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Blitzkrieg in Gaza

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

On June 27, 2006 Israel sent troops, tanks and aircraft into the Gaza Strip. This invasion has been described to the world as a "rescue operation" to free one soldier who had been taken prisoner by Palestinian resistance forces. Almost certainly Corporal Gilad Shalit's capture on June 25th served as a pretext for an operation that was planned out weeks earlier. Only eight months earlier, in what was suppose to be a seminal event, Israel had withdrawn its settlers from the northern coastal strip of Gaza. While that evacuation ended 38 years of illegal colonization of the area, it did not alter the constant state of siege that Israel has maintained against the Palestinians since 1967. This siege has been accompanied by hundreds of incursions that have all but destroyed the economy and culture of Palestine and maintained the tension that facilitated this most recent invasion. The operative term here is 'most recent' for there is nothing original about Israel's present actions in the Gaza Strip.

I.Repetitive Motions

WHEN IT COMES TO ISRAELI MILITARY BEHAVIOR, invasions and incursions are de rigueur. Read through the endless reports of human rights organizations, United Nations investigatory committees, Israel's own peace groups, and even the relevant country reports of the U.S. State Department and you come to realize that incursion and invasion, the destruction of property, the killing, wounding, and capturing of civilians and resistance fighters alike, and the kidnapping or assassination of Palestinian political leaders is the strategic sum of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians of the occupied territories.

One can see this in nearly 40 years of statistics. There have been over 300 Israeli incursions into Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon since 1967. Just in the last six years the Israelis have killed close to 4000 Palestinians while wounding close to 30,000. They have partially or fully destroyed over 71,000 buildings. As of January 2006, they hold 9,184 prisoners. *At present, approximately 40% of the total male population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been detained at some point in their lives by Israeli forces*.

Given the repetitive nature of Israeli incursions and invasions, what credence should be given to the statements that pour forth to rationalize this latest aggression? For instance, are we to take seriously Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's assertion that the entire effort is to "carry out extreme action …to bring the abducted soldier back to his family"? Or is there any hope that, as a soldier of the "elite" Givati Brigade asserted, "the Palestinian fighters will "know next time that they can't just go and kidnap our soldiers and get away with it." After all, the 19 year old Shalit is not the first Israeli soldier to be taken prisoner. And, although many Israelis may have visions of the Entebbe rescue in their heads, none of the previous Israeli soldiers taken captive have been recovered alive. Indeed, the blitzkrieg into Gaza, also seeking to "reestablish a

higher level of deterrence" there according to Meir Sheetrit, Israeli Minister without Portfolio, is more likely to endanger Corporal Shalit than gain his release. Even Shalit's father recognized this fact and called Sheetrit's rationale "delusional." Or, are we to believe General Yoav Gallant when he tells us that a goal of Operation Summer Rains, as the Israelis call this invasion, is to bring about a final cessation of the firing of Qassam rockets into southern Israel? So far this has not been achieved and "senior military officials" in Israel have quietly admitted that "they may diminish Palestinian rocket fire, but it will not halt altogether." Finally, there are a number of statements coming from Israel to the effect that the Palestinians have to be taught a lesson. What lesson is that? That their resistance will cost them dearly. That if Saddam Hussein can be overthrown so can the Hamas government. Yet, given the fact that Israel has been delivering such "lessons" almost daily for over thirty years, what makes the Israelis think that this "summer's rains" will get them the abject surrender they want?

II. Behind the Rhetoric

THE REPETITIVE NATURE OF ISRAELI AGGRESSION calls into question the naive rationales offered so far. None of the hundreds of past Israeli actions have "taught the Palestinians a lesson." At least not to the extent of ending resistance. Thus we must dig deeper to try to understand why Israel has used recurrent incursions and invasions as primary tactics, and therefore why they are really in Gaza now. Behind their rhetoric there are two interconnected goals motivating Israeli behavior, one is strategic and the other is psychological.

A. The Strategic Goal

Israel's strategic goal for its past and present incursions and invasions is the destruction of the Palestinian will to resist the on-going colonization of all of Eretz Israel. Quite simply, Israel does not want a compromise peace based on borders at the 1967 Green Line, and will use "extreme action" to preempt any movement in that direction. If they wanted such a peace they could have had it, along with recognition, any time since 1993, when the PLO formally recognized Israel, and again since 2002, when the Arab League made a similar offer based on a two state solution. But they did not, and do not, want such a peace. They want the land, particularly the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This, of course, eliminates the possibility of a viable and independent Palestinian state and that is why the Palestinians have consistently resisted. The aim of that resistance is not to "throw the Jews into the Sea" but rather to at once move the Israelis back to the 1967 line and thereby prevent the Zionists from throwing the Palestinians into the desert.

Due to Israel's overwhelming military superiority its leadership (be it of the left or the right) has never taken seriously the need for compromise with the Palestinians. And, one has to assume, that same leadership has seen Israeli casualties suffered from guerrilla actions as acceptable. They may even consider such casualties as helpful for they allow Israel to constantly label the Palestinians terrorists. They also offer the necessary excuses to mount the repeated incursions and invasions that destroy Palestinian infrastructure, eliminate its leadership and demoralize the population.

Uri Avnery, leader of Gush Shalom, has put this succinctly in reference to the present Gaza invasion. “The clear aim [of the operation] is to break the Palestinian population by liquidation of its leadership, destruction of its infrastructure and cutting off of food supplies, medicines, electricity, water and sanitary services’not to mention employment. The message to the Palestinians: if you want to put an end to your suffering, remove the government you have elected.” And, we might add, replace it with one more likely to surrender to Israel. Just so, electricity has now been cut off for 700,000 people in Gaza, most major roads and bridges have been blocked or destroyed, nights have been rendered sleepless by constant sonic booms, large numbers of Hamas government officials have been arrested, and the Palestinian Prime Minister threatened with assassination.

Will this destroy the Hamas government? It might. But just as important, the invasion stopped the process of reconciliation that was proceeding between Fatah and Hamas. For while, as Haaretz reported, the Israeli government plotted a “regime change” in Palestine, the Hamas government was slowly moving in a direction that would have accorded Israel de facto recognition and therefore paved a way for renewed peace negotiations. However, this was just what Israel does not want. Indeed, anything that might bring them under international pressure to compromise with the Palestinians must to be immediately squashed. Thus, the negotiations between Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniya for a meeting of the minds based on the political document for peace and reconciliation produced by Palestinian prisoners, only made the invasion of Gaza all the more imperative.

It is important to keep in mind that the Israelis have been using this stratagem of preempting compromise for years and so, it turns out, *that strategy of incursion aims at the destruction of the infrastructure of peace well as the infrastructure of Palestinian society itself.* Yet, the strategy has never brought about a cessation of Palestinian resistance. If anything, it has only made that resistance more brutal. Thus, while guerilla attacks may be useful to Israel’s leadership on a tactical level, they do present Israeli population with high levels of psychological stress. Ultimate victory would have to include the elimination of this anxiety.

B. The Psychological Goal

Again, it is Uri Avnery who gives us the necessary background for coming to grips with the psychological goal sought through a long-term Israeli strategy of destruction. He tells us that for Israelis security has become a fetish. That they have been at war for more than five generations and thus are literally born to fight. “Their whole mental outlook has been shaped by war from earliest childhood. Every day of their lives, violence has dominated the daily news.” He acknowledges that the Palestinians have shared the same fate. Each foe has created “a narrative of their own” to explain and excuse their behavior. When it comes to the Jewish Israelis, they learn from childhood onward “that history is nothing but an endless story of persecution, inquisition and pogroms, leading to the terrible Shoah.” This narrative is reinforced throughout their adult life. It creates a perimeter beyond which thought usually does not go. The result is that Israeli Jews see themselves as “eternal victims” and this makes them anxious, angry and stubborn. Often they are too stubborn to admit that their insecurity

persists even as Israel becomes ever more powerful.

Rucharma Marton, President and Founder of Physicians for Human Rights, Israel, explains this contradiction. On the one hand, “there is the conviction that the use of force will guarantee Israel’s national survival.” In addition, it will “ensure Israelis’ individual safety.” However, “at the same time there is a growing awareness that the greater the military force applied by Israel, the greater the danger.” The result is an “emotional confusion” caused by the notion that fortress Israel doesn’t quite do what it is suppose to.

To this narrative of victimhood, allegedly countered by strength, can be added the equally strong teaching that God gave the Jews the land of Israel where they could construct a safe haven. Avnery emphasizes that Israeli children are taught that “no one else has a right to it. This includes the Palestinian Arabs who have lived there for at least 13 centuries.” There arises a deep psychological dilemma at the point one starts to suspect that the conquest of *all* the “promised land” and the achievement of security are incompatible goals. Because many Israelis seem to be unable to give up either objective, there is a continuous drive to find a way to have one’s cake and eat it to’to have all the land and the necessary security to live happily upon it. Unfortunately, the only way they can think of moving toward this goal is to become ever more aggressive and destructive until the source of the contradiction, the source of the continuing insecurity, is finally eliminated once and for all.

It is to be noted that this dilemma is not unique to Israel. The Americans suffered it as they conquered the “God given” western expanses, and the Afrikaners went through it as they expanded into the “God given” interior of South Africa. Both squared the circle of security and conquest by the near genocidal elimination of the resisting, indigenous populations.

III. The Palestinian Predicament

THE SOURCE OF THE CONTRADICTION FOR ISRAEL IS, of course, the Palestinians and their persistent insurgency. What are we to say about their role in all of this? Have their resistance tactics failed? Have their leaders proved inept? Is their behavior also self-destructively repetitive as suicide bombers are dispatched in revenge for Israeli barbarism?

A. Resistance and Fragmentation

If there is a truism that can be applied to humanity’s violent history it is that, in the majority of cases, oppressed people resist. Sometimes the resistance is violent and sometimes it is non-violent. It depends on the context of the situation, and *that context is established by the oppressor*. In the case of the Palestinians, resistance has, over time, taken many forms and reflected many tactics. There have been a multitude of Palestinian peace initiatives which have, as noted, included the recognition of Israel. There has been years of experimenting with passive and non-violent protest much of which involved internationals and small numbers of Israeli peace activists. Hamas even imposed upon itself a 16 month unilateral cease fire. These efforts have gotten very little foreign press which means that most people in the West know only about the violent resistance of the Palestinians. This too has come in many forms and

levels but, thanks to a biased media, the variety is ignored in favor of an assumed Palestinian obsession with the tactic of suicide bombing.

Within the ranks of the Palestinian leadership there has always been a debate over tactics. Initially, that debate went on between Fatah, led by Yasir Arafat, and other groups within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The disagreement was over the usefulness of such tactics as airline highjackings and attacks on Israeli targets outside of Israel proper. Arafat argued that if the PLO gave up such tactics the countries of the West, which he felt had the power to pressure Israel into compromise with the Palestinians, would more easily see the justice of the Palestinian cause and therefore become their allies in the pursuit of a just settlement. Yasir Arafat won this early debate, these particular violent tactics stopped, and the PLO moved toward the recognition of Israel, the Oslo Accords, and the goal of a two state solution. Serious opposition to Fatah came to reside with the religiously based resistance movements, particularly Hamas, which had always held themselves aloof from the PLO.

Over time it became clear that giving up highjacking and attacks on Israelis outside of Israel achieved no real change either in the rate of Israeli colonization or in the level of practical support coming from Western nations. The two Intifadas, which were at least partially non-violent affairs, then followed. Non-violent resistance goes on to this day, particularly against the construction of the Wall. It too has made no difference in Israeli behavior or that of the Western governments.

It should come as no surprise, then, that there are those who have grown frustrated with the strategies of diplomacy and non-violence. Some of them have resorted to suicide bombing and other tactics of a terrorist nature. There are many, both Palestinians and Westerners, who have long been harshly critical of such behavior. Their critique goes like this: terrorist tactics are barbaric and achieve no positive political end. All they do is provide the pretext for Israel, the vastly more powerful party, to perpetrate its own barbarism. Thus, the victims of Palestinian terror are overwhelmingly the Palestinian people themselves. Therefore, those organizations which pursue such tactics give little thought to Palestinian national interests. Their own survival, and the dogmatic symbolism that accompanies it, has become their only end. Leadership on the streets of Palestine has devolved to a class that behaves in a criminal fashion.

To the extent that aspects of this critique reflect reality, it marks the success for Israel’s strategy of repetitive bouts of destruction. Seeking to avoid peace, the Israelis have purposely thwarted the efforts of all moderate Palestinians. That is part of the reason why Hamas won the last democratic election. The constant harassment, arrest and assassination of Palestinian leaders of any ability have created such stress that all Palestinian political organizations have tended to lose cohesion. Party discipline has been eroded. Some leaders may still hope to pursue diplomatic solutions but they have lost control of those who have no faith in such efforts. The result is a radically decentralized environment in which effective government disappears. As Palestinian lawmaker Nabil Abu Roh-Dana has recently testified, there are splits within Hamas and this makes it hard, at times, to “tell just who is in charge.” Indeed, Hamas is

the last to suffer this fragmentation. Fatah and the secular groups went through it a long time ago and have yet to repair the damage.

Thus, it is true that Israel's success in fragmenting the Palestinian movements, and preventing a united and disciplined approach to strategy and tactics has open the way for more violent, less disciplined elements to come to the fore. It is to noted, however, that this situation is also not unique to the Palestinians. The same process of disintegration in the face of overwhelming force can be seen in many 20th century revolutionary and resistance struggles. Nonetheless, some of them survived and went on to win their struggles.

IV. A Sad Prognosis

Trying to offer a prognosis for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is hard to see anything on the horizon that can stop the Israelis. As the present invasion of Gaza makes clear, Israel does not have to fear retribution from the international community. An obscene silence is all one finds in Washington and most European capitals. Nothing being done in Gaza will negatively impact the colonization process on the West Bank. Israel's end is still to destroy Palestine as a nation, force the Palestinians into Bantustan style enclaves, and condemn them to be hewers of wood and carriers of water. The Zionists want the Palestinians to play the Arab helots to the Israeli Spartans.

The Palestinians will, for their part, continue to resist. However, that resistance will, at least for the foreseeable future, become less and less coordinated and disciplined. It will increasingly constitute the scattered acts of desperate men and women who, having been robbed of all hope for justice, have come to measure success in terms of revenge. Yet, perhaps they will survive this time of disintegration for they and their struggle will certainly not fade away. Even from the prisons and torture chambers of the Zionist state wisdom makes itself heard and hope survives.

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Unilateralism of the Desperate: The Israeli and American Way to Confront Hamas

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A

According to Israeli *Ha'aretz* correspondent Zeév Schiff ['What to do with Hamas', *Ha'aretz* 7 April 2006] Israeli strategists provided four options on how to confront the Hamas- led Palestinian Authority (PA), none of which included direct negotiations with Hamas leaders. While the first two options (of which there is the slightest chance Israel will endorse) call for coexistence with Hamas, the third and forth support Israel's dismantling of the new Palestinian government. Immediately following the Palestinian election results the Israeli cabinet decided that the new PA is neither a partner nor a legitimate ruler. Israel, therefore, cut off all relations with the PA and are looking for ways to demolish the Hamas administration. Furthermore, this policy, according to Schiff, is preferred not only by Israeli officials but also by senior Fatah members who hope to come back to power riding on the Israeli and American horses.

The first option is to base Israel's reaction on Hamas' pragmatic deeds rather than its extreme ideological declarations. The main advocates of this line are moderate Palestinians and several European officials. They even identify a common ground between Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's plan and Hamas' politics.Both are opposed to making the territorial and ideological concessions necessary for anchoring their coexistence in a long- term agreement. Both sides are interested only in unilateral, ad hoc arrangements, whereby Israel will carry out partial withdrawal in exchange for cessation of the violent armed struggle. These arrangements may reduce the hostility and the violence to a tolerable level enabling the populations to lead relatively normal lives, unlike the periods of Palestinian terror attacks and Israeli incursions in the years 2000-2005. Unlike these European and Palestinian voices, the Israeli political and security establishment can see no substantial difference between Hamas ideology and politics. Members of this faction are afraid that, upon implementation of this strategy, Hamas will solidify its power, strengthen its terrorist capabilities and let Iranian agents enter into its territories. In a simplistic method the Israeli establishment characterizes Hamas as an Iranian operative arm, the extension of the existential Iranian threat to the state of Israel and to the world peace [*Ha'aretz* 5, 23, February, 17 March, 17 April 2006].

The second option is to let the European Union (EU), international agencies and NGO's to channel aid to the Palestinian public and, in particular, the 140,000 establishment workers. Few support this approach, but unlike the first option they belong to the Israeli establishment. They argue that preventing humanitarian catastrophe in the Palestinian territories and solving acute daily life problems are major Israeli interests. In their cost/benefit analysis, limited third party coordination will not help Hamas nor hurt Israel compared to Israel letting the

Palestinian people to starve. However, this option does not enjoy much support in the Israeli establishment that rejects it on the same ground as it rejects the previous one.

The third option calls for sheer force by launching a massive army attack to destroy Hamas institutions, kill its leaders and arrest its activists. In the eyes of the Israeli 'hawks' pushing this option the sooner Hamas is cracked the better. Compared to this view, the next option seems moderate and balanced, thus preferred by the Israeli cabinet.

The fourth option aims to achieve the same goal as the third but with less brutality. By cutting off aid crucial to the PA's functioning and building an international boycott, Israel hopes that the PA seizes to function and collapses. Supporters of this option do not care about the suffering of the Palestinians and/or want to teach them a lesson: punishment for their wrong election results. Senior officials favoring the second option criticize this policy alternative as counterproductive. They argue that collapsed social services, massive collective punishment and other aggressive acts will not only help Hamas to root itself in power by blaming Israel but also evoke international criticism. They reason if at the end the international community will force Israel to halt its policy, why not begin with restrained acts implemented carefully? For this purpose Ministry of Defence officials prepared a collapse-index such as Palestinian medicine and food inventory, its level of savings in the banks, the population's purchasing power and sanitation conditions. A four-level ranking system has been established to prevent the PA to collapse completely. Ministry of Defence officials have asked for authorization to put their fingers on the Palestinian society pulse and react when needed.

However, on 9 April Prime Minister Olmert endorsed the forth option as a tool that willprevent Hamas from becoming an established government [*Ha'aretz* 10 April]. He ordered to sever all ties with the PA including security coordination, and views it as a "hostile" entity. Contact with Palestinian security forces will be maintained only to save Israeli lives – to extricate Israelis who have entered Palestinian areas or to prevent a terror attack. Israel will act to isolate the Hamas government, while taking care to prevent a humanitarian crisis in the territories. Such a collapse would force Israel's Civil Administration to take responsibility for the territories in order to prevent international criticism while careful punishment will keep Israel in remote yet with a clear massage regarding Hamas. When Israel made its decision it did not realize the near impossibilty to tunnel international aid to the Palestinian population outside the government services under Hamas' jurisdiction. In addition, Olmert decided that Israel will refuse to hold official meetings with any public figures from abroad who meet with Hamas officials, renewing the boycott policy Israel imposed on officials who met with the late Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Israel, according to Olmert, views the Palestinians as "one authority, and not as having two heads," one in the cabinet and the other in the president's office, but would refrain from a "personal disqualification" of PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. Thus, Abbas and his entourage will be able to travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but Palestinian security officials will no longer be allowed to do so [Israel already prevented the Hamas Prime Minister and cabinet members to travel between the West Bank PA headquarters and their homes in Gaza Strip].

Succesful implementation of Olmert's policy depends on Israel's ability to walk carefully on the brink. Can Israel walk on the precipice for a long period of time? Probably not, especially when you consider the pugnacity of the 'hawks' in the Israeli security establishment, their interest in escalation and modus operandi in combating the Intifada. The involvement of large Israeli forces in the violent acts and in the control of the Palestinian territories on the one hand, and the disintegration of the Palestinian establishment into disparate political and military units on the other, make it difficult for Olmert to prevent his proxies from carrying out acts of violence on their own initiative. Moreover, Olmert's initiatives ' completion of the separation wall, closing the Jordan valley to Palestinians, the expansion of the West Bank settlements and the roads serving Jews only ' are all actions that may evoke Palestinian attacks followed by unrestrained Israeli reactions.

The calls by Olmert's government for total boycott of the Hamas government and punish the public that elected them shows that it understands that it failed on this point. And what solutions does Olmert propose? First, as mentioned above, he views the PA as a "hostile" entity and, second, returns to the unilateral path on a much larger scale.

B

By 2010, Prime Minister Olmert promises Israel will have a border on the east. "Convergence" ' that's the name of the new game, following the end of the "disengagement." Parties that fail to "converge" will not enter the government. It sounds convincing. Who needs the agreement of the Palestinians and the approval of the world when Israel alone has been determining the facts on the ground since 1967? The important thing is that the United States is on its side. According to Olmert, the recent elections were a referendum on his unilateral disengagement plan giving him a green light for implementation. Minister of foreign affairs, Tzipi Livni went even further stating that Palestinian President Abbas is irrelevant.

Let us assume that it is only Israel and the US who determine the political reality. Let us flow with the idea. Is this going to be a regular border that is a clear line with walls and fences beyond which there are no Israeli forces? Absolutely not. The very fact that Israel alleges there is no Palestinian partner obliges the Israeli army and General Security Service to be present on the other side of the "convergence" line.

Conclusion: it is not Israel that is "converging," but the settlers. Israeli forces will be present in territories that are defined partly as "enemy territory" and partly as "hostile territory," which serve as a base for hostile actions and terrorism. The control of the territory and the gathering of intelligence will remain in the hands of Israel.

Olmert also declared that Israel will keep the Jordan Valley as a security strip. Thus we are speaking practically about three border lines: the one with the fences and the wall, across which there will be no settlers but only security forces; the one that separates the Palestinian population from the Jordan Valley; and the exterior one, along the Jordan River. The length of this threefold line is 929 kilometers, three times the length of the Israel's pre-1967 borders.

Caught between the wall to the east and the June 4, 1967 border will be 375,000 Palestinians, including 200,000 in East Jerusalem. Approximately 5,000 are Israeli citizens. Due to its concern to preserve a massive Jewish majority, Israel is unwilling to give full citizenship to such a big number ‘ indeed more than 10 percent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel will continue to see them at best as a ‘hostile’ population that needs to be controlled. In other words, between the wall and the 1967 line Israel will continue to have a Palestinian “other.”

Secondary lines must be added to the main lines. The roads that link the Jordan Valley to the territory on which Olmert calls for “convergence” as well as roads in the Palestinian territories used by Israeli forces that control the imprisoned population are a kind of border. Such roads separate the Israeli forces from the “hostile” territory.

According to Olmert’s plan, Israel must deter about 2 million Palestinians from rebelling, press the PA to eject terrorists, recruit collaborators and informers from its ranks, ensuring the continuation of encirclement, enforcing closures, checkpoints, arrests for the purpose of intelligence gathering, recruitment of collaborators, night-raids and assassinations of junior and senior activists. In other words, the settlements will converge behind the fence, but the military occupation will continue outside it. There will be a certain amount of relief for the Israeli army, because its soldiers will not be obliged to escort settlers to their aerobic dance classes or to evacuate buildings in illegal outposts in the face of resistance from the settlers and their supporters. But in terms of the security burden, nothing substantial will change.

The Palestinians will not reconcile themselves to this situation for long, all the less when ruled by a Hamas government.If Hamas cannot fulfil its election slogan (“In one year of Kassam shelling we achieved what the Fatah could not achieve in ten years of talks”) very few Palestinians will remember its charity and welfare agencies as well as the integrity of its leaders. Since its inception, Hamas has been attentive to the desires and yearnings of the Palestinian public. It stands to reason that Hamas will continue to heed its public and not ignore Israel’s actions.

The use of advanced technological methods such as cameras and sensors to control the long border lines may produce a certain economy in the manpower enforcing the occupation, but the change will not be dramatic. There will still be a need for army and General Security Service forces to enhance and enforce the occupation. Electronic equipment can monitor but it cannot fire, arrest people, or recruit collaborators. Additional forces will be required to enforce the occupation on Palestinians who find themselves between the fence and the 1967 lines. The presence of many security forces in hostile territory and long border lines convert every soldier, vehicle and installation into a target for the guerrilla warfare that Palestinian forces will conduct. The tunnels that were dug in the Gaza Strip and the Qassam missiles fired from there before and after the Israeli disengagement exposed the weak points in Israeli superiority. Many more such weak points can be expected in the West Bank, where the length of the Olmert- proposed border lines and the level of friction are much greater.

Olmert's proposal shows that he did not learn from the experience of unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The credit column shows the achievement: Israeli soldiers and settlers are not present in the Gaza Strip. However, the debit column is much longer. Most Israeli and US expectations did not materialize because the withdrawal was a unilateral process. And in contrast to the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, it was not made back to the international border. According to the relevant international documents, including the Oslo accords, Gaza Strip and the West Bank are considered to form one territorial unit.

Unilateralism obliges Israel to employ force in a variety of ways, and that in itself motivates the Palestinians to respond, sometimes with terrorist attacks and sometimes through the ballot box. Thus Israel finds itself in a state of strategic fragmentation.

But it was not only the experience of the withdrawal that failed in Gaza; the policy of targeted assassinations was also a searing failure. Israel assassinated many Hamas leaders and activists but what was seared into the Palestinian consciousness was the opposite of what Israel wanted as the Palestinians democratically brought Hamas to power. And the US strategy of containment and management of the conflict was shattered with the rise of the Hamas government.

C

This is a problem the US faces in its overall Middle East policy. Since President Clinton tried to use conflict resolution strategy and failed, George W. Bush hoped to succeed by implementing a conflict management strategy as well as supporting Israel to contain the Intifada flames by army operations. Instead of orienting himself to final status goals in a better way then Clinton did at Camp David 2000, Bush invented the 'Road Map' which is no more then a process policy document with vague ends. Though Bush succeeded in having the EU and Russia support his Road Map, it was futile. Neither the Israelis nor Palestinians substantively implemented the Road Map in addition to Bush's containment strategy being severely damaged by Hamas coming to power.

Bush's prevention from imposing the Road Map on Israel was not made by default. Rather it has to do with his alliance with former Prime Minister Sharon. Bush and Sharon share the same strategic view: using massive force and preemptive strikes against terrorism and preferring unilateral acts through which the powerful side can impose its will without negotiations, compromises, or concessions. Consequently Bush accepted Sharon's argument that the Road Map must begin with Palestinians disarming their militant groups and fighting terrorism rather than evacuating Israeli outposts. Bush also supported Sharon when the latter insisted that Gaza Strip settlements evacuation be done unilaterally. Bush did not help Abbas when he begged to advance the Road Map through bilateral and coordinated steps which would have allowed Abbas to show his people that the political track is fruitful. Bush agreed with Abbas only when the Palestinian leader decided unilaterally for general elections in the Palestinian territories as well as encouraged Hamas into the political system. Thereafter the US played a key role in forcing Israel to accept Abbas' decision and to let the Palestinians in

Arab Jerusalem to participate in the elections. However, electing Hamas in free and democratic elections ' as far as elections under occupation can be free and democratic ' the Palestinians voted for a government that promised to resist any US/Israeli unilateral dictate. The Palestinian public saw Fatah failing to stop the Israeli separation wall, an operation that harms daily life of hundreds of thousands Palestinians. Fatah's failure to achieve anything through political dialogue brought to the fore its poor performance in the PA as well as the rampant corruption. The Palestinian public decided to call upon a party that promised to manage both the PA and the relations with Israel differently. In short, both the Israeli and Palestinian elections were referendums on unilateralism but with opposite results. In Israel, Prime Minister Olmert continues to declare that the coalition he leads enjoys the voters support for his unilateral platform. Moreover, he hopes for the continued support of the Bush administration. Shortly after the Israeli elections, Bush envoys' Abrahams and Weltech reacted positively to Olmert's West Bank "conversion" idea. They told him that the US can not recognize the border that Olmert plans to impose, but the US will not force Israel to stop expanding settlements inside the separation wall boundaries creating irreversible facts on the ground that the US will eventually recognize [*Ha'aretz* 2 April 2006].

Israel and the US see eye in eye on the need to internationally isolate the Hamas-led PA and cause its collapse. They want to achieve this by cutting off all foreign aid and assembling a political boycott. The US and Israel prefer using a stick without offering Hamas a political carrot. They do not plan to encourage Hamas to change by showing what it can get in exchange. Worse, they do not present any political incentive to Abbas. Israel and the US hope to abolish the Hamas government without offering to end the occupation by political talks with the successor regime or with the current Palestinian regime. Rather than acting like a colonialist power, Israel and the US should respect the Palestinian vote and challenge Hamas with a diplomatic plan attractive to all parties. Such a plan already exists and enjoys the support of the Palestinians as well as the region. Abbas was elected in January 2005 on the same ticket as the Arab League peace plan of April 2002. From then on up to the recent Arab summit in Khartoum, March 2006 each summit reassured this plan. The principles of the plan are based on UN Security Council resolution 242 which calls on Israeli to withdrawal to its pre-1967 borders. The Palestinians will establish their independent state with Arab Jerusalem as its capital, and based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194 from 1949 an agreed-upon and just solution to 1948 Palestinian refugee problem will be found by the sides. In exchange, Israel will achieve full and secured peace not only with Palestine but with the rest of the Arab states.

Armed with Israeli, US and Arab consent to negotiate along these lines, Abbas can approach the Palestinian people and challenge Hamas. If Hamas refuses to swallow and digest this move, it will loose its domestic and Arab support. However, Israel and the US refuse to move from unilateralism to negotiations. They encourage Abbas to confront Hamas. Unfortunately, without putting in Abbas' hands a political carrot he will fail, and the next Palestinian president will be a senior Hamas leader. Alternatively, the US and Israel will face a more strategic problem if Hamas finds a way to endorse the Arab League peace plan and challenges US/Israeli unilateralism. Israel will lose its excuse for unilateralism, and the US will lose Egypt, Jordan

and Saudi support for its Middle East policy.

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The Great 'Israel Lobby' Fuss

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

In the mid-1980s an obligatorily air-headed action film entitled *Delta Force* popped up on American cinema screens. The gaudy Golan-Globus production dangled before its audiences a wish-fulfillment fantasy as to how the bungled 1979 effort to rescue hostages in Iran somehow might have succeeded. (The braggart advertisement could have been scrawled by Dubya: "They don't negotiate with terrorists . . . They blow them away.") So this formulaic B movie strutted out in the same delirious tradition as a series of flicks at the time depicting rescues of mythical US soldiers held prisoner in Vietnam for no imaginable reason long after that ugly war ended.[1]

Delta Force boasted Lee Marvin as the cunning US commander and chop-socky wizard Chuck Norris as his trusted sidekick. You can't do much better than that for a macho man cast. But the Yanks required one more essential piece if they were going to redeem themselves. The missing ingredient turned out to be a suave Israeli commando who obligingly showed grateful Americans how nifty rescues are performed, as in the famous 1976 Entebbe raid. This silver screen Israeli was so radiantly saintly, so ingratiating, and yet so condescending that I ridiculed him in a review as the candy-coated propaganda figure he plainly was. (That screen image today seems less comic, and more a harbinger of tragedy.)[2] Here was an earnest one-dimensional character who many, and probably most, Israelis themselves would laugh at.

Predictably the Chicago weekly where the review appeared received letters accusing this reviewer of anti-Semitism. To criticize anything Israeli, the aggrieved letter writers implied, was to befoul the memory of six million Jews (not to mention, those five million other victims) murdered in the Holocaust. The Nazi extermination camps were hideous horrors that should not happen to anyone anywhere ever again (though we don't seem to be doing too well), but what exactly does the Final Solution have to do with criticism of second rate movies or, for that matter, Israeli foreign policy? Would holocaust victims believe they hadn't died in vain if they knew they had conferred a series of realpolitik governments with a virtual license to abuse Palestinians? One really had to wonder if any unfavorable comment was too trivial for Israel boosters not to regard as a mortal threat. Indeed, for the ultras among American Zionists, no criticism, no matter how tiny or tangential, escapes their notice, or what they regard as retaliation. An ironic result, as any visitor to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem soon discovers, is that debate about the Middle East is far less inhibited inside Israel than in the US.[3]

So, to seasoned eyes, there was nothing startling about the statement earlier this Spring by two high-profile American professors who, in the course of a robust, if rehashed, critique of Israeli influence over US policy, remark that [a]nyone who criticizes Israel's actions or argues that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over US Middle Eastern policy stands a good chance of being labeled an anti-Semite. Indeed, anyone who merely claims that there is an

Israel Lobby runs the risk of being charged with anti-Semitism, even though the Israeli media refer to America's 'Jewish Lobby.' They proved, as earlier critics of Israeli policies could have told them, to be painfully prophetic. Although little that John J. Mearsheimer of The University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of Harvard University wrote is new (nor do they claim otherwise), they have, as establishment darlings, made a very welcome attempt to spark a desperately needed debate.

The London Review of Books, where their incendiary article appeared, is not exactly a fixture in the waiting rooms at your local barber's or mechanic's shop.[4] This hitherto obscure upscale outlet drew a barrage of vehement attacks culminating in a minor media fire storm. The searing heat scorched serene academe. The Harvard web site for access to the full-length Israel lobby paper forces visitors through a funnel so as to encounter a rebuttal by that scholarly paragon Alan Dershowitz ' the academic equivalent of parading Quasimodo amidst a bevy of bathing beauty contestants.[5] Here is the sort of *de rigueur* disingenuous ploy that gives the Fox News phrase "Fair and Balanced" its nose-wrinkling odor. Mearsheimer and Walt – the writer is acquainted with both gentlemen ' actually are staunch supporters of Israel's right to a secure existence, and are fair-minded fellows almost to a fault- although, like anyone else, they have paradigmatic blind spots. Both happen to be eminent "Realist' scholars who merely pursued a painstakingly logical, if narrow, analysis of international politics into rather daunting local territory. A Chicago newspaper, for example, resorted to the typical tack of denouncing not what the professors said but what the editorialists wanted to imagine they said: "Claim that Jewish Cabal runs US Government is Rubbish."[6] It got worse, much worse, at media outlets ranging from the guttersnipe *New York Sun* ' equating them with racist David Duke who, for his own dark reasons, liked the paper – to the glowering *Wall Street Journal*.[7]

According to Realist doctrine, states in an anarchic world have no reliable friends, only material interests which change from time to time, depending on where leaders reckon their best advantages lay. Therefore, states must be cold-hearted opportunists. Power is everything. Selfishness is, if not quite an insane Ayn Rand virtue, a fixed feature of behavior. (That relentless self-seeking only exacerbates international instability is a notion that we cannot take time to examine here.) Hence, Mearsheimer and Walt, for the life of them, cannot figure out why the US seems to depart regularly from what they see as shrewd pursuit of self-interest in order instead to indulge pipsqueak Israel in costly ways – dishing out billions in subsidies to Israel every year, winking at hundreds of homegrown Israeli nukes while threatening to obliterate Iran for aspiring to make one, and acting as neurotic enablers of avid Israeli expansionists so as to antagonize the whole Arab world, which is surely not in America's long term interest.[8]

"[E]specially since the Six Day War in 1967," they observe, "the centerpiece of U.S. Middle East policy has been its relationship with Israel. The combination of unwavering U.S. support for Israel and the related effort to spread democracy throughout the region has inflamed Arab and Islamic opinion and jeopardized U.S. security.' True, although these authors, like many others, take much too seriously the sententious self-explanation of Bush's administration that it is selflessly spreading democracy, whereas the only democracy Bush is prepared to

countenance is the kind that complies with preordained policy objectives. US elites seem hopelessly devoted to Israel, so long as Israel ultimately serves their goals.

US largesse to Israel may go well beyond what Mearsheimer and Walt estimate. Apart from $3 billion of annual aid usually cited, Israel, according to a study by former Foreign Service Officer Richard Curtis, annually absorbs another half billion in grants from a variety of agencies plus $2 billion in loan guarantees, which handily get forgiven as they come due.[9] From 1949 to 1996 per capita U.S. aid to Israel amounted to 15 thousand dollars. For every dollar the U.S. spent on an African, it gave $250 to an Israeli, and for every dollar it spent on someone from the Western Hemisphere outside the US, it spent $214 on an Israeli. "America's $84.8 billion in aid to Israel from fiscal years 1949 through 1998, and the interest the U.S. paid to borrow this money, has cost U.S. taxpayers $134.8 billion," writes Curtis. "Or, put another way, the nearly $14,630 every one of 5.8 million Israelis received from the US in 1997 has cost American taxpayers $23,240 per Israel."Publicizing such figures alone can land you on an enemies list, as determined by the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which maintains a vigilant "opposition department" to track foes and nay-sayers, and also by B'nai Brith's Anti-Defamation League, with its $45 million budget and extensive private surveillance operations. Little wonder the organizations are so touchy. Perhaps more American taxpayers on learning even the lowball estimates of subventions for Israel may ask, is it worth it?

How to explain the US' peculiar generosity? Mearsheimer and Walt's answer ' after, astonishingly, dismissing the motive of oil, and America's related need to denominate oil in dollars ' is the excessive influence of an 'Israel lobby,' which comprises a loose coalition of all uncritical supporters of Israeli policy.[10] There is, they take pains to say, no central command post, as concocted long ago in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* via the quasi-imaginative Tsarist secret police.[11] They carefully cite polls showing American Jews, if anything, are more skeptical than other countrymen toward Bush's Middle East adventures. But Mearsheimer and Walt's long recitation of qualifications, exceptions, and nuances to their overall thesis was of no avail.

In early May on the University of Chicago campus *Wall Street Journal* editor Bret Stephens, for example, moseyed into a room full of 'Friends of Israel' to castigate Mearsheimer who wisely had declined to get into a "food fight," for that is what would have occurred had he showed. Stephens, pugnacious as only a fighter without an opponent can be, opined that the only real sin of AIPAC, cited by Mearsheimer and Walt for its advertisements for itself, was that it was too 'too boastful' of its influence and, in this case, and in this case only, shouldn't be taken at face value.

Stephens, who evidently knows his Philip Roth novels, suggested that Professor Mearsheimer was the new millennium's Charles Lindberg – an aviation hero who was a sprightly establishment anti-Semite and eugenicist and, moreover, in the run-up to World War II went about stumping for the interests of a foreign power, Nazi Germany. So here was a strange accusation indeed. Did Stephens consider the US a foreign power? For that is unequivocally the nation to which Mearsheimer and Walt pledge allegiance. One agitated audience member

solemnly asked Stephens if Arab loot had bankrolled the vile paper. (Maybe the profs got an oil well or two out of it?) Stephens allowed as he wasn't sure. It was clearly time to exit.

So has US opinion been "captured" by pro-Israel groups who manage to suppress all critical debate? Examples of attempts to do so are plentiful. Norman Finkelstein, son of holocaust survivors, is a loathed figure because of his debunking volumes such as *The Holocaust Industry*, and more recently *Beyond Chutzpah* which obliterated Alan Dershowitz' *The Case for Israel* on grounds not only of plagiary, but plagiary of false 'facts' at that. Holocaust denial regrettably has its lesser but significant counterpart in the denial by Zionists of the forced expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Arabs from Israel in 1948 (and in 1967 from the West Bank and Golan heights). Dershowitz waged a furious but failed campaign to dissuade the University of California Press from publishing the apostate Finkelstein.[12] So the 'lobby' is not all-powerful, but tangling with these folks is no fun unless you have the combative temperament for it.

In the US intimidating watch lists of Israel's critics are diligently compiled and diarrhetically spread by ardent right-wingers Daniel Pipes ("Campus Watch") and, lately, David Horowitz in his neo-McCarthyesque bestseller. Even tough theater producers in New York were unable to sidestep fierce opposition to staging of a sympathetic play about peace activist Rachel Corrie, who in 2003 was crushed in Gaza by a myopic Israeli bulldozer driver, who, poor fellow, also couldn't hear her screams or those of her companions either. But, you know, 'teaching people a lesson' dulls the senses, always has.

National Public Radio is about as good as it gets as mainstream US media goes, but through the conflict, a study found, NPR reported 81% of Israeli children's deaths and just 20% of Palestinian children's deaths – the reverse of the actual proportion.[13] For whatever comfort it is, things aren't much better in Britain. Legendary journalist Robert Fisk of *The Independent* garners hate mail galore for his superbly blunt reportage from the bleeding bowels of the Middle East. *The Guardian* reports survey findings that a large fraction of British citizens are under the impression from standard news coverage that Palestinians are occupying Israeli land, not vice versa.[14] Even BBC coverage customarily is stripped of historic context so as to align with a Likudnik framing of reality. "Increasingly, Palestinian violence has been labeled "terrorism," Paul de Rooij observes of the BBC, "it has never been labeled 'resistance'."

It is not possible to connect the violence perpetrated against the Israelis with the violence and injustice of the occupation; since the latter is not acknowledged Palestinian violence is simply seen as criminal, whereas Israeli violence always has redeeming characteristics…The constant reference to "cycle of violence" equates the Israeli violence to a response to Palestinian violence, diminishing the fact that Israeli violence is disproportionate and used to oppress the native population. This context-free reporting thus renders the violence unintelligible? BBC coverage doesn't answer why there is any violence at all.

It is true enough that in Congress, and much of the media, Israel is 'virtually immune from criticism.' Even so, this profoundly disturbing fact is not at all the same as proving that pro-

Israel interests misshape American policy to the point of instigating the invasion of Iraq, or the subsequent threats to Iran and Syria. It is likewise true that neocons inhabiting the Bush administration have enjoyed warm remunerative links to the Israeli Right ' to the extent, Mearsheimer and Walt point out, of authoring a ferocious 1996 position paper, "Clean Break," for then new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a paper intent on reordering the Middle East to suit truculent rightwing Israeli dreams. Yet the paper was wholly compatible with unbridled American dominance as well. One gets the gist of neocon conquistador aims from peripheral motor mouths such as Yale history professor Donald Kagan, father of Robert, who in the giddier days of October 2003 stated that the victorious US nevertheless "will probably need a major concentration of forces in the Middle East over a long period of time." What about worrisome signs of Iraqi resistance? "People worry a lot about how the Arab street is going to react," the ivory tower tough guy retorted. "Well, I see that the Arab street has gotten very, very quiet since we started blowing things up." Yes. That went well.

So who needs Israeli agents force-feeding a strapped-sown Bush administration with faulty, self-serving data when frothing neocons at home tirelessly peddle their own congenial lies. To flip Mearsheimer and Walt's charge, the neocons, and American elites more generally, may well have been using Israel adroitly all along for their purposes. US elites do act ruthlessly for interests of their own in the energy-rich Middle East ' and Israel is often enough a small piece in this geopolitical game. Ask yourself why the US government, boasting a mighty propaganda apparatus, and populated by policy makers who are a match for devious leaders anywhere, would be gulled to go along with a single small state's whims?

Mearsheimer and Walt soundly argue that knee jerk complicity with Israel, for whatever reasons, militates not only against US interests but those of Israel too. Realists always pride themselves on cutting through ruses and rhetoric to the underlying core of seamy self-interest at work in any international conflict. Yet Realists can be strangely ingenuous in assuming that policy elites act independently of crass commercial motives, therefore see the 'big picture' with dazzling clarity, and act accordingly. In case no one noticed, Big Oil, pestilentially influential since Ida Tarbell's day, virtually seized the White House in 2000.[15] They don't control everything, mind you, just whatever affects them, which is rather a lot. Nuances are nice, but sometimes they become blinders. Noam Chomsky, lauding Walt and Mearsheimer's courage, found that they missed the real process of US elites doing pretty much as they please under the mesmerizing masquerade of the 'national interest.'[16] Neocons are "pro an Israel that is useful to the U.S. and, therefore, useful to them," Finkelstein remarks. "What use would a Paul Wolfowitz have of an Israel living peacefully with its Arab neighbors and less willing to do the U.S.'s bidding?[17]

Mearsheimer and Walt ask, plaintively, why has the US "been willing to set aside its own security in order to advance the interests of another state?" Could it not be more strikingly clear that a coterie of reactionary radicals blithely sacrificed any wider public good in order to plump up fat cat insiders since 2000? If devout Likudniks benefited too, and at someone else's expense, so what? The Bush administration is at least as alien and inimical to 'American values' as any nightmarishly conceived invader from Mars or Jerusalem. Michael Moore did not entitle

his bestseller *Dude, Where's My Country?* for nothing.

Israel would indeed be far better off if the US applied its full leverage to compel a fair settlement with the Palestinians. And, indeed, about half of Israelis support full disengagement from the West Bank. Many US groups, including a large segment of the American Jewish population, sincerely seek a fair and just solution. The saber-toothed Israel lobby, as Walt and Mearsheimer say, has a perfect right to make their case, like any other lobbying organization, but they have no right to escape scrutiny, skew the truth with impunity, or to bully critics. Public opinion may be up for grabs anyhow, as Mearsheimer and Walt note, with upwards of 70% of Americans in a 2003 survey supporting the halt of aid from Israel in order to compel it to come to a mutually acceptable agreement with the Palestinians.

Given growing domestic skepticism regarding US interventionism, Mearsheimer and Walt have ignited a frenzy because Israel boosters fear losing their firm grip on public opinion. Witness the debunking earlier this year of a survey, conducted by pro-Israel interests, which depicted 40% of boring Swedes as rabid anti-Semites, and which turned out to be nonsense ' counting as anti-Semitic anyone critical of Israeli policy. The anti-Semitic component in Sweden is in the low single digits – exceeded by anti-Muslim feelings, though thankfully also in single digits. Yet, as critic Kristoffer Larsson notes, "A 68 per cent majority of the Israeli Jews would refuse to live in the same building as an Arab Israeli, and 40 per cent think that the Israeli government should encourage them to leave the country."[18] Further, a 2006 Israeli Democracy Index reveals "62% of respondents want the government to pursue policies in order to persuade the 1.3 million Arabs, who account for about one-fifth of the population, to leave."[19] These are the same Israelis who otherwise perceptive liberals like Michael Massing dutifully say have been besmirched by Mearsheimer and Walt's charge of 'blood kinship' as the basis of citizenship because there are, after all, a lot of (second class) Arab Israelis walking around.[20] Apparently not if most non-Arab Israelis can help it.

Some states, like some people, don't appreciate who their real friends and enemies are. Witness the certifiably insane alliance between the Israeli right and the American Christian right on confoundedly mystical grounds that defy parody. Fanatic fundamentalist Christians believe that they require an expansionist Israel in order to fulfill cockeyed prophecies and thereby achieve personal salvation ' at which point these ordinarily anti-Semitic folks consign unconverted Jews to the molten furnaces of hell. In other words, the Christian Right despises Arabs a tad more than they despise Jews. Here is an unstable, if not floridly psychotic, partnership if there ever was one. By contrast, heartily scorned enemies like Mearsheimer and Walt, by stirring up this indelicate debate, may turn out in the long run to be among Israel's best friends.

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[1] See Bruce Franklin, MIA, or Mythmaking in America (New Brunswick: Rutgers University

Press, 1993)

[2] Julian Borger, “Israel Trains US Assassination Squads in Iraq.” The Guardian, 9 December 2003.

[3] For one thing, one is less likely in Israel to be a victim of ‘hasbara,” which “roughly means ‘propaganda: ‘rhetoric,’ ‘Indoctrination’ and even ‘self-righteousness.” Hasbara is “a specialty of Israel’s professional emissaries and publicists —-the intended audience is Diaspora Jews who want to know Israel is always right as well as Goys….the trouble is when the dispenser of “hasbara” also is taken in by it….and confuses hasbara with policy.” Avisha Margalit, ‘The Terror Masters,’ New York Review of Books, 5 October 1995.

[4] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, ‘The Israel Lobby,’ London Review of Books 22 March 2006 . Available online atwww.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/mear01.html The article first was commissioned but ultimately spurned by the Atlantic Monthly.

[5] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy, Kennedy School of Government Working Paper Number:RWP06-011, 13 March 2006.

[6] Chicago Sun-Times, 27 March 2006.

[7] Eli Lake, ‘David Duke Claims to Be Vindicated By a Harvard Dean,’ New York Sun, March 20, 2006.

[8] On the Israeli nuclear program see Seymour Hersh, The Samson Option (New York: Random House, 1991).

[9] Richard H. Curtiss, “The Cost of Israel to U.S. Taxpayers: True Lies About U.S. Aid to Israel.” Washington Report on Middle East Affairs December 1997. Accessed at http://www.ifamericansknew.org/stats/cost_of_israel.html. “In addition, there have been the approximately $10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees and perhaps $20 billion in tax-exempt contributions made to Israel by American Jews in the nearly half-century since Israel was created . . . It would be interesting to know how many of those American taxpayers believe they and their families have received as much from the U.S. Treasury as has everyone who has chosen to become a citizen of Israel.”

[10] See, for example, Antonia Juhasz, The Bush Agenda (New York: Regan Books, 2006); David Lindorff, “Secret Bechtel Documents Reveal: Yes, It Is About Oil.” Counterpunch 9 April 2003; and Joshua Holland, “The Great Iraqi Oil grab,” Alternet 23 May 2006 athttp://www.alternet.org/story/36463.

[11] On the history of the protocols see Stephen Eric Bronner, A Rumor about the Jews (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Police are creative when they want to be. In Northern Ireland the Protestant-dominated Royal Ulster Constabulary long ago also dreamed up and publicized a pledge for IRA members, who supposedly were bent on Rome Rule throughout the

known universe.

[12]See the debate between Dershowitz and Matthew Abraham on Finkelstein's work in the Winter 2006 issue of Logos.

[13] "The Illusion of Balance: NPR's Coverage of Middle East Deaths doesn't Match Reality," Extra November/December 2001.

[14] Paul de Rooij, Worse Than CNN? BBC News & The MidEast," 16 May 2002. Also see Owen Gibson, 'BBC's Coverage of Israel-Palestinian Conflict 'Misleading" Guardian 3 May 2006; and the Glasgow University Media group study in Greg Philo and Mike Berry, Bad News from Israel (London Pluto Press, 2004).

[15] In a response to critics, Mearsheimer and Walt yielded on nothing, including their presupposition that oil is incidental in US strategy. London Review of Books, 11 May 2006.

[16] Noam Chomsky, 'The Israel Lobby?' ZNET, 28 March 2006.

[17] Norman Finkelstein, "It's Not Either/Or: The Israeli Lobby." Counterpunch 1 May 2006.

[18]http://www.counterpunch.org/larrson04152006.html

[19] 'Survey: Most Israelis want Arabs out.' 9 May 2006 athttp://english.aljazeera.net/english/images/ico_feedback.gif

[20] Michael Massing, 'The Storm over the Israel Lobby.' New York Review of Books, 8 June 2006, p. 65.

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In the Name of the Iranian People: Regime Change or Regime Reform?

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

The Bush administration lacked a clear Iran policy when it took office in January 2000. The containment policy it inherited from the Clinton administration was under review when the tragedy of September 11 occurred. The US then declared Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil" and pursued wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, as Iran's nuclear crisis intensified, the administration refocused attention on Iran. The broad contours of a new Iran policy were outlined by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice earlier this year.

This new Iran policy is said to differ from the previous policy in two significant ways: it distinguishes the "Islamic regime" from the "Iranian people," and it focuses on changing (some say reforming) the Islamic regime, rather than its behavior. In short, it is a regime change (or regime reform) policy in the name of the Iranian people. On a practical level, the policy relies on international isolation and domestic destabilization of the Islamic regime. The dual pressure is expected to make the system collapse, or bend, hereby delaying or preventing Iran from building nuclear bombs, or making a prospective nuclear Iran safer.

This policy is part of a new "transformational diplomacy" that Secretary Rice is promoting within the Bush administration, and marks a shift in the US approach to Iran, from reactive to proactive diplomacy. Specifically, Secretary Rice has made a number of long-overdue decisions to rebuild the US capacity to deal constructively with Iran such as establishing Farsi-designated positions. The new Office of Iran Affairs is another example of this more proactive approach. One hopes that these developments will lead to much needed insight and understanding of Iran and to proper strategies and tactics.

Despite that President Bush has repeatedly said that the use of force remains "a last option," there is serious concern that the administration may opt for a military solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis before it "exhausts" all diplomatic options. Meanwhile, former and current Israeli officials have called for immediate military strikes against Iran, with the tacit approval of Vice President Cheney; some have even revealed "Israeli plans" for this purpose. I have argued elsewhere that the road to the UN Security Council can logically lead to war, and that our current complacency could prove disastrous.[i]

However, in the present article I am focusing on the new Iran policy, which takes a broader view. As such, it can help postpone or diffuse the military option and give democracy time to develop. Meanwhile, the equivocal position of the State Department between regime change and regime reform will encourage further debate, giving the proponents a chance to advance the policy, and the opponents an opportunity to voice dissenting views. Despite that the Bush

administration and many neoconservatives view the new policy as appropriate, many Iran experts and US allies remain unconvinced.

In what follows, I will offer an exposition of the new policy, critically evaluate its key assumptions and initiatives, explain the difficulties the policy will face, and explicate its pros and cons for pro-democracy Iranians. Finally, drawing from past US experiences with dictatorships that became democracies throughout the world, I offer an alternative perspective on how the US might help reform the Iranian regime without presenting itself as an existential threat to the Islamic Republic.

Between Regime Change and Regime Reform

The new Iran policy is a response to the "defiant" mood of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whom one US official called a "terrorist," which is unprecedented for government commentary on the leadership of the Islamic Republic. The policy is also designed to reduce Israel's insistence on immediate military action against Iran, put additional pressure on the EU, Russia, and China, among others, to stay the course with the US, and embolden the opposition to the regime at home and abroad to more forcefully confront the regime. What is more, the policy is expected to gain the support of the Iranian people as the US targets the Islamic regime.

According to Dr. Rice, the new policy will "broaden" the international consensus on Iran's nuclear threat now that it faces the UN Security Council for censure and sanction, to address the full scope of its "threatening aggressive policies," including support for terrorism and violent extremism, and the "democracy deficit in Iran." To that end, the US intends to further engage its allies in a dialogue on the need to form a common front against the "threat" from the radical Islamic regime in Tehran.

Complementing the international isolation of Iran, the Bush administration will put into action a funding package that actively "support[s] the aspirations of the Iranian people for freedom." The State Department is asking Congress to increase funds from the existing $10 million to $85 million for 2006 and possibly 2007. The fund will be used to "empower civil society" and "promote democracy" in Iran by increasing satellite TV and radio broadcasting, expanding outreach to young and professional Iranians, and enhancing communication for public diplomacy. The recipients will include Iranian human rights activists, labor unions, political dissidents, academics, and NGOs inside and outside Iran. The identity of individuals receiving the money will not be made public for fear of retribution from the Islamic Government.

The recipients are to use the fund to build support networks, expand internet access, shore up civic education, and foster political participation. As one US official said, the Bush administration hopes the fund will "deepen" ties with the Iranian people and initiate a political movement in Iran similar to the Polish "solidarity model." Responding to a BBC Persian Service reporter's claim that the funding will lead to more crackdowns on domestic opposition, one US official said that the dissidents and experts he has consulted all tell him that "exactly the opposite" is the case.

Many in the US have been touting the idea of "regime change" for sometime. "This is a very good idea," according to Professor Michael McFaul of Stanford University and a few of his Hoover Institution colleagues agree. They believe that the simultaneous internal destabilization and international isolation will lead to a total collapse of the regime or to a desirable change in its policies.

While the new policy suggests that the administration is preparing to embrace regime change, many US officials suggest that regime reform remains an option. The State Department's newly created Office of Iran Affairs seeks to "facilitate change in Iranian policies."

Washington is wisely leaving room for regime reform as it duels with Tehran because regime change option has no real chance because the Iranian people, neighboring Muslim states, and US allies will not support it. Smart sanctions, even if they target the regime's leaders, will fail; the Islamic Republic is a millipede with no real head as Saddam Hussein was in Iraq. There is no likelihood for an internal military coup since "the junta" is already in power. Surgical strikes or a military invasion will destroy Iran but fail to conquer, similar to Iraq. Lastly, the opposition, including separatist ethnic groups, is too weak to overthrow the regime even with full US support.

The regime change advocates argue that the reform option will not work because of the constraints that the Islamic Constitution places on meaningful change in the system, citing the failed experience of the reform movement under the leadership of President Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005). Yet, that experience indicates that well before the reform movement had hit a Constitutional wall, it had taken the wrong road. The first time I met Mr. Khatami in 1998, I told him in a private meeting in New York City that his movement will fail unless he made normalization of relations with the US his top priority. A goal I know he wanted but could not deliver.

That was the movement's first fatal problem. Not making free elections another top priority and initiating a struggle toward that end was the second fatal problem. Instead, the reformists took a Hercules approach and tried to advance their cause monopolistically. If they had organized and mobilized the public for normalization and free elections, their chance for success would have significantly increased. The reformists focused narrowly on political reform, a strategy that only a small middle class supported. Finally, the movement took an ideological approach to reform, missing the fact that Iran needed a pragmatic orientation. The end result was that the reform became disconnected from the people who wished to improve their economic circumstances.

From Faulty Assumptions to Flawed Analysis

The two assumptions justifying the policy shift in favor of regime change or reform are that Iran cannot be stopped from building nuclear bombs, and that a secular, democratic, nuclear Iran is less threatening than a radical, Islamic, nuclear Iran. The key individuals advancing these arguments are affiliated with the Defense Department and Vice President Cheney's office

since they are “resigned to a nuclear-armed Iran and argue that the best way to address that problem is by opening Iran to democracy and reform” (*New York Times*, Feb. 16, 2006)

However, both assumptions are erroneous. The existing intelligence reports, including those from the US, give Iran no less than eight years before it can build a nuclear device. As is, Iran has serious technical, legal, and political problems in maintaining even its non-industrial enrichment program. For example, Iran lacks the required technologies in the fields of chemistry, physics and engineering to produce pure UF6. The expected international isolation will make it hard for Iran to obtain the technologies needed to produce nuclear fuel.

Besides, US experience with existing nuclear states does not support the proposition that, unless it is democratic, a nuclear Iran is a more dangerous state. Russia, China and Pakistan are examples of secular, communist and Islamic dictatorial nuclear states respectively that never used their bombs. Incidentally, the only state that has ever used nuclear bombs is the most democratic state existing (trite). A democratic nuclear Iran is not any safer than a dictatorial nuclear Iran.

The emerging regime change or reform policy is also justified by the “war on terror,” which has increasingly focused on a broad concept of radical Islam. President George W. Bush has designated “radical Islam” as America’s number one enemy, analogous to communism during the Cold War. With nuclear bombs, radical Islam becomes even a larger menace, the argument goes. This danger used to be represented by the “stateless” Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden; now it is represented by Iran and its current president, Dr. Ahmadinejad.

The rational observer will see a sea of difference between a stateless radical Islamic group and a nation-state where radical Islamists control the executive branch. By the time Iran is expected to build a nuclear bomb, it will have experienced three presidential elections. Even the most ardent enemies of Tehran acknowledge that the Iranian nation is moving away from radical Islam, and that the last presidential election is better understood as an aberration rather than a normal occurrence. After all, that election was not about bombs but about butter!

Iran has been a dictatorship for centuries, including the last two hundred years when it has not initiated any regional conflict. The only state toward which Iran remains hostile in its region is Israel but, as history indicates, much of the anger Iran directs toward Israel is rhetorical, responsive to regional rhetoric and for domestic consumption. Incidentally, a nuclear Iran would be even more constrained if authoritarian. The fear of regime collapse and the consequent danger of nuclear materials falling into terrorist hands are overblown.

Nevertheless, given the situation in Iraq and the volatile situation in the energy region of the Persian Gulf, Washington is justified to remain vigilant about the Islamic regime’s behavior and to help open up Iran to democracy and human rights. However, to be legitimate, any US action must adhere to international law. Moreover, Washington must take into account the fact that the Iranians are a proud and nationalistic nation (trite) and will resist challenges to their sovereignty.

The Bush administration's call for "democracy and reform" in Iran is a welcome development, as it corrects deficiencies in past policies, namely, the lack of vision about the kind of Iran Washington had wanted to emerge. However, the larger and more important question of how to bring about democratic change in Iran is not yet well articulated. Specifically, the new pro-democracy policy makes erroneous assumptions and as such its implementation can prove disastrous for Iran.

Bush's new policy, based on a Cold War model of political change in Eastern Europe, assumes the following: Iran can be effectively isolated; the Islamic regime has a shallow support base; reform in Iran is hindered by a lack of money and information; democracy is the first priority for most Iranians; and Iran can transition to democracy without relations with the US. Furthermore, it is assumed that by simply distinguishing between the Iranian people and its regime, the disgruntled population will rise up in support of the US. Finally, it is assumed that the regime will respond to force better than to diplomacy.

Fifteen countries border Iran. It has long-standing cultural and economic ties with many of these neighbors. Iran also sits on world energy reserves, having 9 percent of the world's oil reserves and 15 percent of gas reserves. Iran's geopolitical position combined with its large population, rich cultural heritage, and long history makes it a pivotal state in that neighborhood. These and other advantages make isolating Iran counterproductive and difficult. Indeed, the current nuclear crisis is a product of past US attempts to isolate Iran. To avoid US sanctions, Tehran turned to undercover markets to build its nuclear facilities.

Because the new policy is obsessed with President Ahmadinejad's radicalism and is designed to oust him, it focuses on his alleged shallow support base while ignoring the will and the military-security background of his supporters. The policy differences between Mr. Ahmadinejad and his rivals within the Islamic regime are also mistakenly elevated to an imaginary factional antagonism, an impression promoted by certain disgruntled reformists and pragmatists. A policy that threatens the system as a whole cannot hope to receive practical support from the rival Islamic factions against the regime's elected president.

The new policy is also dismissive of the broader support base for the Islamic regime. Even though almost every key pro-democracy personality and group called for the boycott of the presidential elections last June, an action endorsed by President Bush, and the candidates were hand-picked by the Guardian Council; 60 percent of the voting population went to the polls. Of the remaining 40 percent, 20 percent has never voted. By refusing to participate, the boycotters did not help themselves. Instead their actions assisted Dr. Ahmadinejad, who moved to the second round with only 14 percent of the votes.

An absolute majority of Iranians are money-deprived including the pro-democracy and human rights activists opposed to the regime. However, no amount of money can help them become viable alternatives in the foreseeable future. During the last presidential election, former President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani spent upward of fifty million US dollars to end up with an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the relatively unknown Dr. Ahmadinejad. The problem

with the pro-democracy forces is their inability to appreciate the true craving of the majority of the Iranian people and connect to the wider society.

Information is crucial for successful political campaigns. Unlike the former USSR and its satellites in Eastern Europe, Iran is hardly an information-deprived society. Despite the restrictive actions of the regime, hundreds of radio and television stations beam programs into Iran, thousands of e-mail groups, web logs and websites are active, and hundreds of national and local newspapers and magazines are published throughout the country. Media outlets include Voice of America (VOA), Radio Farad, BBC and the anti-regime satellite TVs in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and places outside the US.

Contrary to what US policy makers think, the problem with information that the Iranians receive is not its quantity but its purpose and quality. Skeptical of the governmental broadcasts, many Iranians turned to the sources outside the country for news and analysis. However, they became increasingly disappointed with what they saw and heard, particularly from the US-based Iranian satellite TVs. The Iranian people are looking for independent educational media that deepen their understanding of issues and alternatives, not US propaganda.

Iranian society is highly stratified. An absolute majority lives in poverty and is struggling to meet basic needs, including food, job, housing, education, and health services. They were critical in the surprise election of Dr. Ahmadinejad who campaigned on a platform of social justice and anti-corruption. Only a small number of them must have voted for Dr. Mostafa Moin, the pro-democracy candidate who took fourth place in the first round of the elections. This social group cannot be mobilized by a democracy campaign that remains ignorant of their immediate and basic needs.

The upper class, a tiny but powerful segment of the population, is divided into two main factions. Most among the merchant faction support the Islamic regime and maintain a good working relationship with the government and have benefited from the US sanctions. In contrast, the more modern and industrial faction has suffered from US sanctions. They will not support the US pro-democracy policy unless it provides for Iran’s economic integration into global capitalism and for their required social peace and political stability.

That leaves the critical middle class as the best hope for democracy. However, there are serious problems with this social group. They are divided into many, sometime overlapping, factions including reformists, leftists, rightists, modernists, traditionalists, secularists, the devout, nativists, nationalists, royalists, and Westernizers. It is no surprise they do not co-exist politically; sadly, the prospect for their possible union in the future remains bleak.

While many among the middle class are habitual defenders of liberal democracy, their practical commitment to the causes of free market, reform, and human rights is questionable. Worse, they have grown more and more indifferent to social justice, the cornerstone of Iranian politics since the 19th century. Indeed, as noted, members of the middle class lack a unifying ideology.

They also suffer from a serious lack of leadership as personal rivalry prevails among their rank and file.

Further complicating the US pro-democracy effort on behalf of the Iranian people are three additional critical factors. First, a majority of the "governmental reformists" will remain in the shadow of the conservatives in power, suspicious of US effort; second, many members of the secular middle class are habitually radical and their commitment to the US is opportunistic at best; and third, the middle class, when in power, has been inept in matters of economic growth and management, the provision of basic needs, and national security which has led to a public crisis of confidence.

As the foregoing analysis of the various classes shows, there is no such a thing as a monolith "Iranian people" to rise in support of the US in its struggle against the Islamic regime, even if most Iranians are opposed to the system. As mentioned, Iranians are highly stratified and divided. Though a small group will support a US invasion of Iran, an absolute majority will not support the US "pro-democracy" policy because it does not satisfy their socio-economic needs as well as the fact that Iranians are habitually opposed to foreign intervention, not to mention the cultural resistance that the threatened Islamic regime will generate.

The Iranian people also have a problem trusting the Bush administration's pro-democracy rhetoric while its deeds have been humiliating and damaging to them. The economic sanctions are indicative of this dichotomy, which have caused poverty and the loss of many Iranian lives. Or the humiliating finger printing and body searching of Iranians at US visa checkpoints. Despite the fact that not a single Iranian has been directly implicated in a terrorist act against the US, Iranians are suspected of being terrorists more than any other nationality.

If the Bush administration wishes to be supported by the Iranian people as it targets the regime, it must take concrete steps in their favor. Lifting sanctions on sale of spare parts and civilian planes, and removing finger-printing and body-searching regulations would help. Even more effective would be the expansion of the American Interest Section in the Swiss Embassy in Tehran. The US has never seriously considered this option, and if it were to put a request to the Iranian Government for the purpose, Tehran would have serious difficulty to refuse. The Iranian people support such expansion and Iran has a huge Interest Section in the US.

The view that the Islamic regime responds to force more than to diplomacy is based on the behavior of the regime vis-à-vis the war with Iraq and the American hostages in Tehran. In both cases, the regime did not respond to diplomacy until forced. However, this analysis misses a fundamental change in the fabric of the regime. There was a time when members of the clergy were in full control, and they knew the limits of their power. Today, many non-clergy radical Muslims are in charge and they largely come from humble and security-military backgrounds. They often do not respond to force because they do not understand the limits of their power and cherish martyrdom.

Yet, the most formidable obstacle democratic change faces in Iran is the lack of a normal US-

Iran relation. Experience in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe indicate that no dictatorship has ever made the transition to democracy in the absence of diplomatic ties with the US. No diplomatic ties with the US means no democratic transition. Period! Because there are also countries like Egypt whose relations with the US have not let to democratic change, we can only conclude that diplomatic ties with the US are a necessary condition for transition to democracy, but not a sufficient condition.

Iran will not be an exception to this rule even if it has plenty of pro-democracy forces. This fact is already witnessed by the Iranian experience in the last 26 years. In the absence of diplomatic tie with the US, Iran will become a Cuba, a North Korea, or an Iraq for the US, or else it will experience another violent revolution over which no one will have any effective control. Given the political, social, and ethnic make up of the country, and the absence of a charismatic and unifying leader, the next Iranian revolution could lead to civil war and regional disintegration. No person, group or country can hope to benefit from such an eventuality.

Modeling Iranian Democratic Transformation

Democratic change rarely happens in the absence of relations with the US because democracy requires a peaceful and secure environment as well as time to mature. In countries that have severed diplomatic ties with the US, a military-security environment develops. Under this condition, the public views reformers as weak while the state suppresses them as saboteurs or the "American fifth column." The condition is then prepared for the anti-democratic forces to take control of the state power. The Iranian political environment is no different.

The prolonged lack of diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran has created a military-security environment in Iran that nurtures radicalism and dictatorship. Meanwhile, the past short-sighted US sanctions policies, as well as the hostility between the two countries since the revolution, have made the US an outside existential threat, further eroding its ability to mediate peaceful democratic change in Iran. More significantly, the separation between the two nations has deprived the US of the opportunity to better understand Iran and build trust with the Iranian people, its political groups, and the regime.

For Iran to become democratic, this environment must be changed, a transformation that will require diplomatic ties with the US. Often overlooked is the fact that the democratic change in South Korea, Taiwan, South Africa, Brazil, and Chile, and the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine all took place in countries that had, and have, diplomatic ties with the US. Also overlooked is the fact that in Cuba and North Korea, where the US does not maintain diplomatic ties, dictators have stalled democratic changes and remain in power.

The physical presence entailed in diplomatic relations allows the US to get a better feel for the hopes of the people, political cultures, and dissident groups. It helps build trust and stay in contact with contending political forces. US diplomatic missions and NGOs were better positioned to assess emergent situations, apply pressure, and offer support. US public

diplomacy has a real flavor to it. Significantly, the physical presence helps the US be seen as a mediator of change rather than a threatening outside force. The 13,000 miles that separate the US from Iran deprives Washington of these opportunities.

People often bring up Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among other authoritarian states, as counter examples that have maintained diplomatic ties with the US but have not made the transition to democracy. The critics must be reminded of the fact that almost all such nations are Islamic, oil producing, or both. While diplomatic ties satisfy the necessary condition for their transition to democracy, their specific situation does not allow for the development of the sufficient conditions that are required for the purpose. In the Iranian case, these will include the reformation of Islam, diversification of oil economies, and expansion of a more democratic political culture.

The countries that were successful in making the transition from dictatorship to democracy in the presence of diplomatic ties with the US indicate that transformation, broadly speaking, has taken two roads. In some, like Eastern Europe, the democratic change was brought about by a "revolution" that changed the nature of the existing system, e.g., from socialism to capitalism. In others, the transition meant a constitutional change and "negotiated" transfer of political power to democratic forces without systemic change, as in South Korea, Chile and South Africa, where political changes sustained capitalist development.

In the absence of diplomatic ties with the US, neither of the two models would apply to Iran. However, if they were to re-establish relations, the less-revolutionary approach would suit Iran better. Admittedly, Islam and oil factors make the Iranian transition more difficult as they are often used to maintain the status quo. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the system in Iran is capitalist and its reformation would not require systemic change. What would be required is a reformed constitution and political culture that would allow for a recurring democratic circulation of power among the competing political forces.

There are other reasons why the "revolution" model is not suitable for Iran. In Eastern Europe, the one-party communist systems were autocratic and subservient to the former USSR, the regimes were totally discredited and illegitimate, the opposition forces were avowedly pro-US, and the population was information-deprived. In contrast, the authoritarian Iranian regime allows for dissent, enjoys a degree of popularity, is fairly independent of outside influences, and the public is moderately informed. Furthermore, the Iranian opposition views the US not as a friend but as an instrument to be used against the Islamic regime.

Religion has played prominent role in Iran and Eastern Europe — Mosques in the former and churches in the latter. However, the similarity ends here. In Socialist Europe, the Christian churches played an important role in resisting the Godless regimes and provided protection for the secular opposition without making any claim on political power. In contrast, Islam is the ideology of the theocratic state and of those who wish to reform it. The Islamic forces, while divided into reformers, fundamentalists and pragmatists, act in unison against threats to the regime, and they do not tolerate competition from the secular forces.

Making the New Iran Policy Work

The new Iran policy could help with democratic change in Iran if the Bush administration could overcome the two fundamental concerns that prevent it from making any gesture toward Iran. The first is the misperception that, given the overall environment of US-Iran relations, engaging Iran would look incongruous, unwise, or impossible. Yet, the US held talks with Vietnam while they fought a bloody war. The second is the misperception that Mr. Ahmadinejad or the regime would be the beneficiary of any concessions that the US might want to make toward Iran. Yet, any calming of US-Iran hostility would directly benefit the pro-democracy forces.

For the new policy to promote regime reform, the Bush administration needs to reassess its assumptions and analyses, and chart a different implementation strategy. The US knows how to contain Iran. It now needs to learn how to engage Iran as it applies its new transformational diplomacy to the Islamic system. The new Iran policy "looks to me like a hope rather than a strategy" the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Hass, told CNN.com.

The US can begin by making diplomatic ties at a lower level an immediate goal of the new policy. The Administration must also show interest in facilitating Iran's integration into world economy, which requires a gradual lifting of key sanctions. The experience with Iran's nuclear debacle demonstrates that sanctions are counterproductive. The first practical step will be for the US to consider a dialogue with Iran. Outsourcing negotiations with Iran to Europeans and Russians is counterproductive in the long term. It is also unacceptable to those who want the Administration to "exhaust" all options before opting for regime change or use of force.

A window of opportunity exists now that Iran has agreed to the Bush administration's request for negotiation over the problems in Iraq, and has offered to negotiate its nuclear programs with the US. While the talks on Iraq are bilateral, a possible dialogue on the nuclear matter must begin within a multilateral framework, similar to the 6+1 framework I have proposed elsewhere,[ii] and then gradually move toward a bilateral framework. The Iraqi platform also has the potential for expansion into other areas of dispute. Building on common grounds while key differences are negotiated will help bridge the confidence gulf as well as overcome emotions and threat perceptions.

For the US-Iran dialogue to succeed, Israel must become convinced that the outcome will serve its best interest as well. Tehran rightly accuses Israel of placing obstacles on the road to normalization of US-Iran relations. However, the Islamic Republic must assume the largest share of the responsibility for this Israeli stringency. The fact is the Islamic regime has ferociously propagated an anti-Israeli hysteria, making Israeli citizens fearful of Iran as an existential threat. Even if this fear is not fully justified, perception is reality in international relations.

Equally unhelpful has been the Israeli opposition to a US-Iran dialogue, support for US sanctions, and threats to use force against Iran's nuclear targets. The one gain the Israelis

have made from such stands is increased anti-Israeli feelings among the Iranians. It has also led to the growing power of Islamic radicals who now control the executive branch. Israelis must realize that the current anti-Israeli wave is also the final wave, but that this group intends to use Israel as a scapegoat to consolidate power. It is no wonder that Dr. Ahmadinejad should want to "wipe off Israel from the map" or declare the Holocaust a "myth."

There is only one way the Israelis can change the Iranian political environment in their favor: to encourage and support a US-Iran comprehensive dialogue. The fact is a normalization of US-Iran relations will inevitably lead to a normalization of Iran-Israeli conflict, transforming the relation to one akin to, say, Israeli-Saudi Arabia difficulties. As former US Ambassador to Israel, Thomas Pickering, told me in an interview,"when I talked about the issue [of US-Iran relations] with people like Yitzhak Rabin, he would always tell me that the United States has to find a way to develop closer relationships with Iran."[iii]

Diplomacy must succeed if a US-Iran confrontation is to be avoided over the nuclear matter. However, unless Tehran is convinced that the US is not an existential threat, diplomacy will not succeed, and a US presence in Iran will be impossible. Moving from regime change toward regime reform would help reduce Tehran's threat perception, making it amenable to nuclear concessions. Removing restrictions on the US NGOs to establish offices in Iran, and lifting sanctions on certain trades and investments would help with confidence-building. As experience has shown, trade melts dictators while sanctions fatten them.

The two governments must also encourage Track II diplomacy by NGO activists, academics, community leaders, and business executives as a complement to the state-to-state negotiations. Political dissidents and human rights activists and organizations who denounce violence, revolution and regime change must be encouraged to participate in such informal dialogues. What is more, the pro-normalization forces must be engaged, and they need as much boosting as pro-democracy forces. They are found inside and outside the regime, and in the country and beyond. Most Iranians are for a resumption of diplomatic ties with the US.

Iranian-Americans must also be utilized as a natural bridge that they are between the two countries. Thus far the Bush administration has not used its potential rightly, nor has it offered to help in a constructive manner. The responsibility for this state of affairs rests squarely on the community. An absolute majority has remained indifferent to the US-Iran tensions in the last two decades, and a few even promoted confrontations as a means toward their goal to overthrow the Islamic regime or take revenge from a revolution that toppled them. Sadly, these groups included prominent pro-democracy and human rights activists.

What is more, many in the politically active part of the community made every effort to discredit a minority that tried to improve understanding and dialogue between the two nations. They argued that a re-establishment of diplomatic ties between the US and Iran will benefit the regime and hurt efforts toward democracy and human rights in Iran! The experience has proven them wrong and they will be proven wrong in the future as well. The good news is that many now realize the problem and are expressing serious concerns about a possible US-Iran

war. A few are even promoting a misconceived anti-war movement.

To make use of this community in a better way, the Bush administration must make an attempt to better understand its fears and motivations. A great number of Iranian-Americans dislike the Islamic regime, but they would also hate to see Iran become another Iraq or Cuba. Except for a small minority, they do not support military strikes against Iran and are against destabilization of the country. They also dislike another revolution in Iran, particularly when an attractive leadership does not exist, and because they have no hope that a "solidarity model" of regime change can be peacefully implemented. Moreover, the majority supports normalization of relations.

The best thing the new Iran policy can do is to help make elections in Iran free and fair. The US can legitimately put pressure on the regime for this universal demand, and it will have the unconditional support of the Iranian people, international organizations like the UN, human rights organizations, and democracies throughout the world. However, because the Iranian electorate is divided, the call for free elections must also include a call for political coalition. This can help alleviate the fear of political revenge and facilitate elite political circulation. As it stands, those who lose power in Iran often also lose life and property.

A sizeable portion of any US funding for empowering Iranian civil society and promoting democracy must be channeled through US academic institutions for educational purposes focused on promoting a new political culture. In all cases, the criteria must include full transparency and accountability. As is, the proposed funding gives the Islamic Republic a reason to label Iranian students and academics in the US, as well as the political opposition and the NGOs, as spies. Covert funding can only exacerbate the situation for them and others whom are not even among the recipients.

Covert funding would also be justifiably considered an intervention in Iran's internal affairs, bringing back the memory of the US/UK 1953 coup against the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, the late Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh. To effectively use resources without such misunderstandings, funds should not go to individuals and institutions that oppose normalization of relations between the two nations or are bent to destroy the regime in Tehran by violent means. Financing such individuals and organizations puts the regime-reform project in jeopardy and, more importantly, is not welcomed by the Iranian people.

Finally, the US must handle Iran with care as it confronts its ideological and strategic challenges. A "hard edged policy" that destabilizes Iran may not serve US interests in a volatile and strategic Middle East. It is not in Iran's interest to remain autocratic and inimical to the US. Tehran must accept reforming the theocracy and respond to the strategic concerns of the US. The US must help facilitate Iran's democratic development and international integration. The two nations must become strategic and equal partners on the basis of their common interests. The alternative is a costly confrontation and the emergence of national fascism in Iran.

[i] http://www.american-iranian.org/pubs/articles/Collective%20Framework-01-26-06.pdf

http://www.american-iranian.org/pubs/articles/IranandAmericanTrappingDiplomacy11-17-05.pdf

http://www.american-iranian.org/pubs/articles/WarandOurResponsibility11-04-05.pdf

[ii]http://www.american-iranian.org/pubs/articles/Collective%20Framework-01-26-06.pdf

[iii]http://www.american-iranian.org/pubs/aicinsight/insightsept04.pdf

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I Foresaw it All: The Amazing Life and Oeuvre of Olympe de Gouges

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

Marie Gouze was seventeen years of age when she was married to the son of an inn-keeper. To make Marie a wife already as a teenager and to see her become a mother shortly thereafter can hardly have been scandalous in the French province of Montabaur in 1765. After all, the girl was at the right age and the husband appeared to be a good catch. However, when deciding whether to get married, financial reasons were not the bride's primary motivation, as Marie testified later on. She felt "needlessly sacrificed" to a man, to whom she nourished no feelings and who, turned out to be neither rich nor well-born to boot. And even though Marie, as the typical bourgeois daughter, might have been enthused by the sublime ideas of the Enlightenment with regards to marriage – the promise of marriage under the banner of love – she drew far less romantic conclusions from the disappointment with her husband: "Marriage is the grave for trust and love." Until her death she was true to this insight. Her ill-fated union did not last very long. It was only after one year that her husband died. Finally Marie could start her own life.

In 1770, she moves to Paris with her son Pierre and changes name and social rank. From now on she calls herself Olympe de Gouges and is admired as one of the "most beautiful women of Paris" (according to the judgment of a contemporary). But nature did not only bless her with beauty. Olympe is also a woman with *esprit* and she knows how to behave in the salons of the high society. Allegedly, she was even received in the domicile of Prince Phillipe, a cousin of Louis XVI. Since she, as a widow from the petty bourgeoisie, did not have a command of vast rights, she is one of the privileged women. Like any other social relationships, the relationship between the sexes during the Ancien Regime was subject to a fixed hierarchy. The tradition of power interests within the aristocracy decided on matrimony, and the rules in the gallant society demanded to place the lady according the rank of the bridegroom. Becoming a mistress was a rare occasion for a bourgeois woman.

Still, Olympe de Gouges, who could not claim anything with respect to the name and heritage of her father, was conscious of her noble origins, being "the daughter … of a laurelled head". It was not the butcher Pierre Gouze, but rather Jean Jacques Le Franc (1709-1784), the Marquis de Pompignan, chief justice of Montauban, who was her real father. This rich nobleman was considered a highly educated gentleman. His translation of Aeschylus into French found acclaim in Paris. He also wrote tragedies himself and in 1760 the Academie Francaise admitted him as a member. He had loved Olympe's mother already in his childhood, and he had used his social standing for a scheme, which was completely normal for an 18th century nobleman. He simply sent the butcher Gouze, who was married to the Marquis' mistress-a marriage that was suited to Gouze's station- on a trip. Therefore, Marie Olympe was

born on May 7, 1748 as the *legal* daughter to the butcher Pierre Gouze ‘ yet as the *biological* daughter to the Marquis. The capricious fate that placed her from the beginning outside the established order would continue to steer her later life between the fronts of society.

A decade after her arrival in Paris, Olympe de Gouges had transformed from *femme galante* to *femme de lettre*, and it would be the Marquise de Montesson (the morganatic wife of the old Duke of Orleans) to introduce the theater aficionado and writer to the *Comédie Française*. Hence, in 1784, in the year of her father’s death, Olympe took up the intellectual legacy of the Marquis de Pompignan. Throughout her life she will write forty dramas, novels, smaller literary treatises and political pamphlets. It was already in 1785 that the *Comédie Française* accepts her political drama “Zamor and Mirza”. Elated, but also impatient, the ambitious playwright pushes the actors in the following weeks. She wants to see her play on stage very soon. An altercation, angry letters are being exchanged and soon the production is taken off the repertoire completely. However, for the determined Olympe the quarrel is not over. She asks for an audience with the Duke of Duras, who is in charge of the theater, yet, her request is denied. She is even threatened with Bastille prison. It is not only the temperament of this tough woman fighting for her recognition as a writer that causes rejection. The whole perspective of the drama is not welcome, since in “Zamor and Mirza” Olympe de Gouges opposes “The Enslavement of the Blacks”. She will have to fight for another four years until her drama can finally premiere under exactly this title at the Théâtre de la Nation on December 28, 1789, in the year of the revolution. However, it is quickly discontinued, since supporters of colonialism and abolitionists started fist fights during the premiere. When the national assembly is voting on a decree that orders to abolish slavery in France, yet not in the colonies, Olympe de Gouges— now well-known as political publicist- is outraged about such a violation of human rights: “There (in the colonies) the planters exercise a despotic reign over people, whose fathers and brothers they are. They scrutinize their origins to the smallest shades of color and ignore human rights.”

In 1788 she dedicates the first volumes of her literary works to Prince Phillipe, she admires his political outlook until he votes for the King’s (his cousin) death in 1792. “Oh Bourbons! May your dynasty be cursed for eternity”, she writes to Phillipe, “may the vengeance of God and the people make you want to destroy each other.”

Olympe never held back her political views. Still, she knew how to veil her gallant life with a mysterious air, as her elevated rank demanded. This led her biographers to speculate about the origins of her considerable wealth. What a scandal: Olympe de Gouge, the women’s rights activist ‘ first a lady of pleasure, then a Bluestocking! How wonderfully did this enervating perpetually repeated interpretation fit the image that until the twentieth century people had of an advocate for the human rights for women. This went along perfectly with the bourgeois moral double standard, which had burdened gender relationships since the revolution. Olympe de Gouges is convinced that it would not be the affirmation of a hypocritical morality but rather the equality in rights that would promote decency and morality in human interaction: “Whoever demonizes this wholesome philosophy shall refrain from scolding the primitive morals.”

The virtue of being a rational, thinking individual, with a compassionate soul and ethical conscience ‘ that alone defines a human being. Alone these qualities bestow him or her with an exclusive value, regardless of gender or rank in society. These ideas of enlightenment, based on natural justice, eventually merging with the political demand for liberty and equality of all mankind shaped all thought of those literary and artists’ circles, which Olympe des Gouges had been befriending since 1780.

One of her closest friends is the writer Louis Sébastian Mercier (1740-1814). She feels akin to him, can philosophize about everything with him: not only about literature and politics, but also about Lavater’s physiognomy, Mesmer’s animal-like magnetism, about the meaning of being and life after death. To her it is completely obvious that all nature is spiritual, since, like Mercier, she has turned to the teachings of the transmigration of souls. Her apartment is teeming with dogs, cats, little monkeys and all sorts of birds that are named after honorable historical personalities and with which she holds conversations in a philosophical manner.

After a night at the theater or the opera, people would meet in the gardens, at the cafes, perhaps also at the gambling tables of the Palais Royal (owned by the Duke of Orléans who likes being called Philippe Egalité up there), engage in conversations, applaud agitators and one might give a radical speech every now and then. Freedom of thought is routine, and “mind has no sex whatsoever”. Already a century before, in 1673, the Cartesian François Poulain de la Barre had proclaimed this enlightened thought in his treatise “The equality of both sexes”. Yet, the revolutionaries will do away thoroughly with the old times, in which the *femme savante* held sophisticated conversations with erudite men on art and the nature of the human being. The revolutionaries consider the salon a remnant of aristocratic vices and the learned woman as a downright aberrant being. “A woman”, argues the hero of the revolution, Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his *Emile,* “that is an aesthete, is a misfortune to her husband, her children, her friends, her servants, to the whole world. In the sublime dignity of her mind she despises all female obligations.…”

Olympe de Gouges, however, asserts that an exaggerated learnedness made the man deviate from his natural fate. Everywhere in nature both sexes would be interacting in “harmonious unanimity”. It is not like that with the human being. “Bizarre, blind, presumptuous and disfigured by his science, the man regresses into utmost ignorance in this age of Enlightenment and Reason and believes to be able to despotically dispose of one sex, which is in full command of all intellectual abilities.”

When, on September 3, 1791, the national assembly proclaims the revised version of the constitution, she is in “gloomy thoughts”: There is no mention whatsoever of the legal equality of men and women. Had the declaration of human rights on August 27, 1789 been nothing else than a declaration of *man rights?* “Tell me”, Olympe de Gouges now addresses the women, “what are the advantages of the Revolution for you? It will bring an even deeper contempt, an even more blatant disesteem towards all of you. During the times of corruption (the Ancien Régime) you were at least in charge of the weaknesses of men. Since this empire lies in ruins now ‘ what is left for you?”

In 1791, only a few days after the proclamation of the new constitution, Olympe de Gouges posted the work that established her fame on the walls of Paris: her "Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen". In this text she does not describe a female antagonist. "This declaration", the preamble states, "may constantly be present to all members of the social body and remind them of their rights and their duties; in order that the acts of women's and men's power may be judged constantly against the aim of all political institutions, and respected accordingly."

Her Declaration of the Rights of Women is an amendment to the 1789 Declaration of (Hu-)man Rights and it also contains 17 items that emphasize nation, as a "joining together of man and woman". She designed a particular form for a "social contract between man and woman". She focuses her attention on the security of the children. Even illegitimate children should not be deprived of the right to a father, his name and his inheritance any more. "The wealthy, childless Epicurean definitely considers it comfortable to enlarge his poorer neighbor's family. However, if there is a law that authorizes a poor man's wife to force the rich to acknowledge his children, the bonds of society will quickly be strengthened and morals will improve." Did Olympe have her own parentage in mind? Her childhood memories might still have been a painful memory.

In terms of children, assets or education, Olympe's concern is that justice and law should strive for the improvement of human relations. And just how serious she is about the legal equality of the sexes is shown clearly in Article 10 of her Declaration of the Rights of Women, stating the case for freedom of speech: "The woman has the right to ascend the scaffold, equally she should be granted the right to step up to the lectern." To give speeches at public events did not come natural to her; yet, Olympe de Gouges was never too shy to disseminate her opinion in fliers, posters, in letters and pamphlets.

At the outset of the revolution, still convinced that the "voice of a fair and sentimental woman" would be heard, she turns to the King with petitions and has brochures distributed among representatives and the people. She depletes her assets for the printing costs and when in May, 1789 the Estates-General convene, she has already moved into an apartment on the Boulevard du Roi in Versailles in order to follow the debates closely. She submits her own proposals for how poverty among the people could be alleviated and will notice soon: "The proposals of a woman are met only with contempt; nevertheless it gives me gratification to see when they are implemented."

She does not have the tone of voice of ideological invulnerability when propagating the overthrow of society. She is disgusted by Robespierre who counts down his revolutionary virtues in speeches lasting for hours. "You, altruistic; you, calm and wise; you, friend of your fellow citizens, friend of peace and order? Remember the maxim: When a villain does good, he will only cause greater havoc." Olympe de Gouges is battling for a change in the *behavior* of humans, and at the same time defends old-fashioned and timeless values: Decency, charity, honor, and every single one of her political publications is an appeal to the sanity of the heart. With her vision of an *improvable* world she fights against the stream of the utopian visions of

the *new* world. It is not beyond the human cultural history, in the nondescript wilderness of Rousseau, where she is in search of the earthly paradise. Olympe de Gouges remains *femmes galante* and *femme savante* and is reminiscent of "happy, mythical times" in the past, is also reminiscent of minstrels, wisdom and noble knights who "knew how to defend their motherland and mistress on equal terms".

This dream of an enlightened humanity, stemming from an adamantly idealistically exalted past, sharpened Olympe's perspective on the events in the present, and she has a sense of foreboding like Cassandra had. The massacres of September 1792 are only a prelude to the terror to come. It is on a heap of 1400 massacred courtiers, officers, aristocratic gentlemen, women and children on September 21, 1792 that marks the Year 1 of of the one and indivisible Republic. Since the storming of the Tuileries on August 10, which claimed the lives of thousands of people, the Royal family has been in protective custody at the Temple, the former seat of the congregation of the Templars. The population is eager to see the trial against the King.

"You want to murder Louis the Last in order to avoid that he will be sentenced lawfully" one poster says, put up in the streets of Paris on November 5, addressing Robespierre and that is signed with "Polyme". But it is not only the King, it is all political opponents, on whose lives the Incorruptible plans his attempts, as Olympe predicts Robespierre's reign of terror: "You want to pave your way through heaps of corpses and climb up to the highest power on stairs made from murder and bloodshed."

At the end of November, Robespierre demands that Louis ought to perish. Did not Louis Capet prove with his attempt to flee in July 1791 that he had disgracefully betrayed the motherland? Did this tyrant not dehumanize himself with his crimes and placed himself outside natural justice? It is a truly cogent and yet quite a paranoid logic, trying to provoke cheap cravings for revenge in order to legitimize political murders. In order to kill the king the whole constitution, which guarantees the integrity of the individual, had to be abrogated. In order to stop the monstrosity, Olympe de Gouges risks her own head with her next step. She offers her services as a defense counsel to the Convent and pleas for mercy for his life. Indeed, his deeds are to be condemned, but it is not sufficient to "have a King's head roll in order to kill him; he will be alive for a long time after his death; but he is really dead when he survives his fall." King Luis XVI. can only become the citizen Louis Capet by putting him on equal footing with his compatriots.

Olympe Gouges counters blind instincts with the political clarity of reason. Reason to her means to recognize the spiritual eminence of the human and the limits of his power: The human is not master over life and death. Therefore, she in principle opposes the death penalty. Even the head of the Jacobin despots should remain "untouched". Until the very end, Olympe hopes for a "philosophical revolution, worthy of the sacred principles of mankind".

In her understanding revolution does not mean a political act of violence but rather a change in consciousness. This, however, as she writes to Queen Marie Antoinette to whom she had

dedicated the ” Declaration of the Rights of Women”, will only occur in the future, “when all women will be consumed by their deplorable fate and become aware of their rights in this society.”

Since March 29, 1793 a communiqué has been threatening to inflict the death penalty on those advocating another political system than the one and indivisible Republic ‘ and there is no possibility of appeal against the Revolutionary Tribunal that has been in power since March 10. On June 2, 1793, the Jacobins stage a coup by arresting their last political opponents, the Gironde. Only a short time later the plebiscite is introduced, which lays the foundation to a democratic constitution since the resistance against the Jacobin hegemony had grown stronger in the provinces. In this volatile situation Olympe de Gouge calls for the sovereignty of the people in her essay “The Three Urns, Or The Health Of The Country, By An Aerial Voyager”. She demands that there should be a plebiscite on a choice of three potential forms of government: the one, indivisible Republic, a federalist government or a constitutional monarchy.

“I foresaw it all, I know that my death is inevitable” she already wrote on June 4 in her “Political Testament”. On November 3 she was beheaded under the guillotine. She is taunted by the *Feuille du Salut Public* only a few days after her execution: “She wanted to be a statesman,” and “Apparently the law punished her for forgetting what is becoming for her sex.” Her confusion, according to the paper, started with her “incoherent rambling …” Together with her printer, Olympe had put up her poster “The Three Urns” on the walls of the houses of Paris herself. It was a young woman who informed the Gendarmerie.

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Translation by Kai Artur Diers

Jean Jaurès: A Portrait

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

As he ate with friends at a Paris café on the evening of July 31, 1914, Jean Jaurès was shot and killed. One day later, Germany declared war on Russia and the French government ordered a massive military mobilization. Three days later, Germany declared war on France. On the fourth day, the day that Germany invaded neutral Belgium and Great Britain declared war on Germany, the head of France's trade union confederation rose at Jaurès's funeral to say:

Friend Jaurès! You, the apostle of peace, of international harmony, depart at the hour when the most terrible epic of war that has ever bloodied Europe commences before a dismayed world. You were a victim of your ardent love for humanity. Your eyes will not see the red glow of the flames, the hideous jumble of corpses that the bullets have laid to rest on the ground.

Jaurès had worked tirelessly against the impending war, and his assassination marked the last moment at which hope for peace seemed possible. The First World War may have obliterated the nineteenth century's hopes of endless and inevitable progress, but this is not the only kind of hope. If we reexamine the ideas Jaurès sought to realize through his scholarship and political involvement, we can retrace the structure of his hope, and we might find that his kind of hope is appropriate to our times.

Auguste-Marie-Joseph-Jean Jaurès was born to a modest bourgeois family on September 3, 1859, in the city of Castres. Jaurès's hometown was a small provincial center of trade and manufacturing set in a rural agricultural region where heavy industry had only recently arrived. As a youth, Jaurès was a bright and determined student. He entered the Ecole Normale in 1879, graduating third in his class in 1881.

After four years of teaching philosophy at a *lycée* in Albi and then at the University of Toulouse, Jaurès plunged into politics. He was the youngest member of Parliament when he took his seat after the 1885 elections as a delegate for the region around Castres, Albi, and Toulouse. French parliamentary politics in the 1880s was fundamentally a conflict between republican advocates of rationalism and constitutional democracy and reactionaries nostalgic for monarchy and protective of Church prerogatives. Schooled in philosophy but ignorant of the inordinate complexity of French factional politics, unsure of anything but his commitment to the Republic and to the Rights of Man, Jaurès took a seat with the delegates of the largest republican faction, voted loyally with them, and attracted little attention to himself.

Seventy years after Jaurès entered Parliament, Ignazio Silone wrote about the "choice of comrades" that precedes political ideology, a choice that is "emotional, beyond logic" and that is only later subjected to rational examination. Jaurès made his choice of comrades during his first term in office. He quickly became impatient with the political caution and moral hollowness of the centrist republican politicians. There were a half-dozen socialists on the left

fringe of Parliament, but Jaurès found them doctrinaire and simplistic. Exploring the district he represented, however, he met and talked with members of the miners' and glass-makers' unions. He traveled, asked questions, read, observed, and soon found himself drawn toward the labor movement. In 1886, he spoke at the congress of the miners' federation. In 1887, he led a parliamentary fight for safety protections in the mines, and worked-without much success-to introduce pensions, accident and sickness insurance, and other social welfare measures that would benefit his working-class constituents.

When Jaurès lost his Parliamentary seat in 1889, he returned to Toulouse as a confirmed ally of labor. Alongside his involvement with local unions, he returned to teaching philosophy; he also served on the Toulouse city council, composed frequent articles for a journal of republican thought, and wrote the two theses-one in French and one in Latin-that would qualify him for a doctorate from the Sorbonne. His decision to take the side of the labor movement had consequences, and he now began to think them through. The philosophers of the Enlightenment and the authors of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen had convinced him that politics must be founded on the dignity and freedom of the individual person, of every individual person. He was a universalist, a humanist, a republican. He had taught his students at Albi that Immanuel Kant was "right to make disinterestedness the precondition of morality and to not subordinate man to a material and egoistic end like interest, one's own happiness, or even a certain particular ideal of perfection." Organized workers, however, spoke the language of conflict, disruption, and solidarity based on common experiences, and they increasingly looked beyond their immediate fights over wages and working conditions toward a vision of total social transformation, a vision of a cooperative and collective society they variously called "communism" or "socialism". This was Jaurès's puzzle: How could he reconcile universal norms and self-interested struggles, humanism and conflict, the Republic and class solidarity? How could he be both a liberal and a socialist?

All of Jaurès's work from this point on was an effort to comprehend this tangle of commitments. His first doctoral thesis sought to reconcile the conceptual underpinnings of Kantian idealist liberalism and Marxist materialist socialism. He argued that the universe was constituted as an ongoing struggle to realize the unity of consciousness and matter. Thus, he wrote, the "battle" to enact the moral ideal of harmony and equality "is never won, and is never lost." In his second thesis, he traced the roots of German socialism back through Hegel to Fichte, Kant, and Luther, arguing that the French Revolution's notion of absolute individual liberty needed to be synthesized with the dialectical German idea that "collectivism" could be a means to individual freedom.

Jaurès was elected to Parliament again in 1893 in the wake of a massive ten-week miners' strike in Carmaux, just north of Albi, which galvanized the local labor movement. Jaurès had given public support and behind-the-scenes advice to the strikers, and this time he ran for office as a labor tribune and as a socialist. Jaurès had confidence and fervor now. His oratorical fire and patient pursuit of socialist unity made him a natural leader among the fractious socialists swept into office that year.

Jaurès's raw mixture of liberal and socialist ideas received its first major test five years later. In the fall of 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the only Jew on the French Army's General Staff, was arrested for espionage. He was quickly convicted and sentenced to exile in a military trial involving forged evidence, secret evidence, and other irregularities. Few people paid much attention, but after the novelist Emile Zola assailed the weak evidence against Dreyfus in his thunderous 1898 pamphlet *J'accuse*, the Dreyfus Affair became the dominant issue of the day. Persuaded of Dreyfus's innocence, Jaurès soon became one of the most ardent and hard-working Dreyfusards, speaking in parliament and writing constantly about the case.

For most French socialists, this controversy over a bourgeois army officer seemed to be only an internal dispute within the ruling class. For Jaurès, who insisted that socialism was "the supreme affirmation of individual right," an economistic understanding of class had to give way to something else, however. Since Dreyfus had been wrongly convicted, Jaurès wrote,

he is no longer either an officer or a bourgeois: by his excess of misfortune, he is stripped of all class character. He is no more than humanity itself, in the most extreme state of misery and despair that can be imagined…What a mockery to still count him among the privileged!

Workers organized not just because they knew their own material interests, Jaurès argued, but because they had gained consciousness of their *rights*. If socialism were to be a movement for rights, for justice, it could not ignore any instance of injustice-even if the victim were a bourgeois army officer. This idea of individual rights may have originated with bourgeois liberalism, Jaurès wrote in his monumental *Histoire Socialiste (1789-1900)*, but it was a living idea, subject to new interpretations. The "molten rush of socialism that flows from the furnace of the [French] Revolution," he insisted, must remain fluid:

We do not claim to freeze human society in the economic and social formulas that prevailed from 1789 to 1795…Too often bourgeois democratic parties limit themselves to collecting some fragments of cooled lava at the foot of the volcano, to gathering a few extinguished cinders around the furnace.

For liberalism to remain a living ideal, it must change form as conditions change, Jaurès wrote. If the labor movement understood itself in terms of the liberal idea of individual rights, it could pick up the standard the bourgeoisie had let fall, and it could infuse its own activities with moral purpose.

Jaurès convinced all but France's most sectarian socialists to come together in defense of Dreyfus. This newfound left unity, however, crumbled quickly. In response to rumors of an impending right-wing coup, a group of centrist and center-left politicians-including the moderate socialist Alexandre Millerand-formed a broad coalition government united by little besides its members' desire to preserve democratic institutions. Socialists who held an orthodox Marxist vision of uncompromising class struggle were furious. However important the existence of the republic might be, they complained, Millerand betrayed the working class when he sat in the cabinet with the same moderate republicans who had, a generation before,

slaughtered the Paris Communards.

Across Europe, socialists fell into bitter debates about the strategic value of electoral politics and parliamentary reform. On the left, orthodox Marxists like Karl Kautsky in Germany and Jules Guesde in France insisted that socialism meant a revolutionary class struggle leading to a total transformation of society sometime in the near future, and that parliamentary politics could only be a tool for bringing that revolution closer. On the right, Eduard Bernstein wrote that "what is usually termed the final goal of socialism is nothing to me, the movement is everything," and argued that socialists should look to the immediate interests of the labor movement as their guide.

Jaurès stepped beyond this dichotomy. The day-to-day struggle for electoral and parliamentary victories was crucial, he insisted, and the new willingness of socialist parties to pursue incremental reforms was a sign of growing strength, not of lost courage. Getting serious about reform, however, need not mean giving up the labor movement's radical spirit. A reformist strategy did not require that socialists "counsel the proletariat to settle on the capitalist earth" and reduce "the collectivist or communist order [to] a remote paradise of which one dreams," Jaurès proclaimed. Rather, the socialist paradise "could be present in [socialists'] very existence, if they had the feeling that each of their acts, each of their thoughts, each of their words correspond to it, echo it, and shape future events." Socialists should not concern themselves with an apocalyptic transformation in the future, but should "live always in a socialist state of grace… working in each minute, in each hour" to bring the socialist ideal more fully into reality. Words like "communism" came to seem, in Jaurès's speeches and writings, more like regulative principles than like institutional expectations. Socialism, for Jaurès, had come to be a politics of radical reform. Voting rights, unions, safeguards on civil liberties, social welfare measures, public and secular education, international law, worker-owned and state-owned firms could all be cobbled together in an ongoing struggle to bring the world closer to the ideal of universal human dignity and solidarity, and that ideal could guide and orient disparate reformist activities. "Class" could be the rubric for organization, "humanity" the ethical commitment.

By 1905, Jaurès had become the acknowledged leader of French socialism, even though his radical reformism was a minority view within the new unified Socialist Party. He was a familiar and warmly admired figure throughout the movement: his solid peasant build, his square-cut beard, the disheveled clothing that suggested his devotion to the work of the movement and his disregard for personal glory, were as well known as his soaring and elaborate oratory. At no time did that oratory reach greater heights than in October 1912, as the Balkans erupted into war and the prospect of a Europe-wide Great War loomed large, when Jaurès took the rostrum at an international conference of socialists in Basel, Switzerland. "In the sound of the church bells that welcomed us, I heard a call to reconciliation," he proclaimed.

It reminded me of the epigraph which Schiller placed at the beginning of his beautiful Song of the Bell: "*Vivos voco, mortuos plango, fulgura frango…Vivos voco…* I call the living to defend life against the monster that appears on the horizon!*Mortuos plango*…I mourn the innumerable

dead laid low in the east, from whom a stench arrives to torment us.*Fulgura frango*…I will smash the thunderbolts of war even as they roil the stormclouds!

Since the French Socialist Party's unification, Jaurès had been concerned above all with preventing war. If workers' class interests could found a politics of universal human rights, he reasoned, perhaps citizens' patriotic feelings could be harnessed to the principle of international solidarity. Jaurès rejected the argument that socialists' commitment to international solidarity meant they had to be anti-patriotic. Patriotism, he argued, need not mean blind nationalism; it could mean a commitment to universalistic liberal and socialist principles, coupled with a realization that these principles could be enacted only within particular states. "The nation, and the nation alone," he wrote, "can enfranchise all the citizens. Only the nation can furnish the means of free development to all." Love for one's own country, then, could mean love for that country's potential to realize the human dream of freedom and equality. Patriotic attachments could serve as an "apprenticeship in collective life and in a broad humanistic sensibility."

Jaurès held great hopes for the educative potential of this cosmopolitan patriotism, but he insisted that in order for those hopes to be realized, republics would need to become more egalitarian, more inclusive, and more deeply democratic. In 1911, he published *L'Armée Nouvelle*, a detailed proposal for a "new army" in which decentralized militias would replace standing armies and in which the officer corps would be opened to working-class candidates. Shorn of its elitist leadership structure and re-shaped to fit a purely defensive military strategy, conscious of itself as an extension of the citizenry rather than as a distinct caste with its own interests, the new army would institutionalize Jaurès's cosmopolitan patriotism.

At the same time that he called on socialists to reconsider the value of patriotism, Jaurès took a bolder anti-war stand than did orthodox Marxists like Guesde. For Guesde and his allies, war was inevitable as long as capitalism remained, and active opposition to war was futile. Jaurès rejected this determinism. Capitalism and imperialism might *tend* to foster war, he argued, but specific wars could be averted through diplomacy or, if need be, through direct action by the labor movement. Thus, Jaurès argued forcefully that in the event of an aggressive war, socialists should call for a general strike. His stand was seen as traitorous radicalism by the Right and as naïve reformism by the Marxists. In the last weeks of his life Jaurès worked feverishly, attending peace conferences, addressing public rallies, and using his significant sway within the center-left governing coalition to push for more strenuous diplomatic efforts. War came anyway.

Failure marked Jaurès's last years. The French Socialist Party achieved unity by marginalizing his conception of radical reform; his cosmopolitan patriotism proved no match for nationalism and militarism; his pacifism inspired his assassination. Many of his contemporaries rejected his liberal socialism because they found it insufficiently optimistic, out of tune with their certainty that history was on the side of human hopes. After the traumas of the twentieth century, however, we cannot share their teleological confidence. History no longer appears to be on the side of humanity, but human dignity can still be an ethical norm-something we pursue because

it is right, whether or not it is written into history. When he refused to relegate socialism to the status of a future paradise, when he insisted that the ideal of justice be brought into tension with the practical necessities of political mobilization in the present, Jaurès spoke to our situation. Jaurès proposed that hope for human dignity in the modern world depends on whether the liberal idea of individual rights can be linked with the Marxist appreciation for social movements and political conflict, whether the liberal ideal can be extended to encompass a critique of the injustices we experience in day-to-day life, whether “class” can be understood as a mode of solidarity bringing together all people who experience injustice, and whether immediate attachments-whether to fellow workers or to fellow citizens-can become an “apprenticeship” in “a broad humanistic sensibility.” Socialism, as Jaurès understood it, finds a comrade in every person who seeks a world where no human being is treated merely as a means to an end. The battle to realize that world has certainly not been won; Jaurès reminds us that it has not been lost, either.

Anticultural Positions

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

I think, not only in the arts, but also in many other fields, an important change is taking place, now, in our time, in the frame of mind of many persons.

It seems to me that certain values, which had been considered for a long time as very certain and beyond discussion, begin now to appear doubtful, and even quite false to many persons. And that, on the other hand, other values which were neglected, or held in contempt, or even quite unknown, begin to appear of great worth.

I have the impression that a complete liquidation of all the ways of thinking whose sum constituted what has been called humanism and has been fundamental for our culture since the Renaissance, is now taking place, or, at least, going to take place soon.

I think that the increasing knowledge of the thinking of so called primitive peoples, during the past fifty years has contributed a great deal to this change, and especially the acquaintance with works of art made by those peoples, which have much surprised and interested the Occidental public.

It seems to me that many people are beginning to ask themselves if the Occident has not many very important things to learn from these savages. Maybe in many cases their solutions and their ways of doing, which first appeared to us very rough, are more clever than ours. It may be that ours are the rough ones. It may be that refinement, cerebrations, depth of mind are on their side and not on ours.

Personally, I believe very much in the values of savagery. I mean instinct, passion, mood, violence, madness.

Now I must say I don’t mean to say that the Occident lacks savage values.

Even so, I think that the values held up by our culture do not correspond to the real frame of mind of the Occident – I think that the culture of the Occident is a coat which doesn’t fit him, which, in any case, doesn’t fit him anymore. I think this culture is very much like a dead language, without anything in common with the language spoken in the street. This culture drifts further and further from daily life. It is confined to certain small and dead circles as a culture of mandarins- it no longer has real and living roots.

For myself, I aim for an art which would be an immediate connection with daily life, an art which would start from daily life, and which would be a very direct and very sincere expression of our real life and our real moods.

I am going to enumerate several points concerning the Occidental culture with which I don't agree.

1

ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF Western culture is the belief that the nature of man is very different from the nature of other beings of the world. Custom has it that man cannot be identified, or compared in the least, with elements such as wind, trees, rivers- except humorously, of for poetic rhetorical figures. The western man has, at least, a great contempt for trees and rivers.

On the contrary, the so called primitive man loves and admires trees and rivers. He has a great pleasure to be like them.

The primitive man believes the blossoming of the man is to be found by developing what, in the man, is like trees and rivers, and becoming something as a super-tree, a super-river.

He believes in a real similitude between man and trees and rivers. He has a very strong sense of the continuity of all things, especially between man and the rest of the world. Those primitive societies have surely much more respect than Western man for every being of the world; they have a feeling that man is not at all the owner of the beings but only one of them among the others.

2

MY SECOND POINT OF DISAGREEMENT with Occidental culture is the following one: Western man believes that the things he thinks exist outside exactly in the same way he thinks of them. He is convinced that the shape of the world is the same shape as his reason. He believes very strongly that the basis of his reason is well founded and especially the basis of his logic.

But the primitive man has neither an idea of weakness of reason and logic, nor does he believe in other ways of thinking, that is why he has so much esteem and so much admiration for the states of mind which are called delirium and madness by us. I am convinced art has much to do with madness and aberrations.

I think this disposition of mind is also fairly characteristic of the so-called primitive societies.

3

NOW, THIRD POINT: I want to talk about the great respect Occidental culture has for elaborated ideas. I don't regard elaborated ideas as the best part of human function. I think ideas are rather a weakened rung in the ladder of mental function, something like a landing where the mental processes become impoverished, like an outside crust caused by cooling.

Ideas are like steam condensed into water by the conflict with the evil of reason and logic.

I don’t think the greatest value of mental functioning is to be found at this landing of ideas and it is not at this landing that they interest me. I aim rather to capture the thought at a point of its development prior to this landing of elaborated ideas.

The whole art, the whole literature and the whole philosophy of the Occident rests on the landing of elaborated ideas. But my own art, and my own philosophy, lean entirely on stages more underground. I always try to catch the mental process at a deeper point of its roots, where, I am sure, the sap is much richer.

4

FOURTH: OCCIDENTAL CULTURE IS VERY FOND of analysis. I have no taste for analysis and no confidence in it. One thinks, everything can be known by way of dismantling it or dissecting it into all its parts, and studying separately each of these parts.

My own feeling is quite different. I am more disposed on the contrary to always recompose things. As soon as an object has only been cut in two parts, I have the impression it is lost for my study. I am further removed from this object instead of being nearer to it.

I have a very strong feeling that the sum of the parts does not equal the whole.

My inclination leads me, when I want to see something really well, to regard it with its surrounding whole. If I want to know this glass on the table, I don’t look straight at this glass; I look at the middle of the room, trying to include in my glance as many objects as possible.

If there is a tree in the country, I don’t bring it into my laboratory to look at it under my microscope. I think the wind which flows through its leaves is necessary for the knowledge of the tree and cannot be separated from it, as well as the birds which are in the branches, and even the song of these birds. My turn of mind is to always join the tree with more things surrounding it.

I have been on this point for a long time, because I think this turn of mind is an important aspect of my art.

5

THE FIFTH POINT IS THAT OUR CULTURE is based on an enormous confidence in the language – especially the written language – and on a belief in its ability to translate and elaborate thought. That appears to me to be a misapprehension. I have the impression that language is a very rough stenography, a system of algebraic signs that are very rudimentary, which impairs thought instead of helping it. Speech is more concrete, animated by the sound of the voice, intonations, a cough, and even making a face and mimicry, and it seems to me more effective. Written language seems to me to be a bad instrument. As an instrument of

expression, it seems to deliver only a dead remnant of thought, more or less as clinkers from the fire. As an instrument of elaboration it overloads thought and falsifies it.

I believe (and here I am in accord with the so called primitive civilizations) that painting is more concrete than written words and is a much richer instrument than written words for the expression and elaboration of thought.

What is interesting about thought, is not the instant of transformation into formal ideas, but the moments preceding that.

My painting can be regarded as a tentative language fitted for these areas of thought.

6

I NOW COME TO MY SIXTH AND LAST POINT, which deals with the notion of beauty adopted by Occidental culture.

I want to begin by telling you how my own conception differs from the usual one.

The usual conception states that there are beautiful objects and ugly objects, beautiful persons and ugly persons, beautiful places and ugly places, and so forth.

Not I. I believe beauty is nowhere. I consider the usual notion of beauty to be completely false – I refuse absolutely to assent to this idea, that there are ugly persons and ugly objects. This idea is stiffing and revolting to me.

I think the Greeks are the ones who were first to purport this invention – that certain objects are more beautiful than others.

The so-called savage peoples do not believe in that conception at all and they do not understand when you speak to them of beauty.

This is the reason one calls them savage. The western man gives the name of savage to one who does not understand that beautiful things and ugly things exist and who does not care for that at all.

It is strange that for centuries and centuries, and now more than ever, the men of the Occident dispute which things are beautiful and which are ugly. All are certain that beauty exists without doubt, but one cannot find two who agree about the objects which are so endowed. And from one century to the next it changes. In each century Occidental culture declares beautiful what it declared ugly in the preceding one.

The rationalization of that is that beauty exists, but it is hidden from view for many people. To perceive beauty requires a certain special sense, and most people do not have this sense.

One believes that it is also possible to develop this sense, by doing exercises, and even to make

it appear in persons who are not gifted with this sense. There are schools for that.

The teacher in these schools states to his pupils that there is without doubt a beauty of things, but he has to add that people dispute which things are endowed with that, and that people have so far never succeeded in establishing it firmly. He invites his pupils to examine the question in their turn and so, from generation to generation, the dispute continues.

This idea of beauty is, however, one of the things our culture prizes most and it is customary to consider this belief in beauty and the respect for this beauty as the ultimate justification of Western civilization. The principle of civilization itself is involved with this notion of beauty.

I find this idea of beauty a meager and not very ingenious invention, and especially not very encouraging for man. It is distressing to think about people being deprived of beauty because they are too corpulent or too old. I find even this idea – that the world we live in is made up of ninety percent ugly things and ugly places, while things and places endowed with beauty are very rare and very difficult to meet – I must say, I find that idea not very exciting. It seems to me that the Occident will not suffer a great loss if it loses this idea. On the contrary, if it becomes aware that there is no ugly object nor ugly person in this world and that beauty does not exist anywhere, but that any object is able to become fascinating and illuminating, it will have made a great stride. I think such an idea will enrich life more than the common idea of beauty.

And now what happens with art? Art has been considered, since the Greeks, to have as its goal the creation of beautiful lines and beautiful color harmonies. If one abolishes this notion what becomes of art?

I am going to tell you. Art, then, returns to its real function, which is much more significant than creating shapes and colors agreeable for the so-called pleasure of the eyes.

I do not find this function, assembling colors in pleasing arrangements, very noble. If painting was only that, I should not lose one hour of my time to this activity.

Art addresses itself to the mind, and not to the eyes. It has always been considered in this way by primitive peoples, and they are right. Art is a language, an instrument of knowledge, an instrument of expression.

I think this enthusiasm for the language of words, which I mentioned before, has been the reason our culture started to regard painting as a rough, rudimentary, and even contemptible language, good only for illiterate people. From that, culture invented, as a rationalization for art, this myth of plastic beauty, which in my opinion, is an impostor.

I just said, and I repeat now, painting is, in my opinion, a language much richer than that of words. So it is quite unclear to look for rationalizations in art.

Painting is a language much more immediate and, at the same time, much more charged with

meaning. Painting operates through signs which are not abstract and incorporeal like words. The signs of painting are much closer to the objects themselves. Further, painting manipulates materials which are themselves living substances. That is why painting allows one to go much further than words do in approaching things and conjuring them.

Painting can also – and this is very remarkable – conjure things, which are not isolated, but linked to all that surrounds them; a great many things simultaneously.

In addition, painting is much more immediate and much more direct than language of words; much closer to the cry, or to the dance. That is why painting is a way of expressing our inner voices much more effectively than words.

I just said painting allows, especially much better than words, one to express the various stages of thought, including the deeper levels, the underground stages of mental processes.

Painting has a double advantage over the language of words. First, painting conjures objects with greater strength and comes much closer to them. Second, painting offers to the inner dance of the painter's mind a larger door to the outside. These two qualities of painting make it an extraordinary instrument of thought, or if you will, an extraordinary instrument of clairvoyance, and also an extraordinary instrument to exteriorize this clairvoyance and to permit us to get it ourselves along with the painter.

Painting now can illuminate the world with wonderful discoveries, can endow man with new myths and new mystics, and reveal, in infinite number, unsuspected aspects of things, and new values not yet perceived.

Here is, I think, for artists, a much more worthy job than creating assemblages of shapes and colors pleasing for the eyes.

**Lecture given by Jean Dubuffet at the "Arts Club of Chicago" Thursday December 20th 1951. This article appears courtesy of Jonas Mekas.*
***Jean Dubuffet** (1901-1985) was one of the most important French painters and sculptors of the Twentieth Century.*

Ideas whose time has come: A Conversation with Iranian philosopher Ramin Jahanbegloo

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Ramin Jahanbegloo, one of Iran's preeminent intellectual figures, is currently behind bars in Tehran's notorious Evin prison, where he has been held in solitary confinement since April 27th, 2006, with no formal charges brought against him. Among the hundreds of scholars across the globe who have signed an Open Letter to Iran's president demanding Ramin's immediate release are Kwame Anthony Appiah, Zygmunt Bauman, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Noam Chomsky, J.M. Coetzee, Juan Cole, Shirin Ebadi, Umberto Eco, Jürgen Habermas, Leszek Kolakowski, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Martha Nussbaum, Orhan Pamuk, Charles Taylor, Tzvetan Todorov, Immanuel Wallerstein, Cornel West, Howard Zinn, and Slavojiek.

Head of the Department of Contemporary Studies at the Cultural Research Bureau in Tehran, Jahanbegloo's 20 plus books include, in English, Conversations with Isaiah Berlin (1991), the edited collection Iran-Between Tradition and Modernity (2004), and the just-published Talking India: Conversations with Ashis Nandy (2006); in French, a study of Gandhi's political thought, an essay on the philosophy of nonviolence, a book of interviews with George Steiner and one with the Iranian philosopher Daryush Shayegan; and, in Persian, studies of Machiavelli, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Clausewitz, and Tagore, and works on tolerance and difference, democracy and modernity, and the dynamics of Iranian intellectual life.

Ramin received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Sorbonne, was a fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard, taught political philosophy at the University of Toronto, and is the Rajni Kothari Professor of Democracy at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi. He is one of the founders of the journal Goft-o-gu (Dialogue) in Tehran and worked on the magazine Esprit in Paris. In recent years Ramin has brought an endless stream of Indian, European and North American intellectuals to lecture in Iran – among them Fred Dallmayr, Timothy Garton Ash, Agnes Heller, Michael Ignatieff, Adam Michnik, Antonio Negri, Richard Rorty, and the late Paul Ricoeur – effectively acting as a kind of philosophical ambassador between Iran and the outside world.

The following interview was conducted via e-mail in January and February of 2006. It will appear in Danny Postel's Reading Legitimation Crisis in Tehran, forthcoming from Prickly Paradigm Press.

For more on Ramin's fate, seewww.macleans.ca/ramin. For a selection of his writings, seewww.iranproject.info/articles/articles.asp.

Danny Postel: You've talked about a "renaissance of liberalism" taking place in Iran. Can you talk about this "renaissance"? Where does liberalism stand in Iranian intellectual and political life today?

Ramin Jahanbegloo: Sartre starts his essay "The Republic of Silence" in a very provocative manner, saying, "We were never more free than under the German occupation." By this Sartre understands that each gesture had the weight of a commitment during the Vichy period in France. I always repeat this phrase in relation to Iran. It sounds very paradoxical, but 'We have never been more free than under the Islamic Republic'. By this I mean that the day Iran is democratic, Iranian intellectuals will put less effort into struggling for the idea of democracy and for liberal values. In Iran today, the rise of hedonist and consumerist individualism, spurred by the pace of urbanization and instrumental modernization after the 1979 Revolution, was not accompanied by a wave of liberal measures. In the early days of the Revolution liberals were attacked by Islamic as well as leftist groups as dangerous enemies and betrayers of the Revolution. The American hostage crisis sounded the death knell for the project of liberalism in Iran.

But in recent years, with the empowerment of Iranian civil society and the rise of a new generation of post-revolutionary intellectuals, liberal ideas have found a new vibrant life among many intellectuals and students. The ideas and sensibilities that comprise contemporary Iranian liberalism were more or less formulated by intellectuals such as Muhammad Ali Furughi a century ago. Furughi's writings and translations of that period were mainly discussions of the basic norms of constitutionality and pillars of modern thought. For example, in a text called *Huquq-e Asasi Ya'ni Adab-e Mashrutiyat*, published in Tehran in 1907, he wrote:

The government has two powers: first, the making of laws, and second, the execution of laws. If the powers of legislation and execution remain in the hands of a single person or a single group, the conduct of government will result in despotism.… Therefore, government is constitutional only when it has separated these two powers from each other and invested them in two separate groups.

The idea of separation of powers is one of the key concepts of Iranian liberalism today. For all those who support the idea of a referendum on and reform of the Iranian Constitution, the concept of "separation of powers," and not just "separation of factions" (as we have today in Iran), is essential.

But there is more to this, because Iranian liberalism is perceived by its supporters in Iran today as a more critical project than it was in Furughi's time. For the generation of intellectuals and politicians in the 1920s and 1930s like Furughi, Taghizadeh, Jamalzadeh and others, liberalism was a technique of progress, something to be activated as a universally executable program, irrespective of the local contours of culture. They regarded liberalism as a system of protocols that, when enacted by policy-makers, ensured the creation of institutions that enshrined the rule of law, and generated a rationally organized and governed public life. But the species of liberalism which has taken hold in Iran today, though it is complementary with the traditional

wave of liberalism in Iran, is distinctive and decidedly original.

Thanks to the recent discovery and translations of the schools of liberal thought dominant in the Anglo-American world, as found in the works of Isaiah Berlin, John Rawls and Karl Popper, and an appreciation of older traditions of liberalism (Kantian, Millian or Lockean), a new trend of liberalism has taken shape among the younger generation of Iranian intellectuals. Iranian liberals today do not deny that the liberties appropriate to a liberal society can be derived from a theory or stated in a system of principles, but their view of a liberal society is related to a view of humanity and truth as inherently unfinished, incomplete, and self-transforming. The principles of Iranian liberalism cannot be grounded in religious truth, because the very idea of free agency, as it is understood today by Iranian liberals, goes against any form of determinism (religious or historical).

In a country like Iran, where the logic of the theological-political is still absolute and where there is a single master-value, the principle goal of liberals is to fight for the idea of value-incommensurability that affirms a pluralism of ethical values and different modes of being. This is to say, the chief task of Iranian liberalism is to establish the proper balance between critical rationality and political decency. The lack of liberalism, symbolized by the rise of unreasonable and violent radicalism in the Iranian Revolution (both on the Left and the Right), committed a huge injury to our commonsense ways of political thought and political action, and led to deep confusion about questions of moral responsibility and collective human solidarity based on individual self-creation.

In more concrete terms, against the revolutionary model of citizenship a new model of citizenship is suggested by Iranian liberals who work as human rights activists, NGO organizers, intellectuals and students – a model defined in terms of the empowerment of Iranian civil society, the expansion of human solidarity, privately pursued projects of self-creation, moral education of the public and the development of the vocabulary of liberal democracy. The insistence of Iranian liberals on the concept of "civil society" as a space which stands in necessary opposition to the state is a check on the arbitrary and authoritarian tendencies in Iranian society. The creation of many voluntary associations, independent journals and reviews, and social and cultural NGOs as a genuinely participatory arena of civic engagement, deliberation, discussion and dialogue has played a crucial role in the promotion of civil society in Iran. As such Iranian civil society remains an important site of dissent and a battleground for Iranian liberals who try to bridge the gap between the formal structures of democratic governance and the cultural, social and economic conditions for the realization of democracy in Iran.

DP: The work of Jürgen Habermas is quite popular in Iran today. Can you talk about his visit to Tehran in 2002 and the effect it has had on the Iranian intellectual scene? Why do you think his ideas have caught on with Iranian students and intellectuals in the way they have?

RJ: Habermas's visit to Iran was a huge success. He was treated in Iran the way Bollywood actors are treated in India. Wherever he went or lectured, he was encircled by hundreds of

young students and curious observers. This same phenomenon happened again when Richard Rorty visited Iran in 2004: around 1,500 souls came to his lecture on “Democracy and Non-Foundationalism” at the House of Artists in Tehran. Habermas’s visit to Iran was an important event in the process of democratic thinking and dialogue among cultures. As Victor Hugo says in *Histoire d’un Crime*: “One can resist the invasion of an army, but one cannot resist the invasion of ideas whose time has come.” The time of philosophical ideas have come in Iran. Today in Iran philosophy represents a window on Western culture, on an open society and on the idea of democracy. This is the reason why Habermas, Rorty, Ricoeur, Berlin and many others are relevant in Iran. Most of the intellectuals in Iran today are struggling against different forms of fundamentalism, fanaticism and orthodoxy. Habermas is considered the inheritor of the Frankfurt School’s intellectual tradition that from the very beginning questioned all orthodoxies and authoritarianisms.

Actually, Habermas is the extension of a tradition represented by figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Fromm and Benjamin who are all very well known in Iran. Today in Iran, those who are interested in Critical Theory focus a great deal on the works of these thinkers and there is a network of readers of the Frankfurt School who are also engaged with Haberms’s work. Of course, Habermas’s work is difficult to understand and it takes years of ongoing study to catch the nuances in both his theoretical and political writings. But the difficulty does not stop Iranian scholars and intellectuals from reading Habermas and translating his work.

I think there is also another reason why Habermas is so popular in Iran. It has mainly to do with the fact that with the failure of Marxist-Leninist movements in Iran and a new interest in Marx and Hegel, a younger generation of intellectuals and scholars are interested in rediscovering these thinkers from a new angle. The popularity of Habermas has also to do with the fact that he sees himself as a nexus in which Marxist thought is reformed, transformed, refined, improved, and brought forth to a new generation. Habermas’s theory of communicative action derives largely from Marx but involves a systematic rethinking of Marx’s ideas. Last, but not least, I think that Habermas’s positive assessment of the Enlightenment and his insistence on its democratic potential finds its true place in the lively debate between the two concepts of tradition and modernity in contemporary Iran. What interests many Iranian intellectuals in Habermas’s philosophy is his notion of “theoretical enlightenment” and the possibility of translating it into practical enlightenment. Habermas’s advocacy of what he calls post-metaphysical thinking is of a great relevance to Iranian intellectuals today.

I think Habermas sheds new light on the problem of democratic agency through a new reading of Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Weber. I teach Hegel in Iran and I have made great use of Habermas’s work in my Hegel scholarship. I think Habermas’s reading of Hegel reinforces his approach to the philosophy of history, but it also consolidates his defense of the Enlightenment project as modernity’s self-understanding. This goes hand in hand with Habermas’s reading of Kant which is based on Kant’s essential insight that there is no fundamental gulf between thought and reality, that thought and reality are intertwined in a primordial relation. Habermas’s discourse theory appropriates the Hegelian theme of “recognition” and takes it a

step further. Mutual recognition, understood as the mutual recognition of each other as free individuals, is a minimal condition in the Hegelian as well as in the Habermasian theme of recognition. Habermas transforms the original theme of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic into a communication-theoretical theme of recognition. I think that Habermas's Kantian view cannot be maintained without his explicit endorsement of Hegel's concept of "Sittlichkeit" and his dialectic of society and freedom, even though Habermas categorically rejects an objective teleology.

This brings me to Kant and Habermas. As you might know, Kant is a very popular philosopher in Iran and there were several celebrations in Tehran for the 200th anniversary of his death in 2004. Well, once again as for Hegel, Habermas's recasting of the Kantian principle of autonomy and its political implications shows how public reason lies at the heart of democratizing processes and is decisive to the survival of non-authoritarian political, social, and economic institutions in our world. And you can see how Kant – and Habermas's reading of Kant – can be helpful in reformulating and re-elaborating a new democratic thinking in Iran. Habermas via Kant offers Iranian intellectuals and civil society activists a model of democratic agency and political thinking that avoids two unattractive alternatives: that of rooting politics in personal preferences for authoritarian personalities and that of eliminating the universality of ethics in the name of a revolutionary break.

DP: Hannah Arendt is also quite popular in Iran today. What can you tell us about this?

RJ: Arendt's work is well known in the Iranian intellectual sphere. Her ideas have been not only closely studied but acutely felt by many Iranian scholars. Three years ago I organized a series of ten nights on contemporary thought and the first lecture considered the life and work of Arendt. Arendt's work speaks in a vital way with new perspectives and new political and philosophical needs that have emerged among the younger generation of Iranian scholars and researchers. In a young and troubled Iran in search of a new intellectual culture, there is a serious desire to explore Arendt's oeuvre. If Arendt's contribution to political thinking finds an important place in Iranian civil society and among Iranian intellectuals, it is mainly because her thinking shows us how to recover the meaning of the public world. I believe that Arendt's popularity in Iran after the Revolution of 1979 is due to the fact that many among us saw a similarity between our experience of living with political violence and totalitarian ideologies (whether Islamist or Marxist-Leninist) and her own alienating political experience as a Jewish refugee who was excluded from participating in public life.

This is the main reason why the first translation of Arendt published in Iran was *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Many Iranians had no idea in 1979 what a totalitarian state was, because most of us were in no way affected by the experience of Nazism or Communism. Actually for a long time the Iranian Left dismissed the claim that Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were a form of totalitarianism. This reminds me of what Arendt formulates beautifully in her book. She says that "While the totalitarian regimes are thus resolutely and cynically emptying the world of the only thing that makes sense, they impose upon it at the same time a kind of super sense which the ideologies actually always meant when they pretended to have

found the key to history or the solution to the riddles of the universe."

I think Arendt's work on totalitarianism is key to showing us that evil is an important problem in everyday politics and that it has the possibility to emerge at any time and in any place. I believe that many have experienced in Iran what Arendt describes in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* as "the anti-political principle." It is the end of ethics in the political realm and the unlimited degradation of civic morality. In 1979 the abyss between men of civility and men of brutal deeds was filled in Iran with the ideologization of the public sphere. One saw the breakdown of the old system, followed by the failure of political liberalism and the formation of the ideologies of 1979. One can say that when common sense breaks down or becomes impossible, hopelessness and resignation set in; people lose the capacity for action and despair over their ability to influence things.

If the Iranian revolution of 1979 showed us that "anything is possible," Arendt on the contrary helped us to understand that thinking is an ongoing process which reclaims our capacity for action. I believe that Arendt's phenomenological reconstruction of the nature of political existence appealed to many of us as a way to uncover the originary character of political experience that has for the most part been forgotten in Iranian politics. Reading Arendt in Tehran reminds us continuously of the fact that freedom is "the ability to begin," and therefore civil society is a domain where people, in their collective plurality, remember who they are.

Another important fact that I think many of us have learned from reading Arendt is that pure action is free from everything because it is for the sake of the future. It is the eruption of freedom everywhere and in every situation without a political affiliation. Freedom is interruption and also beginning anew. Therefore, freedom is possible even in a world of secret police and of the rule of autocrats. Freedom is a universal human possibility. The space of public freedom is in essence finite, but the light of life that shines on the public realm can always begin something new. In a country like Iran, where you have a vibrant civil society, the most unlikely things happen on the margins of politics. What enables men and women, young and old, in Iranian civil society to bear life's burdens is the permanent challenge of keeping the free deed alive.

The point is that the taste for freedom and the experience of freedom can derive only from the diverse forms of participation in common concerns and community-engendering values spelled out in terms of a network of independent associations and institutions. Arendt discusses this in *On Revolution*, which was also very popular in Iran. If I am not mistaken in my reading of Arendt, I would say that her idea of "revolution" poses a big challenge to all those who continue to believe that revolution belongs to the realm of necessity in our world. The tragedy of modern revolutions, according to Arendt, is that what is actually revolutionary is the failed attempt to establish a political space of public freedom. This reminds me of what Malraux says in his novel *L'espoir*: "the revolution came to play the role which once was played by eternal life; it saves those who make it." Well, I think that Arendt shows us very clearly that at the end this salvation in its purest form descends into restoration or tyranny, because all revolutions are simple hiatuses between liberation and the constitution of liberty.

DP: Why, in your view, are Iranian intellectuals and students generally not attracted to Marxist thinkers and ideas? Why do you think they tend not to be engaged by political currents like the anti-globalization movement or anti-imperialism?

RJ: It is not necessary to explore very far to find the reason for this lack of attraction to Marxism in Iran today. In Iran the number of "Marxists" was always a hundred times greater than the number of people who had actually read and studied Marx. This is the main reason why Iranian Marxism had so much trouble making sense of the Iranian Revolution. The Tudeh Party (Iranian Communist Party) and the leftist groups in Iran have no explanation today of their political and ideological struggles against liberal and democratic ideas in Iran. Most of these Marxist groups supported the anti-democratic measures taken against women and against Iranian liberals. Most of them, not to say all of them, supported the hostage-taking at the American embassy in Tehran. Some of them even backed the hard-line clerics in the elections and contributed to the Jacobinization and Bolshevization of the Islamic Republic.

Now, I ask you the question: what do you think is left of the Left in Iran? Nothing! Some live in exile around the world. Some are doing business in Iran. Some have become collaborators. A few are good scholars who teach in American and Canadian universities. Many lost their lives and will never be back among us. I salute their courage, even if I think that they were totally wrong in what they did. Those Iranian Marxist-Leninists who continue to follow their traditional line of thinking have become more of an anthropological curiosity, because they continue to hide behind their mystifying appearances, whether political or other. These people continue to regard their point of view, after all their political and intellectual failures, as a privileged theory, because they believe that it represents the point of view of the proletariat and the proletariat is the class which realizes the passage to the true history of humanity.

There are two problems here: first, no vision of history, even if it represents the view of "the last class of history" that can bring an end to all action and discussion on and in history. Second, there is really no organized proletariat in Iran and the action and self-awareness of the working class in 1979 did not take shape in the direction of a socialist revolution; on the contrary, it was clearly in favor of the Islamic revolution. Actually, the equation was quite simple for the Iranian proletariat in 1979: "They [the Islamists] believed that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is his prophet; while the Communists believed that there is no God, and Karl Marx is his prophet."

The heyday of the Marxist intellectuals in Iran was over as soon as the Islamic nomenclature was firmly entrenched in power. Despite the great extent of its influence, Iranian Marxism did not succeed in the realm of great intellectual achievements.

Marxism's intellectual failure in Iran today can best be illustrated by the new attitude that one finds among the younger generation of Iranian intellectuals. The methodological position of the new generation of Iranian intellectuals is characterized by two main philosophical attitudes: the extension of anti-utopian thinking on the one hand, and the urge for a non-imitative dialogical exchange with the modern West on the other. To my mind, this problem of achieving

modern conditions for rational criticism is in direct opposition with the tradition of Iranian Marxism. First, because new thinking in Iran rejects any pre-given consensus as a foundation, whether traditional authority or a modern ideology. Second, because it calls for an institutionalization of the public debate in the form of rational argumentation. Therefore, the real dividing line which runs between the younger generation of Iranian intellectuals and the previous ones represented especially by the Left is between the preachers of grand narratives and monistic utopias on the one hand and the admirers of dialogue and value pluralism on the other. The point is that the new Iranian intellectual is no longer entitled to play the role of a prophet or a hero. He/she is in the Iranian public space to demystify ideological fanaticisms and not to preach them. Today in a society like Iran where there is a systemic deliberation deficit, the sentimental leftist view of the intellectual as a vanguard(ian) of Marxist ideology is inadequate to the new Iranian reality.

In short, what all this means is that the new Iranian intellectual has finally returned to earth, to the here and now, after decades of ideological temptations looking for salvation in eschatological constructions. In other words, Marxism is no longer considered as a valid or sufficient theory for the explanation of social and political reality in Iran. In fact, it is precisely the new social and cultural situation in Iran that has occasioned the younger generation to reconsider the method and the philosophical validity of Marxism in Iran. The re-examination of Marxism that is taking place does not occur in a void. Many have arrived at the point where they feel the need to *choose* between the ossified Marxism of the past and the project of radical change of Iranian society. We can call this process of re-examination a "pragmatic reaction" to the failure of what many considered to be "progressive" on the grounds that it would solve society's ills. In fact, not only were the ills not solved, but Iranian Marxism became an ill itself. I am reminded of what John Kenneth Galbraith once said about Milton Friedman: "Milton's misfortune is that his policies have been tried." Well, the misfortune of Iranian Marxism is that it has been tried. And it failed.

Concerning anti-globalization movements in Iran, as you know, like elsewhere, anti-capitalism has turned into anti-globalization among the left-wing groups. Most of the anti-globalization groups in Iran are those who mourn the downfall of the Soviet Union as a countervailing superpower, but you also find the critics of globalization among the Islamic groups close to the government. This has to do with the fact that the main source of anti-globalization sentiment is the resentment toward US military and economic hegemony. There is also a third group of young intellectuals who seem to be very much influenced by the works of Derrida, Foucault, Agamben, Badiou and□i□ek. The heavy influence of these authors on some Iranian students takes often nihilistic overtones that you can find expressed in articles in Iranian journals. On the other hand, you can find some democratic universalists and cosmopolitan intellectuals in Iran, like myself, who do believe that since globalization will not fully ensure the advancement of positive social agendas, we need to empower civil society in the domestic sphere, as it represents a countervailing power and prospects for better governance.

DP: You referred to Marxism's intellectual influence in Iran. What exactly has been the extent of that influence?

RJ: I think it is as necessary to understand why Marxism succeeded in influencing Iranian intellectual life as it is to understand why in the end it lost out in the 1979 revolution. There can be no doubt that Marxism and the Marxist movement registered spectacular successes in Iran despite not finally succeeding. There is also no doubt that Marxism has received a devastating political and ideological setback in Iran as elsewhere. Iran never had a working class comparable to the European proletariat of Marx's time. Marxism was propagated in Iran by the upper middle class and rich families, who were politically against the Pahlavi regime and intellectually the most prepared to embrace new ideas and to implement them in the Iranian social sphere. From the 1930s until the end of the 1960s Marxism was the doctrine that provided the Iranian elite with an intellectual grounding for a rupture with Islamic traditions. Despite this vibrant interest in Marxist ideas – which in the 1970s turned into a cult for guerilla warfare, Latin American style – very few Iranian Marxists had read Marx or were versed in the philosophical literature of western Marxism, such as the Frankfurt School, Gramsci, Korsch, Lukacs, and so on. These were too complicated and, in any event, little known. If you looked at the books, pamphlets and political tracts of the Iranian Marxist groups inside and outside Iran, you would be horrified by the low level of philosophical knowledge and by the Stalinist tone and content of the writings. Strangely enough, Marxism was able to find a significant place in the hearts and minds of many Iranian intellectuals for more than four decades.

It's interesting to note that the influence of Marxism and the activities of the Marxist political groups in Iran fluctuated in direct proportion to changes in the Iranian nationalist movement and the influence of American diplomacy in the region. The political and philosophical failures of the Iranian nationalist movement headed by Mohammad Mossadegh after the coup d'etat of 1953 helped put wind in the sails of Iranian Marxism, which presented itself as the vanguard philosophy of the revolution. Also, events such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Cuban Revolution and the Vietnam War were influential factors in the spreading of Marxism among students and intellectuals in Iran. Lenin, Stalin and Mao were far more influential than Marx in shaping the consciousness and work of those in the Iranian Communist movement. Most of the members of the Iranian Communist Party considered (and some continue to this day to consider) Stalin as a great hero.

Most important of all was the lack of sufficient awareness among most Iranian Communists about the force of religion and the strong social networking of the Islamist groups in Iran. What the Iranian Communists lacked was an appreciation of Islam as an important social-historical factor in the formation and consolidation of the Iranian masses. Iranian Marxists, despite their ambition to be close to the masses, never spoke the language of common people; they were hopelessly out of tune with the traditions and idioms of the people. This got in the way of their progress as a revolutionary force, but not necessarily as intellectuals. They ended up after the 1979 revolution as unhappy intellectuals with no political party. This reminds me of Brecht's line: "Unhappy the nation that needs heroes." Maybe I could add in the context of what has been said: "Tragic the movement that cannot have the heroes it needs"!

DP: You mentioned the urge in Iran for what you call a "non-imitative dialogical exchange" with the modern West. This brought to mind a passage from an essay by our mutual friend Fred

Dallmayr, in which he observes that there are often “more vibrant resonances” of European thought in a place like Iran than in Europe today. “This does not mean,” he writes,

that European perspectives are simply disseminated across the world without reciprocity or reciprocal learning. Nor does it mean that local origins are simply erased in favor of a bland universalism … What it does mean is that landscapes and localities undergo symbolic metamorphoses, and that experiences once localized at a given place increasingly find echoes or resonance chambers among distant societies and peoples.” (*Small Wonder: Global Power and its Discontents*, p. 115)

Is this the sort of thing you have in mind when you talk about a “non-imitative dialogical exchange”?

RJ: I am happy to see that you quote Fred Dallmayr in relation to my idea of “non-imitative dialogical exchange.” Fred is a colleague and a friend with whom I have had many fruitful exchanges. We share a deep interest in Gandhi and India. I agree with Fred’s view of a global or cosmopolitan discourse conducted along non-hegemonic lines. His idea of an alternative model of cosmopolitan interaction, inspired in part by Oakeshott’s linkage of conversation with inter-human friendship has been very helpful for my own formulation of the idea of “democratic universalism.” As you might know, in my debate with Richard Rorty during his visit to Iran, I suggested a distinction between two concepts of “universalism”: a “soft” universalism and a “hard” universalism. “Soft” universalism provides us with a theoretical framework for various possible versions of moral life without being founded in a fixed idea of the self. In other words, “soft” universalism or what we can call “democratic universalism” provides a universalistic criterion by which we can scrutinize the principles of action that we might seek as basic to our lives, activities and institutions. Soft universalism does not force us to choose, but offers us reasons and arguments for adapting principles which we would adapt. In other words, soft universalism applies the universal right to reciprocity in a world of plural values in order to allow people with different values to accept one another. Unlike “soft” universalism, “hard” universalism is in search of uniformity and homogenization, because it does not accept the principle of cultural pluralism.

For many the paradox of the human rights corpus is that it seeks to foster diversity and difference, but does so only under the rubric of Western democracy. In other words, it says that diversity is good so long as it is exercised within the Western paradigm of liberalism. As a result, the center of the debate turns around the argument over whether or not Western democracy should be considered as a universal principle. Today in our world, Western democracy is challenged by religious fundamentalists and by nihilistic groups on the ground that it represents a form of political imperialism or hegemony. Well, I believe that even if democracy is not as easily spread or as deeply rooted as many American thinkers and politicians have assumed, there is no shadow of doubt that each democratic process is a potential ally in the struggle against the challenges of our century such as ethnic and religious conflicts, terrorism, poverty and environmental degradation. This is why I think that the idea of “democratic universalism” could be the best way of having a non-hegemonic implementation of

human rights in countries where individual freedom is not the most fairly distributed thing.

This goes hand in hand with the idea of a “non-imitative dialogical exchange” through which I suggest an intellectual discourse for redefining communities and individual-community relationships in a pluralistic way. I also refer here to Todorov’s concept of “transculturation,” which is very different from “acculturation.” Transculturation is entering and living in another culture without necessarily appropriating its mode of being. Transculturation is the inclusion of new elements in an existing culture. It is the ability to grasp other traditions and to incorporate them into one’s own system of thought.

Dealing with modernity in a dialogical way is having the right to speak back to it. And this response becomes in effect a part of the process of modernity itself. Therefore, a dialogical engagement is an open-ended process where the meaning is not located outside the subject but it is situated in the intersubjective relation of the two cultural subjects who are in dialogue together. In the model that I am outlining the subjects of the dialogue add to each other’s identity in and through the dialogical exchange. A dialogical exchange among cultures is the only way in which our ignorance of other cultures and civilizations can be aired, our biases challenged, and our knowledge expanded. A dialogical exchange is the only way to negotiate different interpretations of the world without imposing one interpretation on others. So we are talking here about an exchange between two conscious partners based on a respectful confrontation of their experiences and the knowledge of the process.

So, there is no imitation in a dialogical communicative interaction between two cultural agents. I think countries like Iran, Turkey and Egypt deserve to be analyzed as societies which have imitated modernity for a long period of time instead of having a critical exchange with it. The result of this uncritical exchange with modernity has been the total subjection to different modes of instrumental rationality with no emphasis on the critical driving force of modernity which are, in Kantian terms, “escape from tutelage” and “public use of reason.” Modernity is fundamentally about the reflexive making of history, and in this process the struggle for mutual recognition occupies the most important place. This struggle for mutual recognition arises from a dialogical exchange, because it is a mutual desire of respect. So it is accompanied with a demand that a person be culturally esteemed for his/her own sake. Of course, it is important to refer here once again to the concept of democratic universalism, which holds that there is an underlying human unity which entitles all individuals to basic rights regardless of their cultures. I will put forth the view that neither hard universalism nor cultural relativism is sufficient in coping with the increasing variety of human ontologies. That is to say, we have to look for a universalism which is founded on all human experiences of history rather than only on Western values. This is only possible through large-scale cultural encounters. Taking into consideration the ontological impact of these encounters, an outsider’s judgment and discussion of local violations of human rights cannot be criticized as unwarranted ideological interference.

DP: You mentioned a number of contemporary European thinkers in whom there is interest among some young Iranians today: Derrida, Foucault, Agamben, Badiou, □i□ek. Does Antonio

Negri also belong in this group? I know that you brought him to lecture in Iran last year – which I found interesting, given your views on Marxism. Writing about Negri's reception in Iran, Nina Power, who was there, commented that his ideas were generally regarded as "oddly tangential to [Iran's] most pressing concerns." Negri's "concept of radicalism," she noted, appeared to possess "no frontal relation to the constraints of the existing order" in Iran. If anything, she observed, Negri's message appealed more to the religious hard right. "If there is to be a new Iranian revolution from below," she concluded, "it is unlikely to take the form of a plebeian carnival or quasi-Biblical 'exodus'." This sounds entirely consonant with your own thoughts on the failure of Marxism in Iran. Isn't it?

RJ: I know Negri from the time I was living in Paris. We are now close friends and I have been reading his writings with great interest, especially his work on Spinoza. I think there is nothing strange in appreciating Isaiah Berlin and Negri at the same time. This maybe has to do with the fact that I consider myself a politically moderate and nonviolent person, but a philosophically radical-minded person. I think philosophy is not only having a true sense of reality (as Hegel says: "Philosophy is its own time raised to the level of thought") but also knowing how to resist it. Philosophy is the daily practice of dissent at the level of thought. Being a true radical is having the courage to think and to judge independently.

As I told you before, what sounded fake to me in Iranian Marxism was that it was supposed to be a revolutionary philosophy and yet it produced ultra-conservative elements in Iranian society, who knew how to grow a Stalin moustache or put on a Che Guevara beret, but had retrograde ideas on social issues like women's rights or children's education. You can see the best example of this in the political attitude of the Marxist-Leninist groups in Iran regarding the first demonstration of women against the Islamic regime. Therefore, to make my point I would add that being a radical today has nothing to do with slogans, but has to do with the process of thinking differently. On this matter, Negri reminds me very much of Cornelius Castoriadis, whom I knew very well during my years in France. They both represent a generation of men of character and integrity who speak truth to power. I think despite the fact that many continue to consider Negri as somebody who, according to the former Italian President Francesco Cossiga, "poisoned the minds of an entire generation of Italy's youth," Negri is a radical mind that we need in the context of today's world. I think Negri and Hardt's *Empire* was wrongly characterized by many as a mystical and romantic invocation of a decentered postmodernist and post-imperialist world. Unfortunately, most people missed the important point of the book which is the discussion of the biopolitical context of empire. According to Negri and Hardt, the production of capital converges ever more with the production and reproduction of social life itself and it becomes ever more difficult to maintain distinctions among material labor and what they call immaterial labor. Those who are familiar with the works of the French philosopher Deleuze know that theoretically speaking Hardt and Negri situate themselves in the line of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. One might not agree with the conclusions of Hardt and Negri's book, but one can say that *Empire* is a work of visionary intensity.

Maybe this is the main reason I invited Negri to Iran. His presence and his lectures had a great

impact. For those of us who live and work in Iran, every visit of a prominent intellectual figure is a breath of fresh air which gives us the oxygen necessary to continue thinking differently. In Iran today, "intellectualism" is an accusation often concomitant with that of "being pro-Western," a deviation from the official line. Therefore, inviting intellectuals like Negri, Rorty, Habermas, Heller and Ricoeur is a way of crossing borderlines without leaving the country. It is a way of bringing into Iran the voices of other cultures so as to further cross-cultural dialogue.

DP: You mentioned your debate with Richard Rorty. What was the debate about?

RJ: The first time I met Richard Rorty was during my visit at Stanford. I was giving a lecture there and took the opportunity to meet with him. At the end of our meeting I asked him if he would be interested in visiting Iran and giving a few lectures. He kindly accepted and I organized his trip for June 2004. I thought it would be more interesting to have a debate with him rather than just having him lecture. So I asked Daryush Shayegan, an Iranian philosopher, and George McLean, Professor Emeritus at the Catholic University of America, who was invited by another Iranian institution, to join us on a panel. More than 1,500 people attended this event at the House of Artists in Tehran. Shayegan's presentation was mainly based on the idea that secular democracy now seems inevitable in the Islamic world, given the widespread rejection of revolutionary ideology and the diffusion of sentiment in favor of human rights. McLean's remarks were to do with democracy and inter-faith dialogue. Rorty's intervention was based on his idea of "post-democracy."

According to Rorty the golden age of bourgeois liberal democracy is now coming to an end. It lasted two hundred years, and it was good while it lasted, but we can no longer afford it. People are nowadays being easily persuaded to surrender their freedoms in the interests of "homeland security." As you know, Rorty dismisses the traditional aspirations of political philosophy. Unlike thinkers such as Locke, Kant, and the early Rawls, who sought philosophical principles which could provide the theoretical groundwork for a liberal-democratic political order, Rorty insists that liberal democracy can get along without philosophical presuppositions and that democracies are now in a position to throw away the ladders used to construct them. In his speech, Rorty came back to his idea that an attempt to ground democracy is futile because it is couched in an obsolete and naïve philosophical paradigm. In line with his anti-foundationalism, he argued that there is no way to reconcile universal and particular epistemological justifications. He directed our attention to the manner in which an anti-foundationalist position can yield ethical claims. Anticipating charges of cultural relativism, Rorty came back to his ideas on "human rights culture" and maintained that the claim that human rights are morally superior does not have to be backed by positing universal human attributes. I then presented my reply in an effort to elaborate the idea of a democratic universalism.

Considering Rorty's argument that the degree to which a "human rights culture" is likely to be persuasive depends directly on the degree of humility with which it is presented, I tried to show that Rorty's light regard for the political and lack of interest in the institutional

conditions for realizing ethical ideals could present problems on the issue of human rights in the exchange between cultures. My point is that for many people in non-Western countries, the human rights corpus as a philosophy that seeks the diffusion of democracy and its primary urgency around the globe can, ironically, be seen as favorable to political and cultural homogenization and hostile to difference and diversity. As a result of this point of view, you can find many Iranian or Indian intellectuals who see universalism as the product of European history and challenge it as a form of political imperialism or hegemony.

As a non-Western intellectual who believes firmly in the ideas of democracy and human rights, I have been tempted through my readings of Rorty and because of my own experience as a civil society actor to seek a way out of this dilemma by finding a balance between the values of cultural rootedness and a sense of belonging, on the one hand, and the idea of shared, cross-cultural, universal values. Uneasy with the way Rorty seems to put discussion of the political on hold, I suggest in a very humble manner my distinction between two concepts of universalism. As I mentioned previously, "soft" universalism, unlike "hard" universalism, does not force others to choose, but offers them reasons and arguments for adapting principles which they might adapt. That is, "soft" universalism applies the universal right to reciprocity in a world of plural values in order to allow people with different values to accept one another.

I see "soft" universalism as the only hope for promoting democracy in non-democratic cultures. This relies on conscious cross-cultural learning and understanding. When cross-cultural learning can enable us to internalize democratic values, the possibility of moving in and out of any value system is preserved. In this situation, individual responsibility replaces particular values as the focus of concern. So we are talking here of universal values within a global democratic sphere. I think it would be extremely dangerous to have a dialogical exchange among cultures without a structure of shared universal values. In other words, I do not believe in international relations without an international ethics, especially in situations of power, violence and crisis. But going back to Rorty, I believe that his take on the desirability of human rights free of claims to their naturalness is an open-ended debate. But it certainly requires a long process of political and cultural argumentation and persuasion, one which many non-democratic societies, like ours, cannot afford for the time being.

DP: Is there interest in Noam Chomsky and Edward Said in Iran today? As someone who has interviewed Chomsky more than once, do you sense that his political outlook speaks to the contemporary Iranian situation? When you brought Fred Dallmayr to Tehran, he lectured on Said. What sort of response did he get from his Iranian interlocutors? Do the perspectives of Chomsky and Said – so paradigmatic in Western academia today – resonate in the Iranian context you have described?

RJ: Both Edward Said and Noam Chomsky are very well known in Iran and some of their books have been translated into Persian. I have met Chomsky four times and each time we had an interesting conversation on subjects related to the Middle East. Reading Chomsky and listening to him has always been very inspiring to me. As for Edward Said, I met him for the first time in Paris in 1996. I was introduced to him by Pierre Bourdieu and the Seuil publishing

house. We had a long chat and I asked him if I could make a recording of my conversations with him. He kindly accepted and I later published my conversation with him in a book in Iran.

Through Said, I have met many other interesting people who were either his friends and colleagues at Columbia or were simply his readers and followers. I have invited some of them to Iran. Among these, Ebrahim Moosa, Eduardo Mendieta, Ashis Nandy and Fred Dallmayr were invited in two different colloquiums in 2002 and 2005, the latter a colloquium on Said organized at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tehran University. Fred Dallmayr and the other participants presented papers on different aspects of Said's life and work and they were all well received by the Iranian students. My contribution to this seminar was on"Edward Said's Conception of the Public Intellectual as Outsider," which was published a year later in the *Radical Philosophy Review*.

The colloquium on Said was a premiere and it created a new wave of interest in him and his writings. Many of his later writings are now getting translated. It would not be an exaggeration to say that for Iranian intellectuals in particular and the Iranian learned public more broadly, Chomsky and Said are both considered as towering figures of contemporary intellectual life. This fame is not only due to their moral courage and intellectual audacity in facing the challenges of our world, but also because of their deep influence on Middle East politics. Were Said still alive, he would be amused to know that he was being read, translated and remembered in a country like Iran. But one must not forget that Said believed in the universality of ideas even as he understood the importance of a location for their application. So he would have been against any misinterpretation or misuse of his ideas and writings by Islamic fundamentalists.

And this goes also for Chomsky. In one of my conversations with Chomsky, he makes clear his belief in the universality of human rights. Of course for Chomsky the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not perfect and can be improved, but is a reasonably good expression of principles that people around the world accept. Chomsky stresses that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was put together from many different cultures that were not Western imperialists. So there is a real universal aspect to this Declaration. In other words, according to Chomsky, the principles of human rights are reasonable principles because they express the consensus that most reasonable people would agree to. So, one can say that both Chomsky and Said defend a sort of non-hegemonic and democratic universalism. This is another reason for their status in Iran.

But I should add that Said and Chomsky are not only respected among Iranian intellectuals because of their radical and anti-conformist attitudes, but mainly because of their struggle against extremism and authoritarianism. For us, their struggle is a struggle against embedded prejudices of all kinds and against institutions (religious and non-religious) which aim to enslave people. I think that Said and Chomsky are also important to us because their intellectual task has been a perpetual struggle against the negative role played by the media in sidelining and covering, if not altogether eliminating "undesirable" news. I think Said and Chomsky represent good examples of intellectual integrity and responsibility. Their continuous

struggle and hard work is a testimony to the role of the intellectual in today's world and the intellectual's position as an "outsider" but also as a critical traveler of cultures and traditions in the age of the global village. Today the struggle of intellectuals in Iran is not only a quest for pluralism, but also a vital quest for ethical truth and human dignity, situating the intellectual endeavor in its responsible context. To have a free spirit and to be an unrelenting force for integrity is not a simple task for those who are confronted with lies on a daily basis. Few figures have been able to bring together the radical denunciation of cultural and political hegemony with such a deeply felt commitment to democratic universalism as Said and Chomsky. Today reading Said and Chomsky in Tehran is like living life at the edge. It is risky, but full of excitement and exhilaration. Not only because they challenge us continuously through their writings but because they ingrain in us the value of intellectual integrity, which is of the essence in the most challenging of situations.

DP: You have expressed a deep respect that you and other Iranians feel for Chomsky and Said in broad terms, as intellectuals. But I want to focus for a moment on the political *content* of their ideas. Let me rephrase my question this way. You've painted a picture of a liberal renaissance in Iran today, of an intellectual landscape in which liberal thinkers and ideas, generally speaking, hold more sway than do radical/Marxist ones; a milieu in which the language of democracy, rights, and pluralism has a deeper resonance than does the language of anti-imperialism, anti-globalization, and anti-capitalism. Although you're certainly right to emphasize the universalism and humanism of both Chomsky and Said, there's no avoiding the fact that the central issue around which their political writings revolve is that of imperialism. Anti-imperialism is not the animating spirit or the central issue for Iranian liberals, whereas anti-imperialist and Third Worldist motifs formed the core of the Iranian Marxist paradigm, which – as you pointed out earlier – was a failed project that the younger generation of Iranian intellectuals largely rejects. Given this, it would seem to me that Chomsky and Said, as paradigmatic figures of anti-imperialist thought, would have less direct *political* relevance in the context of the Iranian liberalism. Is there not something of a tension or disjuncture here, between the liberal-democratic-pluralist project and the radical anti-imperialist one?

RJ: One can be a liberal and be anti-imperialist. As you know, there is a tradition of anti-imperialist liberals in the West. Classical liberalism was stridently anti-imperialist. English liberals denounced British empire-building. By reading J.A. Hobson's book *Imperialism: A Study* (first published in 1902) you could find a Fabian line of criticism of the British Empire. The book is partly a response to the Boer War and it was very influential on Lenin, who regurgitated Hobson's ideas with a Marxian twist. Hobson says very correctly that "Imperialism is a depraved choice of national life, imposed by self-seeking interests." The classical liberal sociologist William Graham Sumner was also a strong anti-imperialist who explained 20th-century US foreign policy quite clearly when he wrote:

We were told that we needed Hawaii in order to secure California. What shall we now take in order to secure the Philippines? No wonder that some expansionists do not want to 'scuttle out of China.' We shall need to take China, Japan, and the East Indies, according to the doctrine, in order to 'secure' what we have. Of course this means that, on the doctrine, we must take the

whole earth in order to be safe on any part of it, and the fallacy stands exposed. If, then, safety and prosperity do not lie in this direction, the place to look for them is in the other direction: in domestic development, peace, industry, free trade with everybody, low taxes, industrial power.

So one can talk about an anti-imperialist liberal tradition in the West, even if it was weak in its institutional continuity in a country like the United States. If we turn to contemporary Iranian history, we see clearly someone like Mossadeq, who was *both* a liberal and an icon of anti-imperialism in the developing world. By blocking liberal, secular nationalism in 1953, the Americans unwittingly played an important role in ensuring the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in that country a quarter of a century later.

Now to get back to Said and Chomsky and how I think they can be read and practiced by Iranian liberals, let me quote a line from the American judge Learned Hand that I have always liked and cited: "The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right." I think this is the best way of being a liberal today. There is a difference between this mode of thinking and neo-liberal thought. To say that reality and truth are the sole properties of Western liberalism is ideological demagoguery. To me being a liberal means having more of a moral predicament than a political mandate. So one cannot be a critical liberal and put imperialism before pluralism. And when I say pluralism, I mean a non-dominative exchange. This means that by positing a universality of human experience, we should stand outside the constraints of political and financial dependencies. So what Said elaborates as "outsiderhood" in his thinking is an important cornerstone not only to a cross-cultural dialogue, but also to the situation of critical marginality that an intellectual should have. I agree fully with Said that being an "outsider" does not mean cultivating one's garden, but rather experiencing life as an "unstable cluster of flowing currents."

So I situate myself on the side of people like Said and Chomsky, as someone who stands at a distance from a tradition, in order to be able to develop his critical capacities in regard to that tradition. This is how one can be a liberal pluralist and a secular humanist and be at the same time an anti-imperialist. It has to do not only with creating an alternative narrative but also resisting the hegemonic narratives that block us from forming and consolidating this counter-narrative. I think Empire is not merely a political relationship of power and domination, but revolves around the power to control the other's state of mind. Therefore, the job of a critical intellectual is neither to accept the dominion of another culture, nor to get swallowed by a nativist politics of identity which ends up with a culturally relativist or fundamentalist attitude. This also means that fighting for democracy and values such as pluralism in a country like Iran or Iraq does not necessarily mean accepting the American way of life. This is a fact that Americans have become aware of very recently. The truth is that what America has to say about other people and other cultures is now challenged by those people themselves. I thing the phenomenon of "American exceptionalism" is in itself a major obstacle to a just and equal cross-cultural dialogical exchange. Arabs, Turks, Iranians, Indians and many others are no longer living on the "periphery" of history, because there is no longer any one center anywhere; we have all become centers.

DP: Although you, Ramin, value and derive insight from the work of both liberal-pluralist thinkers like Berlin and radical anti-imperialist thinkers like Said and Chomsky, are Said and Chomsky as popular among Iranians today – young Iranians in particular – as are Berlin and Habermas?

RJ: You are absolutely right about Berlin, Popper and Habermas being more popular in Iran than Said and Chomsky. This is mainly due to the fact that philosophy has become fashionable among Iranian students. It is surprising to see the level of interest of Iranian youngsters in philosophy. Even in some recent Iranian films you can see the main characters reading philosophy books written by contemporary Iranian or western philosophers. I have personally organized seminars on Hegel and Kant in Yazd, Isfahan and many other urban areas of Iran. I am always amazed to see the level of interest of Iranian youth in philosophy. I think this is because philosophy is experienced as a mode of resistance against political ideologies and religious dogmatism. Reading philosophical texts in Iran today is like reading Patocka and Husserl in Prague in the late 1970s. So no wonder Berlin, Habermas, Rorty, Foucualt, Derrida, Ricoeur and others are far more popular than Chomsky. What interests Iranian youth in Chomsky and Said is their critique of American foreign policy in the Middle East. But as I mentioned earlier, Iranian students have other ideas in mind. Their discussions turn around concepts like democracy, pluralism, civil society, tradition and modernity, religious tolerance, and the like.

As for the intellectuals, they are not a monolithic group. In regard to philosophy and philosophical readings, one can identify three tendencies in their discourses. The first tendency is secular. Secular intellectuals do not attempt to promulgate any ideologies or to struggle for the establishment of an Islamic democracy in Iran (as do the religious reformist intellectuals) and yet they undermine the main philosophical and intellectual concepts of the established order. Among them you have post-revolutionary intellectuals, such as Javad Tabatabai, Babak Ahmadi, Hamid Azodanloo, Moosa Ghaninejad, and Nasser Fakouhi, who are in their late forties and fifties, and who can be referred to as the "dialogical intellectuals" (in contrast with the revolutionary intellectuals of the 1970s and early 1980s). In other words, for the secular intellectuals, the concept and the practice of dialogue provide an ontological umbrella for all political and cultural meanings and understandings. The very objective of this "culture of dialogue" is to move beyond seeing the other as an "enemy" who must be terminated either as an individual or as a social class, and to promote a full acknowledgement of the other as a subject. In this case different intellectual attitudes are asked to co-exist side by side to find an intersubjective basis for their encounter with modernity and democracy. This move away from master ideologies is echoed by a distrust of all metaphysically valorized forms of monist thinking. Unlike the previous generations of leftist and religious intellectuals, what the critical engagement with modernity has taught secular intellectuals in Iran is to be at odds with both *fundamentalist politics* and with *utopian rationalities*. The secular intellectuals are mainly influenced by Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Berlin, Hayek, Popper, Foucault and Ricoeur.

The second and third tendencies are both based on religious thought, but are divided by political and epistemological differences. On the one hand, we find the reformists and on the

other hand we find the neo-conservatives. The reformist group is represented by figures such as Abdolkarim Soroosh, Mohsen Kadivar, Alavi-Tabar, Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, Mojtahed Shabestari, and many others. The unifying trait of these intellectuals is their attempt to reconcile Islamic thought with democracy, civil society and religious pluralism and their opposition to the absolute supremacy of the Supreme Guide (*velayat-e faqih)*. The rise of religious intellectuals can be followed through the writings of Soroosh. Soroosh's main idea is that there are perennial unchanging religious truths, but our understanding of them remains contingent on our knowledge in the fields of science and philosophy. Unlike Ali Shariati, who turned to Marxism to bring a historicist perspective to Shiite thought, Soroosh debates the relation between democracy and religion and discusses the possibility of what he calls "Islamic democracy." What Soroosh, who's now living in England, has been trying to do during the past decade is convince his fellow citizens that it is possible to be Muslim and to believe in democracy. Soroosh stresses that there are two views of religion, a maximalist and a minimalist one. In the maximalist view, according to him, everything has to be derived from religion, and most of the current problems in Islam come from this view. But the minimalist view implies that some values cannot be derived from religion, like respect for human rights. For Soroosh the maximalist view of religion has to be replaced by a minimalist view, or else the balance between Islam and democracy is not possible. Thus for Soroosh a democratic Islamic society would not need any Islamic norms from above.

Mojtahed Shabestari is among the rare religious intellectuals in Iran who has challenged the monistic view of Islam. According to Shabestari, the official Islamic discourse in Iran has created a double crisis. The first crisis is due to the belief that Islam encompasses a political and economic system offering an answer relevant to all historical periods; the second crisis is entailed by the conviction that the government has to apply Islamic law (*shariah*) as such. These two ideas have emerged, according to Shabestari, in relation to the Islamic revolution and the events that followed it. But the fact is, according to Shabestari, that Islam does not have all the answers to social, economic and political life at all points in history. Also, there is no single hermeneutics of Islam as such. Therefore, the relation between religion and ideology is simply unacceptable and leads to the desacralization of religion. Strangely enough, the reformist intellectuals have also been influenced by thinkers such as Kant and Popper (but less by thinkers such as Foucault or Derrida).

Unlike the reformist intellectuals, the neo- conservative intellectuals in Iran are in favor of the absolute supremacy of the Supreme Guide and against concepts such as democracy, civil society and pluralism. This movement includes figures such as Reza Davari Ardakani, Qolam-Ali Haddad Adel, Gholam Reza Awani and Mehdi Golshani. The famous personality among these is Reza Davari-Ardakani, who an anti-Western and anti-modern philosopher deeply engaged with the work of Martin Heidegger. Davari-Ardakani, unlike Soroosh, takes some of the features of Heidegger's thought, mainly his critique of modernity, and frames it in Islamic terms. He rejects the Western model of democracy, which is based on the separation of politics and religion. President of the Iranian Academy of Science, Davari-Ardakani could be considered the philosophical spokesman of the Islamic regime. There is a temptation among the conservative intellectuals to find an affinity between Heideggerianism and Islamic thought. We thus find no

readings of Said, Popper, or Berlin among this last group. Even those like Haddad Adel (the president of the Iranian parliament) who are interested in Kant make no hay of his moral and political writings.

So it is safer to say that there are varied intellectual currents in Iran and there are multiple readings of the Western canon. This actually creates an opportunity for pluralism in the Iranian intellectual arena, which has been absent for many decades because of the cultural agendas pursued both by the Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Republic. But it had also to do with the ideological predominance of the Marxist and Islamic ideas among Iranian intellectuals in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This ideological predominance has posed both philosophical and practical problems today in Iran.

DP: What, if anything, can liberals outside of Iran do to support Iranian liberals? There are many who argue that Iran's issues are internal and that western "outsiders" should stay out of them (a view shared by both Islamists and many Marxists, it's worth noting). When I[interviewed](#) Shirin Ebadi, she firmly rejected this position and expressed a desire for "human rights defenders…university professors…international NGOs" to support the struggle for human rights in Iran. "All defenders of human rights," she said, "are members of a single family." "When we help one another we're stronger." As an internationalist and a universalist, what are your thoughts on this question?

RJ: I fully agree with Shirin Ebadi on this issue. Of course, as you know this intellectual attitude is not new. It goes back to the 18th century. I always take pleasure in reading and teaching Thomas Paine, the great British-born liberal who writes in his pamphlet *Common Sense*: "Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mind."

Well, one can say that the violation of freedom and democracy and disrespect of individual liberties in different parts of the world continue as in Paine's time. Since the idea of human rights transcends local legislation and the citizenship of the individual, the support for human rights can come from anyone – whether or not she is a citizen of the same country as the individual whose rights are threatened. A foreigner does not need the permission of a repressive government to try to help a person whose liberties are being violated. Because insofar as human rights are seen as rights that any person possesses as a human being (and not as a citizen of any particular country), the reach of the corresponding duties can also include any human being, irrespective of his/her particular citizenship.

So I am a human rights universalist, but I do not think that one can enforce human rights and liberal values through violence or military force. I am, however, for humanitarian intervention, as it is practiced by human rights activists and NGOs around the world. The universality of human rights should not be turned into a double standard. Human rights provide us with a standard of conduct which no one can now ignore. Human rights are primary core values of

human civilization. They are far from being perfect, but they are the cornerstones of our daily struggle for human dignity around the world. Protecting human dignity is not only about protecting oneself from violence but also defending the other.

So there should be firm grounds for moral objection when people's rights are violated in another society. For me one of the essential problems today is to promote cross-cultural harmony. For relativists, as Clifford Geertz has argued, "humans are shaped exclusively by their culture and therefore there exist no unifying cross-cultural human characteristics." I think this is to say that there are no ultimate standards of right and wrong by which to judge cultures. If this becomes true, we all turn into passive spectators of naked violence happening in front of our eyes. Of course I don't think religion can be used to judge our actions as right or wrong, because religion provides us with a fixed moral philosophy. But there are ethical standards that transcend political actions in international relations. I think there should be an equal submission of all to a minimal set of universal ethical rules. This is how the struggle for the liberal values of pluralism and negative liberty can join the universal values of critical cosmopolitanism. It is a route that leads from Kant's idea of a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view to Fred Dallmayr's vision of "our world." Values and norms do not remain unaffected by what I regard as cross-cultural exchange and learning. There is no one way of life suitable to all individuals around the globe, and reasonable people therefore can and must have reasonable discussions and arguments about human values as they are practiced in different cultures. This means that against moral relativism and hegemonic universalism from above we can build a cosmopolitan democracy from bellow. In other words, we have to take up the challenge of defending the classical values of liberalism by promoting the spirit of cosmopolitanism and tolerance for diversity. After all, cosmopolitanism in essence means opening to others, accepting differences and living with plurality. But it also means going beyond one's own national prides and prejudices and giving allegiance to humanity.

I'm not talking about a universal culture that situates itself against particular experiences of local cultures. But it is a middle way between neo-liberal universalist interventionism and particularist identity positions. I think liberals around the world can join Kant and say with him that the global public sphere is the place in which the private interests of members of global civil society can be reconciled with the universal moral obligations of membership in a "kingdom of ends," a kingdom in which individuals and relationships are treated as ends in themselves, and not simply means to other ends. That is to say, no one can pretend today in America, Europe or the Middle East to believe in liberal values and not have a sense of solidarity with individuals who are fighting for their dignity. We need to think hard about the meaning of solidarity. Solidarity is not about supporting those who share your precise view of politics. It's about supporting those who struggle against injustice and violence and who fight for democracy. The real hope for democrats in Iran is that this sense of the word "solidarity" be understood by humanists, liberals and cosmopolitans around the world.

DP: You have made a most eloquent intellectual case for a cosmopolitan perspective. But let me ask you on a very practical level: what can we liberal internationalists and democratic pluralists living outside of Iran do, concretely speaking, for our Iranian counterparts? How can

we be of assistance to you in your struggle?

RJ: I think the first thing to do is to recognize the fact that there are democratic pluralists in Iran fighting for democratic values and civil liberties. Their struggle for the empowerment of Iranian civil society goes beyond a simple act of contestation. The process of democratization in Iran is a day-to-day challenge which is not only political, but also social and cultural. Democracy is not a place where you sit and relax for the rest of your life. It is about responsible civic participation and intellectual integrity. So without this sense of responsibility I don't see how we could manage to have a strong civil society wherein people find their confidence in speaking and acting.

Pascal used to say that "We are usually convinced more easily by reasons we have found ourselves than by those which have occurred to others." This is very true of our situation in Iran. The actors in Iranian civil society need to find their own logics and practices of togetherness rather than those imposed on them. But this cannot be done without intellectual maturity. Maturity is the condition of possibility for pluralism in Iranian civil society. I am referring here to the Kantian idea of moral responsibility based on intellectual maturity. As you know, Kant defines immaturity as one's inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. In other words, the public use of reason is the true condition of democratic life. Therefore, our aim in Iranian civil society is to create a horizontal line of critical reasoning in the public sphere.

I sincerely believe that finding a place for philosophical debates in the Iranian public sphere today is the highest level of political maturity. This is how our counterparts in the West or the East could be helpful. I have been trying to invite writers, philosophers and scholars from different parts of the world here in order to help them understand Iran but also to open up intellectual discussions with them on subjects that are of great interest to us. Iranian students are eager to know more about Western cultures and are curious to discuss their views on religion, democracy, philosophy and culture with western intellectuals. What they ask for is not sympathy but empathy. They have an eagerness to learn from others and through this learning to become more mature. What remains most fundamentally true is that "empathy" as opposed to "apathy" is the most desirable, even the definitive, philosophical state in our struggle for political maturity. A civil society like ours which is experiencing an alternative form of togetherness on a daily basis requires empathy and solidarity. Empathy is for us the condition of belonging to a global public sphere.

Consequently, we cannot undergo a process of redefinition of our political self without having created this situation of empathy with others. It seems clear that in our philosophical quest for maturity we need to address the question of empathy in the sense of what Husserl called "experiencing someone else." This is where your notion of "solidarity" finds its true meaning. If we understand by "solidarity" getting involved with another's community to create change, then the best form of solidarity with Iranian liberals is to engage in a comprehensive and empathetic dialogue with them. Liberal ideas are new to a country like Iran. They are only 100 years old. To internalize them, Iranian civil society needs to know them better. This cannot be

done by violence or by exporting ideas. We need to have more debates among us. Internationalism, liberalism, and democracy are powerful concepts and have indeed begun to dominate all of the debates within Iranian civil society. But we need to examine them together critically. This is where the concept of maturity links up with that of solidarity. Solidarity does not mean charity, it does not mean intervention and it cannot be reduced to altruism. Rather it is something which grows out of an understanding of common responsibility. It is in our common responsibility as liberals to help Iranian civil society to grow.

DP: You have said that "[l]iving in Iran is living at the edge and struggling as an intellectual is like walking on a tightrope." Can you explain this?

RJ: The work of an intellectual requires living on the edge. This is the only way the essence of life can be grasped. This is even truer in a challenging country like Iran. Do you remember the epigraph to Somerset Maugham's great novel *The Razor's Edge*, taken from the Upanishads: "The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard." I suppose what I am trying to say is that you get used to living with challenges in a society where there is no such thing as a plain and simple life. Life is not easy when you have to live morally in the face of untruth. Maybe intellectuals in Iran have learned to face a life of challenges because the challenge of truth is more crucial to their existence than it is to others. I believe one cannot be a friend of truth without living on the edge. But to do that one has to be gripped by the idea and the passion that life and thought are one. If thinking and aliveness become one for us then certainly we can reach the conclusion that living a challenging life in Iran is a meaningful process. For me as an Iranian philosopher, thinking differently is a form of going beyond the challenges of my daily life in Iran. It's an opening up to the world which goes hand in hand with the act of being free. I think this internal dialogue with oneself – listening to one's inner voice, as Gandhi used to say – but also having an acute sense of the world, could be a quest not only to understand the meaning of our world, but also a ceaseless and restless activity of questioning on the nature of the evil that one has to confront in political life.

In Iran we have grown accustomed to living with political evil but to not thinking about it. I think today more than at any other time our mode of thinking and our mode of judging in Iranian society have a crucial role in determining where Iran can go from here. Thinking democracy and establishing democratic governance in a country like Iran is not an easy task. Unlike what people think, it is more than a simple political enterprise. The challenge here is to focus on the process of democratic consciousness-building which can provide continuity to the political structures of democracy by way of contrast with our authoritarian traditions. This is where philosophical thinking comes to our aid as a grammar of resistance to the tyranny of tradition. This does not mean that I consider the tremendous body of traditions in Iran as mere errors of the past. It means that our political and social traditions are acceptable as long as they enable us to think freely. We may find ourselves at home in our traditions, after all. But we need to distinguish between a false sense of belonging and respect for a common space where the plurality of voices can be realized.

I must admit that I am in fullest sympathy with a mode of thinking that would bring

intellectuals into struggle against thoughtlessness and acceptance of things as they are, and speaking and acting by appeal to authority, to tradition or to personal loyalty. Here, I believe, lies the deep paradox between living in and for truth and the commitment to a culture where one can feel at home. Thanks to western traditions of thought, I learned to think philosophically and politically, but I have refused systematically, during the past 30 years of my intellectual life, to abandon the Iranian question as the focal point of my philosophical and political thinking. An independent and critical thinker in Iran who takes responsibility for the marginal status thrust upon him is like an acrobat walking on a tightrope.

Poetry by Alicia Ostriker & Andy Clausen

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Alicia Ostriker
“A Walker in the City”
“Coda: Into the Street”

Andy Clausen
“Insurgency”

A Walker in the City

What you see is what you get, an inventory of garbage lying loose– the poor are always with us, but the rich lurk behind one-way glass in limousines and an entire class of attractive youth increasingly able to make money without actually working increasingly are into arts and leisure. There’s power and there’s glamor and there’s grief, that’s what a city is for, it’s why we come, there’s violence more or less unchanged apart from a brief spike on nine-one-one. The movies and TV are minting it. Maybe the city should publish maps showing the areas of greatest crime for the benefit of the interested tourist with special blue stars for locations of especially famous crimes, the way in London two shillings lets you follow the career of Jack the Ripper with a little booklet. Midtown East Side, here’s where Robert Chambers strangled his pretty girlfriend during sex in Central Park. Up by the reservoir someone from lower Harlem jumped and raped and beat for kicks, get it, a woman jogger into not death but coma. We thought it was five boys, but that was wrong. Running between a playground and a lake, Strawberry Fields, some blackbirds in the shady sycamores mark where across the street on 72nd the Beatles fan Mark Chapman killed John Lennon. *Imagine there’s no heaven, and imagine The people living in a world of peace*. You have to take the A train to see where Bernie Goetz pulled out his .44 and stopped the boy he thought another mugger from sneering with his friends, from making fun. They come on with their nasty stares, unlaced, It’s so hard to be white, to be a man, when black kids don’t respect you. Here’s Howard Beach, another white on black question of turf and goodbye Yusef Hawkins. Here’s where the woman guard in the parking garage got herself shot between bright eyes for being eyewitness to some drug dealer’s murder. Here a Bronx housewife weary of scrubbing cracked linoleum trying to clean her street of crack, lost it, and the proud Haitian in his candy store the same, as he wiped his hands on his apron, and half a dozen children caught in crossfire one steamy week in summer. *Mama, mama Ayudame, no puedo*–Here’s the house where Joel Steinberg hit his little daughter for pleasure, or for anger, breaking bone after bone, yanking the soft blond curls while the mom cowered in her druggie daze. The case is special because he was a lawyer and had a lot of money, otherwise it wouldn’t count. It wouldn’t count. And in this very courtyard of comfortable brick and stone Kitty Genovese, mother of them all, ushering in an era, screamed, in 1960, being stabbed several times in the chest by her old boyfriend, *Help me! Somebody*

help me! None of the neghbors who heard that woman scream for an entire hour called the police, a sensible restraint, all things considered. That was the sort of thing that shocked us then. It is important to keep the selection of crimes racially balanced and symmetrical for tourist purposes, as the mayor says. Right now everyone seems worried about black people killing white people. That's the disturbing thought if you are white, though naturally most of the people killed are men of color. There could be a key at the map's bottom explaining what was what if you are here on a self-guided tour. Maybe the sponsors of the map could be the NRA, and maybe they'd agree to have an advertisement on the back, like flower shops and banks in highschool yearbooks. We'd need another color code to show where most non-violent crimes have taken place, Wall Street, City Hall, Police Headquarters, The Board Of Education (Bored of Ed) and Columbia University. Some people rob you with a knife some with a fountain pen some with an IBM. And a map to show the areas of crimes of omission? Color the whole map red. Color the city red. Color it ghost white for the death of compassion.

Coda: Into the Street
— For Jerry Stern

All of us may ask ourselves from time to time exactly why it is we do what we do all of us may want to rip our own hearts out sometimes when we think about the world but we could laugh ourselves silly or figure out how to profit by it or wonder how to love it anyway This is what freedom and consciousness are for as if we are standing on the roof of a very tall tower looking at the complicated view then taking the elevator going out into the street lucky us

Alicia Ostriker *is the author of 11 books of poetry, most recently* No Heaven *(University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005, www.pitt.edu/~press), in which the two poems in this issue of Logos originally appeared. Her previous books of poetry include* The Imaginary Lover *(1986),* The Crack in Everything *(1996),* The Little Space: Poems Selected and New 1968-1998, and the volcano sequence *(2002). Her critical works include* Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America *(1986) and* Dancing at the Devil's Party: Essays on Poetry, Politics, and the Erotic *(2000).*

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Insurgency

Ineffable undigested lament hovering
in dark lawless hallways Cellular anger gestating in mildewed garrots
adhering to rheumy smoked skin
tremors of varicose stairways O you've been elusive grandeur
peace of mind generation Yes sparkling diamonds dancing on the lake
gold shining on the Sierras
emeralds like festive ornaments
hanging in the branches And in the distance the unmistakable cries
of wounded children

of thirsty & hungry dispossessed
of those left to die I summon and call all reserves I must try One word like one step at a time staccato spontaneity
interrupted a dozen times a minute Jolt conscious consciousness
say away the monstrous
bring the light Samsonite optics
purgatory lip burn Breathing like a nudged accordion
squeezing wheezing from the center
of the solar system The streets have no home
the cries of the wounded All the laughter & bounty
that will never be
eaten by maggots alongside
the bombed roads Were there no me
all my working
all my so called verse
never existed
all my loves
tribulations, sins
all my desires
dead in the water Far better than this failure
of the world This is not about me It’s about us
I know you wrote & belted the anthems
marched & protested
led a different life than was planned With ringing strings & radiant keys you strived to celebrate
harmony in every good atom of your willing body
scribing verse like never before
defying the customs & tired forms of the limpid parlor
ignoring muse strangling edicts
from tenured blue blood Illuminating instead the street prison workplace
backyard river side & human gates
exonerating desire You were born in a bombshelter
born in the exaltations of the G.I. BIll You sprang into life listening to broadcasts
reading headlines New Frontier Great Society War Against Poverty
Stay the Course I Have a Dream You fought wars on foreign soil
sometimes reluctantly, willingly sometimes Fought against war Fought warfare with everything you had
and imagined you had You came home doubting the identity and purpose of God The way we walked the talk
was going to change Each would abet this salvation
of earth by earth for earth on earth You would turn on the world
emancipating the railroaded inmates
of calloused overweened Truth You would both do your own thing
and collectivise against a war

and do what seldom had been done
You stopped a war without using weapons of war You formed Manichaen communes to grow resilient bodies
& ideas
welcoming the renegade progeny
of the Madman of Kent Arms open to Spartacus & Ghandi
Malcolm & Martin
to demand an accounting
to understand our resources at the source
to foster devotion to the Common People
to love the down trodden
to literally love one another Freedom was going to be more
than just another word
more than a word Your seven senses rhapsodied majestic pines
pungent aphrodisiac redwood, cottonwood & magnolia You embraced hemlock and climbed rhododendron himals
copped a stance for snapshots, boots on receding glaciers
dutifully reporting the raucous elevated sounds
at 18000 feet You beheld the quarried faces
the landslide jowls
the gouged & scourged breasts
desultory forlorn acres of two story piled logged Alaska
bound for Japan
the rotten cabbage-egg spumes of the pulp mills
of Springfield & Missoula
the concertina wires silently screaming
Coxsackie, Otisville, Woodbourne You were blown out when the oxygen devouring flames
\of the refineries spelled out SATAN MOLOCH
TERROR DISEASE APOCALYPSE
in the choking salmon charcoal night miasma
clinging to the windshield
on the doldrum drive to lower east
Paradise Lost & the land of Nod You got off the couch
& learned hands-on carpentry & plumbing
dancing on red iron high in the sky
the Gotham-Baghdad by the Bay-Oklahoma City Sky You punked the rods in the thick air valley Santa Clara-San Fernando-Phoenix-Hudson-Williamette Shouldered the hod, humped the wheelbarrow Kept the rig barreling in the white line fever
cross country wail bar night You waited on tables with weary dogs
and conjured smiles, a tip dependent thespian You set tables, bussed & cleaned tables
polished & fabricated tables
your own and those of the rich
if you were lucky If you were lucky had kids
went into the family business Wanting to ease the trials of the road

for the kids, the road you no longer travel
deteriorating detonating under their innocent
wheels
Remember when you made your own music
worked out your own songs & prayers
your own steps & mudras
your own instruments Anything was a drum Any twang okay Every street had a story a tune
Every country road gave birth to jigs & blues
Pilgrim & artist
pulsating genuine lived in living rooms
utilizing bedrooms at all hours
raunchy rambling garages and old time stoops
of lowdown hoods with cross blown
mouth harps, crimson eyes at half mast
messaline meadows and brown bag corners
ideoblastic parks of cities & cherished wilderness
midnight cemeteries
ancient barns gypsy fiddle lofts hustling coffee houses
saxophone woodsheds swimming in clear light
atop godlike mountains down by the everyday water side Everyone was a celebrity
all was genius I know the jobs you had were not easy
more than once humiliating dreamless
underpaid unpaid health destroying boring
as all get out You learned mammon has reality
on its side at its side Nothing has a sharper blade Nothing has colder penetration Nothing has the concentrated will to ruin
like legal tender Even history & scripture & medicine must consult the mighty
dollar (Or is it Euro?) before they write themselves You decided to aim your poetic flare at merchandise
advertising promoting sometimes the best
sometimes what you knew was bunk
toting grief & guilt a million miles
purchased at Walmart You battled forest fires, battled erosion
battled environmental stupidity
and grew old growing asparagus & beans
& catnip with home grown fertilizer
muttering, “Everyone loses…and it doesn’t matter.” You opened hip rare vision & user friendly bookstores
the brightest came to browse and carouse
Wagner & Dylan in the air You had eclectric transrational record shops
and sold posters of Anarchy & rent short artists
and went to work for Barnes & Nobles
Bertelsman Seagrams & Rupert Murdoch You haven’t yet taken off your clothes
and walked thru midtown a saddhu You haven’t yet gone for the rope

the razor the pistol the pill bottle
or 10th story window You Here
hand fashioning jewelry, scented candles & mirrors
doing massage color gem & aroma therapy Late at night in the 7-11, Quick Stop, U-Totem, down on Cumberland Farm At dawn cleaning houses & toilets too
delivering papers
hanging drapes in blocks of condos you could
never afford or want to live in You voyaged to foreign lands went native
started sending exotic culture home You could no longer afford America You toiled for disrespectful pitiable wage
before and after parole They wanted you to work scared
& act like you loved it You were told to consider yourself fortunate Everything you collected was consumed in the fire Everything you knew washed away in the flood Like the sword of Bhairav
amputating ignorance Like Jesus put a sword between parent & child A sword dissolving with the torn pages
of composting calendars
and grandchildren pointing at pages
yet to be And the old anthems seemed only old Even though you did puberty in the projects You became the beaucoup gardener of wanton
celestial flowers, ghetto flowers, neon bouquets
immersing into the Waters of Life
precious everyday Water You were born again
yet suffered the afflictions
of begrudged repetitive motion
sitting on the unjustifiable boils of Job
yet rode his horses when they jumped
Nobodaddy's fence– abandoning a deity
who'd gamble away your loved ones You guided the inhibited to the primordial pools
sailing the pre-Adamic seas laden
with contraband jazz & duty free Jai Shambeau Days melding into endless novenas
of house car medical payments Your Lord's first name was Land You dug the sod with back & plow & pen
aiming, clicking the carnal camera
with excess joy inevitably
leaking sanguine droplets
of gleeful sweat You could still dream You could still grin You had a mother guru
a father guru
a child guru–a consort guru You made love with your guru You took the mountain side for your guru You sought refuge on Tamalpais the Flat Irons
Denali Overlook Tremper Fuji Kilanmajaro
El Capitan Sagarmartha Nose Mountain You sought primitive therapy in atavistic pubs
the outlaw rock and roll of your sexual awakenings
& came that close to biting the dust

in a bath tub of ice cubes
with neglect came denial, false romance & viral grief You are still here You can get off the floor on one knee, get the other foot on the ground
Rise Up O Uprising O Insurgency Forget your solipsistic woes Let your voice be heard! Without Bombs! Let it be heard!
Are you here only to witness
every aspiration
every shred of decency under siege & corrosion? The sustainability of mothers of earth of the stars & beyond
all the eye can & can not see, desecrated? What it is to have choice, persecuted & condemned? Every scintilla the poor have to protect themselves
against the whims, follies, and privilege
of the rich being snuffed? Every religion worshipping the One God
invoked to justify killing human beings? Every industry governed by Mammon Urizen Moloch Dog Eat Dog? America who gave the world the transcendence
of the blues rock and roll, be-bop hip hop the wobblies
the Summer of Love, Harlem renaissance & the Beats America the beautiful reviled by the world
cast as insatiable bully & glutton
has become what she hated A land of Orwellian distortion
of lethal deceit
of treacherous anti-sense Freedom is not free (3 times) Heroism is comparing bombing missions
to video games & the 4th of July Whole families explode and burn
accidently on purpose The duty bound the poverty coerced
compare drive-bys in Iraq
to drive-bys in Brooklyn Patriotism is denying those who disagree
free speech Justice is compiling dossiers
on what folk read think contribute to Justice is retribution & revenge Allah, Jesus Christ, Jehovah the names invoked
before committing mass murder The Rapture exonerates lying
to vast populations Professing fear of God absolves all bads Love is anything very expensive Love is chocolates, a stunning gown, a limo & liposuction
a new face, a rare breed of mammal Love is a package dancing on a gilded stage
it’s applause, O show me the love
it’s a whoop for the home team
four letters on a page
a slo mo zoom in a manicured meadow Democracy is not Whitman’s, not Thoreau’s
John Stuart Mill’s
not Martin Luther King’s
nor Eugene Debs democracy
not Thomas Paine
not Buffy St. Marie
not Paul Robeson, Rosa Luxemburg Democracy is a twisted depraved metaphor

for doing business America is a code word for get
the best of any transaction You were privy to the Way is not the Way You might have read Corso’s The American Way You know what I know You’ve been out sourced You’re paycheck to paycheck
to other kind of check And everything is rising but wages Temperatures are rising Tempers are rising Rent and Real Estate rising Threats are rising Torture is rising The water is rising The sewage & effluvia
of carnivorous slag is rising It is permeating the fabric Injuries against nature float
like greasy seaweed The pig-out of conquerors
has upmerged from shallow internment
like chemical zombies But wages are not rising What else can rise? What can come out of the charnel sod? You have religious practice
your rituals your prayers your solitude
facing the sun the moon east & west
in all six directions
fingers on beads emptying & filling your mind
from little round pillow to cushioned pew
and your legs behind your neck
and counted everyone of the 108,000
walked the last mile on your knees! You have access to more information than dreamnt possible a generation ago You can parse the gaits of rare animals & insects
machines, gold, winds & rain
that will never touch your face
at your fingertips Everyday you affirm faith the path to unwind
will not lead you nowhere
not marooned in your cenotaph residency
in hyperparanoid domains of ravenous
matter consuming ghosts You have your departed friends & lovers
& their indispensable counsel for ephemeral comfort
& funereal resolve You deplore the destruction of meaning in words
of meaning of the old forests
old buildings & ways
sitting in a thousand rooms of agreement
& encouragement sans answer
without key no window
outside the war continues You laud easy laughter
intoning your motto your rune
“It’s all good.”
like a mortal lock paradigm
“It’s all good.”
outside they are teaching you are the enemy What else will rise? What else can emerge from this charnel ground? You who hold the driving belts
to the machines of the world
in your maybe battered, maybe contorted,

maybe barely able, maybe atrophied,
maybe reborn one thing’s for certain hands Call out! O Common Sense Insurgency Organize!
Let your voice be heard! Organize! Stop the war, let the chimes of freedom flash again
Be born again! Voice it! O Land of Beulah how can you be measured
by numbers? O Imagination how can your value plummet so? Politically as one man I ask you how has
smallbusiness fared under the Republicans
Nixon Reagan The Bushes
and liberal republicans like Clinton? Ask Office Depot, Barnes & Nobles Ask the radio waves,
ask Clear Channel How has education fared? Ask the millions who only know a false history
or no history at all We had one president who told us to conserve nature’s yield
and withdrew finance to vicious tyrants One president who did not bomb
& we saw what & where it got him As long as the plastic presented consumer good life
in action & the supermarkets were well stocked
& the oil flowed into fuel
you did what you had to do
you didn’t have to think about it
whatever it was Insurgency quit working for the war don’t supply the war
don’t fight in, don’t let your children fight in this profiteering inexcusable bogus war
exorcise the war from your heart
this war that is all wars
this is the war fought on every plane & dimension in every aspect & fiber
this is the war against human love Human Love Honest work for honest pay, cry
out wail howl organize! Out of the ashes & flotsam, out of its coffin It is Joe Hillstrom, Emma Goldman, W.B. Dubois
Vachel Lindsay, Emmit Grogan & Abbie Hoffman Let your voice be heard
in every day in every way O insurgents, O peace mongers
don’t mourn, organize! O artists magnanimously the planet turns
from the desperate day Your hand has fashioned represented & glorified
unrelenting beauty we were born to are entitled to But we suffer addicted collusion intent on using this
awesome fecundity to make capital Capital that begets more capital Money not even what
money buys just money Money inflicting pain A society that fears its neighbors
whose gold is do unto others before they do unto you A society that fears race & language
sex & no sex & poverty’s karma A nation that jetsams its heritage
when push comes to shove
which is its heritage & its sex A society that conceives to make reparations
to the descendants of the ethnically cleansed
& robbed original inhabitants of These States
with long shot pipe dreams
of the poor & working losing
their retirements at the gaming tables A society that conceives to make no reparations
at all to the descendants of slave labor

survivors of and in defacto apartheid You saw streams of fish & revivifying drink
rendered carcinogenic & wept iodine You saw rain seducing mysteries clear cut
& waves of stumped Mars like terrain Orange Walnut Apricot groves bulldozed
into disposable housing Beaches petrofried Acres of abandoned rust Mountain ranges of plastic
plastic plastic Mountain tombs of radioactive waste buried alive Winds of depleted uranium &
birth defects
dirging Hills of crank & pills & lost teeth
dirging You saw it from the portholes
of your rides You felt it on a train to Secunderbad
to Budapest to Eugene Oregon A bus to Cleveland Ohio
on the turnpike, O Elizabeth!
boarding a plane in Walla Walla
O Homeland Security pork! On the 7 train Insurgency Uproar boiling in its bloody cauldron O
insurgents for birthright, laugh loud & proud
dance like your life depends on it– it does
drink go ahead Jesus & Haffiz are with you
smoke it's your right, your religion
watch your ashes, notice your anger
outspoken exuberant generous forgive educate protest
wail shout out Let it be heard You can stop the war You the woman & you the man
can stop the war Who else can stop it? Renounce virtual reality's design on 24/7
not enough virtue
not enough reality
not enough time Tear yourself from the screen
go out the door Insurgency without bombs & poison
renounce the media of big boy control culture
hypnotizing cheapening us O uprising dawn new Unions, Revolutions
& outlaw outside markets
bring it to the numbered streets & sylvan roads, the sacred airways O non-
violent heart of Jesus & Buddha
reach & touch
overwhelm these malignant cowardly heartless vibes Whether it be Velvet
Orange Rainbow Pink Black Blue
Red or Green
by any means possible This deadly fog must lift Arise Tom Paine, John Peter Altgeld, John
Reed
Jane Adams Helen Adam John Coltrane Etheridge
Knight Jack Kerouac Allen Ginsberg Black Buffalo
Woman Crazy Horse Langston Hughes rise Uprising Debs and Jack London Caesar Chavez
Abelardo
Delgado Frida & Diego Billie Holliday Bessie Smith
Big Bill Haywood Joe Hill Phil Ochs Malcolm X
Joaquin Murrieta Chief Joseph rise Woody Guthrie Leadbelly Cisco Houston Harriet Tubman
Charlie Chaplin Billy Burroughs Jr. Enid Dame

David Lerner, Judy Bari, Pedro Pietri arise Maestro Gregory Corso come with on the point straight shot
eloquent prophetics “Know that there are millions of Americans seeking America…know that even with all those eye-expanding chemicals–only more of what is not there do they see” Isabel Eberhardt show us the New Frontier
& if need be disguise & attitude Sitting Bull show us the route
the method the rudiments How will we fight the most pervasive
destructive Empire the Earth has known? I reach out to all the saints & sinners
you who are named & you billions with no names in books
with no glory but what was
in front of you I call to all laborers, the misrecognized
the great heros the mothers of us all
the hammer the hoe the rags & sponges
the lactating breasts & fore arms
the steel wool knuckles & eyes aged
beyond this life– Cold mouth
declaiming the immortal lines in mortal faces
the mop & broom, the conveyor belt
the choker and skid, the will killing pick
the ovens the ladders and swinging scaffolds
the tie wire and grill and telephone and trowel I call to guide wire and caulked boots
the steel toes, the dollie, the ho dad, the lumpers
the victims of misogyny, the foster families
broken furniture families
the jack hammer, the jack of all, the fruit picker
pearl diver the hacks the seamstress the drill press
the death bed comforter, the lesson planners
and underpaid menders of atrocities To all who did the dirty work To all who made us clean To all who were sold short overused
& deceived yet found time to live I call on you now Arise Help Us, guide us We will make a future together
fit for you to live again You shall rise! You are not dead O Insurgents O Pioneers Let it be heard! Stop this everywhere everything
contamination Stop this war, Organize, rebirth Come together
& you’ll find a way
to stop this war

Andy Clausen *is the author of ten books of poetry, including* Without Doubt *(Zeitgeist Press, 1991, introduction by Allen Ginsberg),* 40th Century Man: Selected Verse 1996-1966 *(Autonomedia, 1997), and* Songs of Bo Baba *(Shivastan Publishing, 2004). A coeditor of* Poems for the Nation *(Seven Stories Press, 2000), Clausen is a construction worker and teaches poetry in New York public schools.*

The Hat: Arendt Meets Heidegger – A Short Play

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

Context for the Text

Two outstanding intellects of the 20th century, Hannah Arendt, the political theorist (1906-1975), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the philosopher, met in 1924 at the University of Marburg, Germany. They both went on to write major contributions to 20th century thinking. Arendt is most famous perhaps for her Origins of Totalitarianism*, and* The Banality of Evil*; Heidegger for his* Being and Time*, among other works.*

Their encounter 'and the complex, controversial relationship that was born from that encounter' is documented by their correspondence. Their bond continued, on and off, until Arendt died in 1975. Heidegger followed her a mere five months later.

When they first met, Arendt was an 18-year-old philosophy student, writing her PhD on the concept of love in St. Augustine. Heidegger was 35, married with two young sons. His philosophy lectures were unrivalled in popularity, he was the rising star of philosophy at Marburg University. Many of his students went on to became famous, influential thinkers in their own right, such as Arendt, Hans Jonas, Karl Löwith and Herbert Marcuse.

From their many letters and poems it transpires how they resonated with each other's 'being': as lovers, as teacher-student, as colleagues, rivals and friends. Arendt and Heidegger interconnected at many levels, over many years, in many roles; yet they could not have come from ' and depart to ' more different contexts.

As a young child, Arendt is traumatized by the death of her father and grandfather, and by her mother's sudden remarriage. The notion of death and departures, 'being-towards-death' resonates with her memories. She is from an assimilated, cosmopolitan, leftist, atheist German Jewish family of professionals. Heidegger is from a devout Catholic, peasant background, attached to the soil and nature, originally preparing to be a Catholic priest.

They are irresistibly drawn to each other, and embark on a passionate, clandestine affair. However, history and their personal and political choices force them apart. Heidegger chooses the path of National Socialism. He becomes 'and remains until 1945' a card-carrying Nazi, an admirer of Hitler and his "wonderful hands". The anti-fascist Arendt works for the Zionists, gets arrested by Gestapo, spends years in France as a stateless person, almost ends up in concentration camp before she finally escapes to the US and become a US citizen in 1951. And yet… and yet, they reconnect after the war and resume their bond until they die.

The Hat *investigates the possible dynamics of the first meeting between Arendt and Heidegger. It explores their chemistry, the spark that generated enough intellectual, sexual, psychological, emotional energy to last two life times.*

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CHARACTERS:

HANNAH Arendt – 18, philosophy student.

MARTIN Heidegger – 35, philosophy professor.

ANNE Mendelssohn – 18, philosophy student, HANNAH's close friend

PAUL McCarthy – 28, American philosophy professor, ANNE's husband

PLACE AND TIME: Marburg, Germany, 1923.

SCENE 1: HANNAH'S ATTIC ROOM.

Blackout. Crackling of fire and ticking of clock punctuates the silent darkness. Then soft klezmer music fades in. As the lights come on, we see HANNAH *blowing at the logs in the stove, resuscitating the flickering flames. Piles of books on the table and on the floor.* ANNE *stirs a pot of chocolate on the stove, dips in the ladle, blows at it and offers it to* HANNAH.

HANNAH *(slurping from the ladle)* Anne, I'm telling you… darn, it's burning… doesn't taste like yours.

(HANNAH *ladles some more, they both blow at it, then* HANNAH *offers it to* ANNE.*)*

ANNE *(savoring)* Umm… Perhaps the milk or the cocoa is not quite the same. It looks the same, but it's different. — *(raptured*) Like Paul.

HANNAH My, aren't we smitten by this sweet American.

ANNE *(laughing)* I have a sweet tooth, remember?

HANNAH Hot chocolate for some, hot Paul for others.

ANNE (*offers a spoonful of hot chocolate to* HANNAH) Perfect, wouldn't you say?

HANNAH *(savoring)* The real thing. Almost. How long has he been teaching here?

ANNE *(peeling an apple)* Two years. Superbly. The most popular professor. Except for Heidegger of course.

HANNAH Oh.

ANNE What?

HANNAH Not you too.

HANNAH I'm up to here with odes to the 'greatest professor on earth', Professor Heidegger. I don't fall for this sporty philosopher image. *(Beat.)* Imagine, taking his skis to class!

ANNE Why not? Paul skied with him many times. Brilliant skier, apparently. Loves giving ski lessons ' not just philosophy…

HANNAH Brilliant skier, brilliant teacher, brilliant philosopher ' anything else?

(Energetic knock at the door while she speaks. ANNE *bolts out of the chair, hurries to answer it.*

(PAUL *tumbles in with a wicker basket, laughing.)*

PAUL Heidegger, Heidegger, Heidegger.

PAUL *(kisses* ANNE*'s forehead tenderly, then hugs* HANNAH. *To* ANNE*)* You've been telling Hannah about the greatest star of modern philosophy, my love?

HANNAH Yes, we talked mostly about you, Paul. Did you get cinnamon and cream?

PAUL In the basket, with the challah.

(He puts the shopping on the table by a piles of books and slaps on HANNAH's HAT*. He picks up some of the books ' Greek titles, Goethe, a book on Beethoven.)*

PAUL *(looking through the books)* Aristotle… Goethe… Thomas Mann… Beethoven… St Augustine… Kant. Hannah, is there anything at all you haven't read?

*(*ANNE *snatches the* HAT, *slaps it on* HANNAH, PAUL *lurches after her, but she throws it back to* ANNE. Finally PAUL *snatches it back and slaps it on himself. Actors ad lib the playful chase.*

(ANNE *embraces him from behind and snuggles her chin into his neck.* HANNAH *ladles the steaming chocolate into the mugs.)*

ANNE *(sniffing* PAUL*'s neck)* Hmm. Delicious. You smell so–

HANNAH –sweet?

ANNE *(kissing his shivering neck)* Let me warm you up.

*(*ANNE *buries her face in* PAUL*'s back and blows air into his jumper, resurfacing only to take another deep breath. Watching them,* HANNAH *whips the cream energetically, walking towards them.)*

HANNAH Careful, Anne. He'll melt.

(Elated by ANNE*'s 'heating operations',* PAUL *tilts his cheek up against* ANNE*'s, and intertwines his arms with hers*. HANNAH *continues to whip the cream energetically.*)

PAUL *(sitting down,* ANNE *snugly nestling in his lap)* Seriously, Hannah, you too should have a taste of the 'little magician of Messkirch'. Heidegger really is–

ANNE *(feeding* PAUL *a slice of apple)* — mesmerizing.

HANNAH *(poking her fingers into the cream, then licking them)* I much prefer hot chocolate to magic potions. Mm… superb.

PAUL Students would kill to get into his class. *(tightening his arms around* ANNE, *caressing her thigh)* Totally hooked, everybody. *(kissing* ANNE*)* –One of his students committed suicide.

ANNE *(feeding* PAUL) She got entangled in one of his puzzles –apparently.

*(*HANNAH *stops whipping.)*

HANNAH *(lighting a cigarette)* The magic potion… *(sarcastically)* hm, deadly after all.

ANNE It may just be hearsay, you know. *(kissing* PAUL *tenderly)* Accusation.

PAUL Malicious gossip. *(kissing her arm)* Quite possibly. You see–

HANNAH *(to* ANNE*)* —A pinch of cinnamon?

HANNAH Mm. That'll do. Well, I'm here to learn. –To think. *(dishing dollops of cream into the mugs while dragging on her cigarette as she speaks)* For myself. Not to get hooked on anything. Or anybody.

ANNE *(savoring the drink, offering it to* HANNAH*)* He is a taste worth acquiring though. You'd–

HANNAH *(slurping)* –Appalling! Can't you see? Can't you see? Everybody is taken in by Heidegger. Everybody. *(slamming the mug on the table, spilling chocolate on her books.)* Darn. *(cleaning the books, mopping up the mess)* I've already had enough of him. Not to mention… that he teaches at the crack of dawn. *(She snatches the* HAT *from Paul's head, puts it on, looks at her small pocket mirror.)* Out of the question.

Blackout. Klezmer music fades in.

SCENE 2: MARTIN'S OFFICE

Music fades out as the lights come on. Large piles of books on the floor, the desk and the chairs. There's a large painting of a tree on the wall, and a pair of skis by the door. A wooden ladder by the shelves. MARTIN *is sorting his piles of books, putting them on the shelf, occasionally stepping on the chair or the ladder to reach a higher shelf.*

Hesitant knock on the door. Pause. Then a more assertive knock. MARTIN *steps off the ladder, opens the door and admires his visitor standing in the door for a while, finally inviting her in.*

As HANNAH *walks in her long black coat, elegant* HAT *pulled over her face, her books under her arm, she bumps into his* SKIS. HANNAH *trips, the skis fall, hitting* MARTIN *on the head as he tries to protect her from falling ' but can't.* HANNAH*'s books fall, her* HAT *flies off her head.)*

HANNAH *(shaking his helping hand, kneeling from the fall)* Oh, I'm so sorry… Professor Heidegger… em… Sorry for being late. I'm… em… Hannah Arendt. I… I was wondering-

MARTIN *(extending one hand to help her up, while feeling a bump on his head with the other)* Hm. Always a good sign.

(They pick up the skis and lean them up against the wall. MARTIN *turns around and penetrates* HANNAH *with his glance.* HANNAH *is taking off her coat while…)*

MARTIN *(is picking up the* HAT *and twirling it)* For Kant, yes, every experience is first and foremost a *human* experience. When we look at this hat, we cannot deny that we look at it in a peculiarly human way. *(sizing her up)* Can we know what that hat is like ' apart from our experience of it? No. Because we filter it through ourselves ' like all our experience. We interpret it. Through ourselves. Through Time and Space. *(Beat.)* Time and Space.

(Some of HANNAH's books fall down, cluttering the silence)

MARTIN *(anger rising)* If our perception of this hat ' just like our conception of the world ' is confined by our own experience ' *(looking at yet another book falling, angry)* which in turn is confined by Time and Space *(to* HANNAH*)* ' how are we to make moral choices?

HANNAH *(hardly audible, picking up her books)* On the basis of –the Categorical Imperative.

(Keeping his gaze to himself, MARTIN *waits in silence for her to elaborate.)*

HANNAH We must… we must act as if the principle we follow were to become a law which everyone had to follow.

MARTIN *(sarcastically)* Take the example of coming late.

HANNAH *(trying to explain)* Professor Heidegger, I…

MARTIN *(harshly)* In Kantian terms, we can see the far-reaching implications of any choice — a choice like –coming late. *(Turning his back on her, he starts pacing up and down.)* Now. Back to the mystery of existence. The oldest mystery on earth. Let's see some of the solutions to it. (*He continues sorting his books. He stands on one side of the ladder, motioning HANNAH to hand certain books to him, then places them on the shelf while putting her on the spot mercilessly. She climbs higher and higher on the other side of the ladder as they talk.)* How did Plato see it?

HANNAH *(tentatively, handing over a book)* The world is… but a copy . A copy of a perfect realm.

MARTIN And Pythagoras?

HANNAH Mathematical. For him, the world is mathematics.

MARTIN Descartes?

HANNAH *Cogito ergo sum.* The world is the result of our thinking.

MARTIN Kant?

HANNAH The world is the product of our mental structures.

MARTIN Nietzsche?

HANNAH Will to power. A game of chaos and power.

MARTIN Husserl?

HANNAH The world is a phenomenon of our existence.

MARTIN *(softening)* Phenomenal. *(stepping down from the ladder, helping* HANNAH *down)* And of course what they ALL forget… What they all forget to even consider is the fundamental mystery. *(Beat.)* The fundamental mystery… that something… exists. Rather than nothing. *(Beat.)* That the world IS. *(As he scribbles 'Being' and 'being' on the blackboard)* BEING is the primordial condition for beings to exist. *(He turns off the light. Silent darkness except for the fire crackling, and the clock ticking.)* Without light… we can't see. *(He switches on the light.)*

HANNAH Without light, we can't see. Without BEING, beings can't be.

MARTIN *(taking in the mesmerized* HANNAH*)* And that's where Time comes in. As opposed to Being, each being – each of us – is temporal. We are time. We all go from Being to Nothingness.

HANNAH We all depart.

MARTIN Consequently… consequently…

HANNAH We must… We must face up to the… departures. To Nothingness. *(Beat.)* To death.

MARTIN We're going to die 'so might as well take responsibility for the life we're going to live. No one else is accountable for your life. Except you. Now. —

HANNAH –If you live in the knowledge that your own being has to… depart one day from Being into Nothingness–

MARTIN –if you live as a being-towards-death, then you make the most of your possibilities.

HANNAH We must.

MARTIN Then, and only then, you live an authentic life. Then you CARE. Then you start CARING about your world.

HANNAH The key to authentic existence then is taking responsibility for our life. –For our actions.

MARTIN *(smiling)* For being late.

(Softened for a second, his hands shoot into the air to speak with renewed energy. She puts on her HAT*, he helps her with her coat. The coat brushes against the skis, they fall again, hitting both* MARTIN *and* HANNAH *this time. Laughing, they pick up the skis together and lean them up against the wall, both nursing their own bumps on their head with one hand, and holding a ski with the other.)*

HANNAH *(squishing the hat)* Professor Heidegger… My… My doctoral thesis is on the concept of … love in St Augustine. I was wondering… would you… would you supervise me?

(Blackout. Ticking of clock, then Klezmer music.)

SCENE 3: HANNAH'S ATTIC ROOM

The sound of relentless STORM *outside, then the lights come on.*

PAUL *is studying the chessboard,* HANNAH *is trying to coax a mouse out of its hole in the wall,* ANNE *is making tea.*

HANNAH Peek-a-boo… peek-a-boo…What got into her? I haven't seen her all day today.

PAUL *(wrapped up in deciding his next move)* Hannah. Please. It's just a mouse.

ANNE *(pouring* PAUL *tea)* Just a mouse… Because you choose to frame it so, remember? Hannah used to care for a little mouse in her grandfather's tea warehouse. What was her name? She was a marzipan-addict, right, Hannah?

HANNAH *(nodding distractedly and making a move on the chessboard)* Where's my hat?

PAUL *(sipping his tea)* You are off? It's pouring out there. The heavens opened big time.

(Sound of thunder and lighting, rain pouring. Stars and music (Bartók's "Divertimento") flood the room, the shadow of tree leaves sprinkle them. A sense of magic, surreal fairy tale, time suspended. ANNE *and* PAUL *dance slowly in each other's arms in the background.)*

HANNAH *(in storytelling mode)* And then the dwarf looked in the puddle. And what did she see?

ANNE *(playing along)* The rainbow? The clouds?

PAUL The trees? The leaves?

HANNAH Herself.

PAUL And she liked what she saw?

HANNAH *(nodding)*

ANNE And then? What happened?

HANNAH Days, months, years went by. Then one night the sky opened wide and flooded the forest.

PAUL Hey, and the dwarf? What happened with her?

HANNAH She looked at the rainbow, and said "Peek-a-boo, rainbow, will you take me?" *(Beat)* But the rainbow said no.

ANNE The rainbow said no?

PAUL It didn't care? Why not?

HANNAH "Oh dear me, what big nose you have. I don't know you."

*(*PAUL *and* ANNE *stop dancing.)*

PAUL And the trees? Did they take her?

HANNAH She looked at them. They looked at her… and said "My, my, what big nose you have. I don't know you." The dwarf leaned over the puddle, her nose poked into the muddy water. Pitter-patter… pitter-patter… pitter-patter… the raindrops flopped in her mirror… and disappeared in the sea of tears. Still, she could see herself … and the gray sky gazing right back at her from the puddle…. She stomped her feet and leaped off the ground. She flew

through the leaves, the branches, through the lace of treetops, past the rainbow. Higher and higher. Then… suddenly… a thunder roared by her ears, a lightening twisted and twirled her body, and plopped her panting on the clouds. *(panting)* "Peek-a-boo, Clouds… will you take me? Will you?!" The clouds huddled together, and looked away: "Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo. We don't know you."

(The tree leaves and the music fade out, the magic is gone. Silence, except for the thunder and lighting, and the clock ticking. ANNE *puts her hands on* HANNAH's *shoulders, she reaches for her hand and stands up*)

PAUL *(makes a move on the chessboard, then, victoriously)* Checkmate, Hannah.

(He sits down, ANNE stands behind him. He reaches up with his hands for her hands. Their hands play with each other as they speak.)

HANNAH *(putting her* HAT *on, and putting on some makeup)* Heidegger has agreed to supervise me.

PAUL He took you? My! When did this happen?

ANNE And? And? What did he say?

HANNAH *(getting ready to leave)* Hmm. Nothing. Nothing much.

ANNE *(slapping* PAUL's *hands impatiently)* Hannah! Hannah!

HANNAH *(licking her finger, smoothing out her eyebrows in the mirror)* You are right. Yes, thinking has come to life again. There exists a teacher; one can perhaps learn to think…

PAUL Well, what did he say?

HANNAH You see, passionate thinking– *(glancing at watch)* Oh, I'm late again!

HANNAH *pulls the* HAT *over her face, closes St Augustine's Confessions with a* BANG *.*

(Blackout. Klezmer music fading in, then fading into the sounds of a violent storm.)

SCENE 4: MARTIN'S OFFICE

Violent storm rages outside. MARTIN *is flipping through St Augustine's Confessions, glancing up at HANNAH furtively. She is stretching her arms for warmth towards the fire, glances back at him. Their glance interconnect. He closes the book with a* BANG*.*

He slowly unwraps her from her long, black coat as if he was undressing her. Shivering in her green dress, HANNAH *leans towards the stove.*

MARTIN *stretches out his hand for her* HAT *too, but she insists on keeping it on, pulling it*

further down, over her face. He kneels beside her and stokes the fire.)

MARTIN *(blowing at the embers)* Tea?

*(*HANNAH *nods, still panting from running in the storm. Her face is dripping with rain.* MARTIN *blows at the fire vigorously, looks up at her, stands up, wraps his own scarf around her neck and walks to the table, offers her several tea boxes with their lid off.)*

MARTIN *(handing her his scarf)* Well?

HANNAH *(drying her face with the scarf, sniffing the teas but looking at him)* Hmm… Difficult choice.

(After some hesitation, she picks one of them. MARTIN *takes off his jacket and wraps her in it as he talks.)*

MARTIN We are so self-centered, aren't we all? Human-centered philosophy, along with the history of mankind, is an egotistical affair. *(motioning her to sit down)* Let's think about it for a moment. *(pouring her tea)* Is there any other being which believes other beings exist for it?

HANNAH That all of Being exists for it?

MARTIN Remember Descartes?

HANNAH Cogito ergo sum.

MARTIN It's ME. It's me, me, me! I- *(they say 'I' at the same time, then she finishes his sentence)*

HANNAH 'I' am the ultimate point of reference.

MARTIN *(Looking at a tree in a painting on the wall, then sorting books.)* Take the tree. How do we think of the tree?

HANNAH Well… Air… Oxygen… Its leaves transform carbon-dioxide into oxygen–

MARTIN *(crouching at the fire)*–so that we can breathe. And hence, live.

HANNAH And the roots… the roots prevent erosion–

MARTIN –to hold the soil in place. So that we can inhabit it.

HANNAH (*the burning logs, looking down at him, flirting)* Keeps us warm.
MARTIN *(looking up, slowly standing up)* And paper. Phenomenally… *(admiring her)* wonderful.
(She almost moves away.) Couldn't possibly live without it.

HANNAH We can take a rest in its shade.
MARTIN (*offering her an* APPLE*)* Your hat can take a rest on its branch.
HANNAH *(biting in the apple)* It feeds us…
MARTIN Yes, yes, yes… All very useful. That is, if you take the technological attitude to life. *(Beat.*
talking to himself as eating the apple) Alarmingly useful. We only see the tree as… standing reserve. It's homogenous stock, existing–
HANNAH 'for us. Us, the thinking things.
MARTIN You see… We 'frame' the tree. We frame it. We frame it for our use.
(They both chew on the apple in unison, thinking in silence.)

HANNAH *(hardly audible, biting in the apple)* Well, how about–

MARTIN *(cutting her off)* Mere putty. The world is but putty in our hands.

(Silence except for the ticking of the clock. They chew their apple in unison.)

HANNAH *(shy but determined)* How about its… beauty? Inspires us to create. Paintings. Poetry. Music.

MARTIN *(staring at her hat)* –From a technological viewpoint, this is just an object. *(harshly)* Just 'stuff'. *(Backing her into the fire. Matter-of-factly:)* It can be measured, torn apart, made into something else. Or given a monetary value.

*(*MARTIN*'s hands reach towards* HANNAH*'s face. She steps back; he steps closer. They continue this dance across the stage until* HANNAH *backs into the stove.)*

HANNAH *(burnt by the stove)* OOOOOH!!!

(MARTIN *steps closer to check if she is all right. His hands reach towards her face again, hesitate around her cheek, then reach for her* HAT*. The erotic tension between the two is palpable.)*

MARTIN *(holding the rim of the* HAT *on her head, dispassionately*) Hmm… Let's see. Size 12? Say, 35cm in diameter, the brim an extra 10. Well-worn but I could get, say, four marks out of it.

*(*MARTIN *takes off the* HAT *as if in slow motion.* HANNAH *shakes her hair.)*

MARTIN Or I could tear off the rim and throw that in the rubbish.

HANNAH Herr Professor…

MARTIN Or I could use it as a curtain tieback.

HANNAH *(she throws off his jacket)* Professor Heidegger…

MARTIN *(caressing the hat on his chest)* Or… as a tie of sorts. *(Turning the hat upside down, he fills it with index cards.)* The rest could serve me… as a container for my index cards. *(He takes out the cards. As he puts the* HAT *back on her head, slowly and tenderly:)* But for me this… hat is different. *(while putting the hat on her head gently)* I can see it in its context.

HANNAH It's not just an object. It's part of someone's world.

MARTIN *(His face almost softens as he admires hers.)* Your world.

*(*HANNAH *adjusts her hat.)*

MARTIN *(taking her hand into his hands, kissing it)* It has your history, Fraulein Arendt.

HANNAH By 'Caring', Professor Heidegger —

MARTIN *(taking her other hand, kissing her fingers tenderly)* Each speck of dust… every little dimple and wrinkle… on your hat… is an evidence of your whole existence.
HANNAH By 'Caring' you mean–
MARTIN *(framing her head in his palms)* I mean–
HANNAH –seeing everything… in its context.
MARTIN *(whispering, leaning towards her)* With its… historical significance.
*(*HANNAH *pulls back. In silence, they are locked in each other's eyes. Clock ticking. Then* HANNAH *takes off her* HAT*, shakes her hair and tilts her head, nesting it back into his palms. His fingers buried in her tousled hair.)*
HANNAH *(leaning towards him)* Caring–
MARTIN *(brushing his cheeks against hers)* Caring–
HANNAH *(turning her other cheek)* –is to experience–
MARTIN *(kissing her)* –how everything is–

HANNAH *(kissing back)* –interconnected.

The two are fused in a passionate kiss. Clock ticking, rain falling. As HANNAH *embraces him, the* HAT *falls from her grip to the ground. Blackout. Klezmer music fades in.*

THE END

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The Blinding March Of Neoliberalism

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Inhis seminal account of the collapse of the 19th century liberal European order, the rise of fascism and the outbreak of general war, Karl Polanyi traced the ultimate source of the "self-destruction of (European) civilization" to the ravages produced by the institutionalized utopia of a "self adjusting market"[i]. Anchored in a metaphysical construct (the "invisible hand") detached from the anthropological realities of social life, the self-adjusting market became the dominant paradigm of market societies that commodified labor, land and money. Over the course of the century, the market became "the only organizing power in the economic sphere" and the dominant institution of society. Whereas economic activity had forever been "a function of the social in which it was contained", it became a law unto itself, severed from its social foundations, "subordinating the substance of society itself to the laws of the market."

This process of universal commodification, Polanyi argued, "could not endure for any length in time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society". Indeed, most European societies ultimately took measures to protect themselves from the corrosive effects of the self adjusting market by opting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for strong mercantilist states that pursued narrow national goals and strove for imperial monopoly at each others' expense. Mid-century transnational capitalist cooperation, embodied by pan-European networks of haute finance whose functional role was to "avert general wars", gave way to ruthless national power politics: despite the high degree of European economic integration at the turn of the century, the webs of capitalist interdependence were swept away in the rising nationalist wave.

The outcome was "a social transformation of planetary range, topped by wars of an unprecedented type in which a score of states crashed (and new empires emerged) out of a sea of blood". Fascism, a deadly pathological "solution to the impasse reached by liberal capitalism… a reform of market economy achieved at the price of the extirpation of all democratic institutions", was the predominant but not the only "solution" to the impasse of market societies: Soviet socialism in one country and Roosevelt's New Deal were synchronous alternative pathways out of universal commodification. Both emerged strengthened from the war.

In the West, social states with varying levels of protection and state intervention, reflecting different national pathways and traditions, were created and/or consolidated around a new growth regime and a new international institutional order. At the national level, the "Keynesian welfare state" appeared to resolve two of the central contradictions of capitalism: cyclical uncontrolled slides into depression and unrestrained class warfare. At the national level, the

compromise between capital and labor, mediated by the state, helped to mute the competitive pressures of the market by promoting relative social fairness: throughout the industrialized West, income and wealth inequalities were significantly reduced. In Europe, this helped to contain potential challenges to liberalism from mass based Communist parties. At the international level, the institutional architecture created at Bretton Woods created a stable international regulatory framework for the capitalist political economy. In David Harvey's words, "the restructuring of state forms and of international relations after the Second World War was designed to prevent a return of the catastrophic conditions that had so threatened the capitalist order in the 30's."

As the core state in the post-war capitalist order, the United States was the driving agent of the restructuring process. It sustained the international institutions it had helped to create, and supported the establishment of (liberal) interventionist welfare states in Europe and (authoritarian or semi-authoritarian) developmental states in East Asia. This mixed-economy policy, contrary to the US's pre-war liberal credo, was not driven by altruism but by self interest: the US hegemonic project during the Cold War required a belt of stable hence prosperous subordinate states ringing the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China[ii]. This could not be achieved through the markets alone. The Marshall Plan embodied the US's interventionist management of the capitalist world economy. In the US itself the Rooseveltian welfare state took on a minimal form but it nonetheless became a major component of the postwar US state and the American political economy. Apart from a few isolated followers of the Austrian school (Friedrich von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises) Keynesianism was hegemonic economic policy: government intervention and counter-cyclical policies to stimulate demand and support the unemployed had become the orthodoxy, even within the conservative camp. "We are all Keynesians now", said Richard Nixon in 1971. Ironically, that statement was uttered the year the Bretton-Woods system began to unravel, ushering in the monetarist counter-revolution of the 80's and contemporary neo-liberal hegemony.

The proximate causes of the breakdown of the Keynesian paradigm are well known. Facing inflationary pressures due to the war in Vietnam, declining productivity, intensifying trade competition from Europe and Japan, and hence rising foreign claims to redeem dollars with gold, the US unilaterally tore down the fixed but adjustable exchange rate regime set up at Bretton Woods. The convertibility of the dollar to gold, the pillar of the post-war international monetary system, was ended. John Connolly, Nixon's Treasury Secretary, put matters bluntly: "it's our currency but it's your problem", delicately adding: "foreigners are out to screw us and it is our job to screw them first". Two years later generalized floating exchange rates reintroduced pre-war international monetary anarchy. Meanwhile, on the domestic front, prolonged "stagflation" and mass unemployment challenged counter-cyclical macro-economic policies. Inflation that had been building up since the early years of Vietnam peaked at 13.58% in 1980. In 1979, the Federal Reserve launched the global monetarist backlash by implementing highly restrictive monetary policies. Monetarism had a series of profound domestic and global effects: it forced drastic industrial restructuring and decisively shifted the balance of forces between labor and capital. By favoring rentier capitalism it restored and expanded the power of the increasingly autonomous financial sphere.

Globally, as Giovanni Arrighi points out[iii], the prolonged US rates rise restored the US's declining world hegemony by redirecting capital flows back to the US and disciplined the periphery into submission (the Latin American debt crisis of 1982). The neo liberal reconfiguration that followed was not the work of an "invisible hand". Though structural transformations played an underlying role, notably the decline of the "rust belt" industries, the neo literal mutation would not have been possible without coercive state intervention: In the early 80's, the leaders of the "conservative revolution" in the US and UK joined forces to lock in the transformation by crushing organized labor. Ronald Reagan suppressed the air controllers' strike in the US and Margaret Thatcher waged a vicious and ultimately victorious war against the miners in the UK[iv]. Neo liberalism was thus a "political project" mobilizing the repressive powers of the state to "restore the power of economic elites."

This narrative goes some way to explaining the macro mechanisms of the paradigm shift. But it does not tell us why neo-liberalism, a contemporary globalized variant of the "self regulating market" of the 19th century, subsequently gained near universal hegemony. That is the central question of David Harvey's latest, intellectually stimulating, book. As a doctrine and a practice, neoliberalism was designed, writes Harvey, to "liberate corporate and business power (and) re-establish market freedoms" that had been contained by the social state, that is to restore "the conditions for the resumption of active capital accumulation". The restoration, theorized by a tightly knit group of ideologues in the UK and US, and legitimized by a discourse deeply embedded in the American mind on individual freedom and autonomy, had four major components: the financialization of the economy; the growing mobility of capital; the dominance of the "Wall Street-IMF-Treasury" complex in the 90's; and the "global diffusion of the new monetarist and neoliberal economic orthodoxy". These components, writes Harvey, were fused in the "Washington Consensus of the mid-1990's which "defined the US and UK models of neoliberalism as the answer to global problems". Those models called for limitless market freedom. "Shareholder value" became the war cry of the business class during the 90's, culminating in the later part of the decade with shameless displays of wealth, crony capitalism and corruption. Today, one of its most obscene expressions is the unrestrained enthusiasm of the financial markets whenever mass lay offs occur.

The last frontier of the free market project was opened with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Liberalization, deregulation and privatization spread worldwide to areas previously outside of market control. Led by an oligarchy of robber barons, Russia underwent "shock therapy" which it has still not fully recovered from. India began its own deregulation and privatization process, though in a far more controlled fashion. China, which had initiated an gradual state-managed policy of agricultural de-collectivization and selective international opening in the late seventies, accelerated the liberal turn in the mid 1980's. After a parenthesis in the late 80's, liberalization was deepened again when Deng toured southern China in 1992.

As anyone who has visited China over the past decade knows, the labor market has been nearly entirely "freed" from regulatory constraint, leading to Darwinian competition between the "old" industrial working class in the declining state sector and the great mass of disenfranchised and unprotected workers flowing from the countryside into the cities. Health

care and the best parts of the school system have been privatized. Meanwhile, the dynamic developmental states of northeast Asia and the emerging states of Southeast Asia were subjected to intense western pressure to liberalize their capital accounts and open them to foreign investors. The outcome was the great financial crisis of 1997/1998, caused by overinvestment in short term speculative assets, whose ripple effects nearly engulfed the global financial system. That said, the spread of neoliberalism has not been a uniform process: Harvey is right to point out that neoliberalization proceeded unevenly, with local outcomes depending on the "interplay of internal dynamics and external forces", and the institutional configurations of different societies.

The external forces were the US state, the international institutions dominated by the US, and the transnational companies with a vested interest in unfettered global investment, trade and financial flows. Since the early 80's, successive US governments intervened overtly and covertly to produce outcomes favorable to American business and, more broadly, transnational companies, American or not. Given the permanence of US economic nationalism this may at first sight appear contradictory. Yet as Susan Strange pointed out in the late 1980's, "globalization" did not submerge all states, merely the weaker states of the international system: "all the decisions about the regulation of market operators and intermediaries that used predominantly to be the prerogative of each national government are now shared unevenly between a few governments of the largest and richest countries, of which the US is by far the most important". As a result, transnational firms are less autonomous than many post national theorists have claimed. They were and remain "responsible to policy decisions taken by the US government."[v] Global liberalization affirmed the US's comparative advantages in the FIRE sector (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate). Capital account liberalization allowed the US to reshape national development paths, and to dig deeply into the savings of the rest of the world (at high rates of return).

Simply put, the establishment of a global free capital market was essential for the economic and financial well being of the world's leading debtor. This helps to understand the continuity of US global liberalization policy since the mid 80's. In 1985, Ronald Reagan set out to knock down barriers to trade, foreign investment and the free movement of capital between industrialized countries, especially in Japan. His successor continued this effort though the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, designed to support free markets and the free movement of capital in the western hemisphere. The policy was globalized under Bill Clinton: "Previous administrations had pushed for financial liberalization principally in Japan, but under President Clinton it became a worldwide effort" directed in particular at the new area of wealth accumulation in East Asia, "seen as a potential gold mine for American banks and brokerages". According to *The New York Times*, the Clinton White House worked out a plan, coordinated by the Department of Commerce, that "identified 10 rising economic powers from the Pacific to the Atlantic whose economies were to be opened up, and it called upon all government departments, from the CIA, to US Ambassadors abroad"[vi].

During the 90's the power political objectives of the US State and the wealth maximization objectives of market actors coincided to an extraordinary degree. Robert Wade suggested a few

years ago that liberalization and the "increasing mobility of information, finance and goods and services frees the American government of constraints while putting everyone else under tighter constraints". This is undoubtedly the case. Yet, as Harvey argues, "the grim reach of US imperial power…by no means constitutes the whole story" of the global slide to neoliberalism. The US did not directly impose liberalization and opening on China, India, or continental Europe for instance. What it did was set the global agenda and create a global context favorable to local forces pursuing their own market objectives. In most emerging countries the small domestic constituencies favoring the liberal turn that were strengthened by internationalization (they are now in retreat in Latin American and South East Asia). This was also obviously the case in continental Europe and Japan where thin but very influential business circles (the European Business Round Table) were empowered by the US's turn to neoliberalism. These constituencies acted to reshape government agendas as part of a growing global elite consensus around common objectives. Indeed, private institutions of global governance became the locus of transnational elite dialogue and convergence around the neoliberal agenda (World Economic Forum), buttressing the global disciplinary function of public institutions such as the IMF.

The continuity of US foreign economic and financial policy over the past two decades does not mean however that there was continuity in other domains. While Harvey is very persuasive in his detailed discussion of the complex mix of factors leading to neoliberal hegemony, he is less so when he argues more speculatively that neo-conservatism (and implicitly the US's imperialist drive since 2000) emerged as an "answer" to the contradictions of the neoliberal state in crisis. While neoliberalism entails forms of social control, surveillance and repression ' of governmentality in the Foucauldian sense ' that are inherently disciplinary, it does not necessarily follow that neo-conservative authoritarianism is, as Harvey seems to imply, an outcome of a critical moment in neo-liberal rule. Underlying this is the assumption that the US hegemony has been "crumbling" since the 70's and that militarism is a convulsive response to that trend.

In fact, US hegemony which was indeed waning in the 70's and early eighties was restored in the late eighties and the nineties. Under Bill Clinton neoliberalism proceeded without militarization, through the subtle operation of governmentality within and muscular economic "diplomacy" abroad. Though it is neoliberal in the sense that it has done more than any other government to favor the owners of capital (mostly in the energy and national security sectors), the sovereign authoritarian state of George Bush, or what Judith Butler calls the Bush administration's "lawless exercise in state sovereignty", has little to do with its predecessors in all other regards. This is not a minor matter: different forms of exercise of state power under specific hegemonic configurations produce very different outcomes. There is no continuity between the silky discussion on the trading state and interdependence of the 90's and the forward march of neo-imperialism since 2000. Indeed, the US's lawless exercise of power of the past years has deeply split ruling elites within the US, but also globally.

Be that as it may, the outcome of the decades-long reconfiguration of social forces has been an extraordinary increase in social inequality. In the US, income and wealth polarization has

reached levels not seen since the twenties, with a tiny fraction of the population concentrating most of the country's income and wealth. According to the Economic Policy Institute, in 2000 "the share of income held by the top 1% by income was the largest since the run-up to the Great Depression. In 1979, the average income for the top 1% was 33.1 times the income of the lowest 20% and 10.1 times the middle fifth. By 2000, the average income of the top 1% was 88.5 times that of the bottom fifth, an increase of 55.4 points." In the US and in continental Europe, average living standards have either stagnated or regressed. Inequality has also risen sharply in Asian societies with historic traditions of relative social equity (Japan, South Korea). Everywhere, large fractions of the population, the "unqualified", have been written off and left to fend for themselves. Apologists of this brutal process of social selection have naturalized the transformation, making it appear an historic necessity. Like all hegemonic narratives, neoliberal theory has cloaked the real world objectives of the reconfiguration behind high sounding ideals: "the genius of neoliberal theory is to provide a benevolent mask full of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice and rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power."

The reconstitution of market societies marked by extreme inequalities is not sustainable in the long run. Polanyi's analysis and warning must be kept in mind. Social backlashes of various types will emerge, indeed are already apparent: right-wing populism and religious conservatism, on the one hand, progressive movements of global social transformation (the World Social Forum) on the other. The growing demand for protection from world market forces is already translating in nationalism (Russia, for instance) or regionalism (Mercosur) in various parts of the world. Ultimately, the content and pathway of change will depend on the balance of forces of the social agencies at work. For the moment, the constituencies favoring social and democratic alternatives to commodification are in retreat in the West. But they are still sufficiently present to influence the course of events. The real test will come in times of crisis. The timing and trigger of fundamental crisis, at systemic level, is of course hard if not impossible to predict (likewise mass mobilizations still elude the grasp of the social sciences). Nonetheless, some of the conditions may be crystallizing now. In particular, the US, the main normative agent in the process of global marketization over the past decades, appears to be losing control: the country's rapidly growing indebtedness and reliance on foreign capital flows creates global financial volatility and generates systemic vulnerabilities. If the trend continues it will severely strain the world financial system.

The US already consumes 75% of world savings to meet its daily financing needs. At some point not yet determined, rising US foreign debt will conflict with the requirements of the US's main financiers. The US will then be forced to adjust. Harvey argues that to free itself from growing external constraints, the US has a polar choice: hyper-inflation or deflation, both of which imply a crisis of the US hegemonic order and hence a fundamental and possibly violent restructuring of the world system. This may be too starkly put: Clearly, under its present leadership the US is heading towards financial disaster (not to speak of the disaster produced by imperial foreign policy in the Gulf). Yet, under wiser management, the US may be able to find a softer middle way out of its present economic and financial dilemma. That pathway would however require the US's acceptance of real interdependence, that is a downsizing of

US imperial ambitions and a major change in economic policy…

One needn't agree with Harvey's hypothesis, widely shared in Marxist circles, that neo-conservatism emerged as an authoritarian solution to the instabilities and contradictions of neooliberalism, or his assumptions about structural US decline, to share his intellectual and ethical concern over the neoliberal destruction of society. His *Brief History* is a valuable conceptual and descriptive history of the great regression of our times. It also a normative statement about what should be. In denouncing universal commodification Harvey rightly suggests that it is urgent that we reinvent and reinvest the meanings of "democratic governance", of "political, economic and cultural equality and justice". With the renaissance of the left, neoliberal hegemony has ended in Latin America. It is being challenged in parts of Asia. What is needed now is a progressive global agenda in a difficult but not hopeless reactionary age.

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[i] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1973 (1944).

[ii] See Bruce Cumings, Parralax Visions (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

[iii] Giovanni Arrighi, "The social and political economy of global turbulence", New Left Review, N° 20, March/April, 2003.

[iv] For a Foucauldian reading of this critical turning point see Noelle Burgi, *L'Etat britannique contre les syndicates*", Kimé, Paris, 1993.

[v] Susan Strange, "Toward a Theory of Transnational Empire", in Ernst_otto Czempiel and James Rosenau, eds, Global Change and Theoretical Challenges

[vi] Nicholas D. Kristof and David Sanger, "How US Wooed Asia to let the Cash In", New York Times, 16 February 1999.

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Edmund Wilson: A Life In Literature, By Lewis Dabney

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Late in life when confronted by the mindless consumerism of Life magazine Edmund Wilson said: “I do not belong to the country depicted there… I do not even live in that country.” Every page of Lewis Dabney’s long awaited biography of Wilson is shadowed by his subject’s realization that the America which he had written of and praised; the world which he had come from was gone. Edmund Wilson had become a ghost.

Wilson’s life parallels America’s rise to world power; to the humiliation of Vietnam and its descent into a National Security State overseen by arms dealing bureaucrats. His final years were soured by his conviction that everything he had championed had been defeated. Wilson’s long life (1895-1972), from his days at Princeton mentoring F. Scott Fitzgerald, to his extended battle with the Internal Revenue, and his ultimate disillusion, in its incidents rivals that of Samuel Pepys or John Evelyn. Patrician as Wilson may seem, Dabney does not shy from depicting graphic personal details that could belong just as easily to the seventeenth century.

Wilson’s mother was a Kimball who traced her ancestry to the Puritan Divine, Cotton Mather. His father had been New Jersey’s Attorney General, and had President Woodrow Wilson lived, a Supreme Court Justice. Caught as a child between tyrannizing parents, he was a privileged pawn in an interminable family drama. His mother, on hearing his father diagnosed as ‘mad,’ had gone deaf, and his father, who lost but one case in the course of a long legal career, slowly descended into hypochondria and isolation behind a felt lined door. Wilson, educated at the exclusive Hill School and later at Princeton, was studious; a typical product of the Eastern establishment until, on entering the Army as an enlisted man in 1917, he witnessed military incompetence; the horrors of the First World War; and, up close, people who were not of his lofty class. The combination changed him forever. On returning from the War, scarred by what he had seen and determined “never again to live trivially or indifferently,” he mocked his time at Princeton:

I too have faked the glamour of gray towers
I too have sung the ease of sultry hours,
Deep woods, sweet lanes, wide playing fields, and
smooth ponds
–Where clean boys train to sell their country’s bonds.

Having put the ‘instinctive snobbishness’ of his class behind him, he declares himself a Socialist and rooms in Greenwich Village where he falls in love with the poetess Edna St. Vincent Millay. Millay, a femme fatale and Pulitzer Prize winner, betrayed him with élan, but

set him on a sexual career that still dazzles. He recycles his college work to small journals and magazines, and determined to succeed as a journalist and critic, wrangles a job at *Vanity Fair*.

His mates at Princeton he said: "stayed with their class," while Wilson, perpetually attired in a Brooks Brothers suit, tie and white shirt, embraced New York bohemian life with a zest that would never flag. Wilson came into his own in the Roaring Twenties with its heady mix of Bootleg alcohol, intense talk, Bohemian camaraderie, romance, and enduring friendship. He goes to work for Frank Crowninshield, a self- promoting Bostonian, at *Vanity Fair*; meets Benchley, Dorothy Parker, George S. Kaufman, and the rest of the Algonquin Round Table; is promoted to managing editor; mentored by H. L. Mencken; declares war on the Philistine and reads Marx and Freud. His friendship with F. Scott Fitzgerald proved durable, though Wilson could be a prickly mentor, and Fitzgerald a feckless and irritating drunk. Wilson describes a disastrous dinner with the novelist Edith Wharton and a drunken Fitzgerald desperate to impress the proper aristocrat. Dabney is not alone in marveling at Wilson's extraordinary capacity for drink. Wilson's work habits were unvarying, and long periods of writing invariably preceded heavy drinking.

His drinking almost cost him his final and happiest marriage to Elena Mumm, who took to suggesting that something be purchased by remarking :"Edmund, this will only cost ten bottles of Johnny Walker." Wilson's first marriage to the actress Mary Blair produces one child, Rosalind, and is soon over. He marries the Californian Margaret Canby and she dies of a fall shortly after. Wilson will dream guiltily of her for the rest of his life. Left a single parent with a nine year old, Wilson leaves his daughter to his mother's care and conducts a series of liaisons, most of which found their way visibly into his work. All the same, he meticulously recorded the details of his sexual life. When interested, he was an inspired conversationalist and commenting on his long list of conquests admitted candidly: "I talked them into it." His marriage, in the early Forties, to Mary McCarthy, proves a protracted disaster. "You were too young and I was too old," he later lamented.

The Depression sharpens Wilson's maverick revolutionary impulses, and he writes *To the Finland Station*, still a definitive study of Marx's ideas and of the men whom he and Engels drew on in their battle with a capitalism only just beginning to assert its power.

Wilson's complicated transition from Village bohemian to Communist following the Crash is a contorted tale and Dabney is at some pains to get it all straight. The vicious cross-fire between Stalinists and Trotskyites complicated Wilson's literary appeal, which was not primarily to workers but to Liberal readers who were leery of or hostile to Marxism. He hoped, he said: 'to disarm' them. He was anxious that Americans take communism from the Soviets and rework it according to homegrown democratic values, and in this he was prescient, as the Comintern dominated US party went from a series of catastrophes to self-liquidation. Sydney Hook wrote of *Finland Station* that "there was nothing which equals the insight, the eloquence, and the essential justice' of Wilson's treatment of the sources of Marxism." Dabney justifiably calls Finland Station "the most significant imaginative work to come out of the Thirties.' It remains today an engrossing analysis of Marx and Engels, and of those, like Michelet, who inspired

them. Following a tour of the Soviet Union in 1935 financed by a Guggenheim, Wilson became classed a Trotskyite and 'renegade' by Party hacks.

The Forties find him hobnobbing with Stravinsky and Auden and trapped in an unhappy marriage. He lacked the dominating presence necessary for success as a guest professor and found academic atmospheres, English departments, and literary types enervating and soulless, but his tenuous finances demanded long periods lecturing in his thin, quavering tenor at Harvard, Yale, and the University of Chicago. The depth and breath of Wilson's erudition astounded, and he remained a Victorian in his absolute insistence on strength in the face of all that life deals those who insist on living as Hemingway said: 'at the top.' By the Nineteen Fifties he has seen through the 'American Century' and rejects the Cold War triumphalism and reactionary opinion that find his old friends Dos Passos and Allan Tate embracing Conservatism and an antiquated racism. He learns Hebrew, and writes a book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, still widely praised. But the Republic to which he had dedicated so much of his intellectual energy has ceased to represent either progress or sanity.

The Second World War puts an end to attempts at changing the United States, and instead much of what Wilson had valued is subverted in the long fight to defeat Fascism. Wilson's final years are spent chronicling Upstate New York: and his family's long history at the Talcottville home he retreated to in the last years of his life. He writes a book damning the Cold War and the income tax, and wages a long struggle over his own tax delinquency with the IRS; finally resolved with some help from well-placed friends.

What remains of his work? *The American Jitters* is a prophetic look at the Thirties, and in its interviews and sharp narration suggests Studs Terkel and the New Journalism. *To the Finland Station*, *The Cold War and the Income Tax*, *Patriotic Gore*, and the literary criticism are not just the works of a daunting polymath but all break new ground as well. Wilson abandoned the Stalinists following the purges, and watched as the Second World War puts an end to efforts to liberalize and democratize the US – in favor of an anti-Fascist crusade, which will mutate to the McCarthyism and post War ultra-conservatism he deplored. Wilson was a progressive whose life and attitudes spanned the Victorian and Modern ages. His conviction that Socialism would both improve culture and the human gene pool was not uncommon among Progressives of his day.

Wilson's friendships were deep and longstanding: his letters at Yale number over seventy thousand. But the histories of those around him; Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, John Peale Bishop, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Edna Millay, and boyhood friends, Sandy Wilson and Ted Paramore are tales of dissolution, waste, instability and finally ultra-conservatism: Wilson mourns them, and passes on muttering a Hebrew phrase he would repeat each morning: "Be Strong, Be strong," and continues to the end prolific, focused, performing prodigies of work uncorrupted by cant, or the 'New Criticism' he came to detest. He mourned the passing of the world he had loved, and its gradual erosion by the corporate Capitalists and bureaucrats he felt had vulgarized and nullified the old American traditions of honesty and rectitude whose history he had helped write.

As he wrote of Chief Justice Holmes: The American Constitution was, as he came to declare, an experiment – what was to come of our democratic society it was impossible for a philosopher to tel l- but he had taken responsibility for its working, he had subsisted and achieved his fame through his tenure of the place it had given him, and he returned to the treasury of the Union the little that he had to leave." The perfect balance of this sentence is at once proof of Wilson's great gifts and stark evidence of the vast distances that now separate us from those who once selflessly served this Republic and made it, for a time, a place of great hope and promise.

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The End Of A Certain World: The Life And Science Of Max Born, by Nancy Thorndyke Greenspan

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In the 1950s I studied physics at Birkbeck College in London, first as an undergraduate and then as a postgraduate research student under the supervision of the Reader in Theoretical Physics, Dr Reinhold Fürth, an émigré from Continental Europe who had taken his doctor's degree at the University of Prague. I mention this because from the beginning of the Second World War, Fürth had been a research assistant in Max Born's Natural Philosophy department at the University of Edinburgh. He became one of Born's principal collaborators in the department's research school that flourished after the war (another principal collaborator at the time was Klaus Fuchs, who was arrested in 1950 for passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Republic). Fürth later described Born's zest in directing his research students, even when approaching retirement age:

When Born arrived in the morning he first used to make the round of his research students, asking them whether they had any progress to report, and giving them advice, sometimes presenting them with sheets of elaborate calculations concerning their problems which he himself had done the day before . . . Being such an incredibly fast worker himself he could on occasion become quite impatient when he found that a student had not managed to complete the calculations which had been suggested to him only the day before. The rest of the morning was spent by Born in delivering his lectures to undergraduate honours students, attending to departmental business, and doing research work of his own. Most of the latter, however, he used to carry out at home in the afternoons and evenings[1]

At Birkbeck, the aspects of physics on which Born worked during the 1920s, lattice dynamics and the principles of quantum mechanics in particular, were part of the curriculum, and still, despite the passage of 30 years, remarkably fresh to our young minds. We were learning the 'new' physics. At undergraduate level, Born's Atomic Physics, a lucid, masterly, and wide-ranging text book, was required reading, as it was in physics departments throughout the world. First published in 1933, it ran to eight editions, keeping pace with developments until 1969, the year before Born died. Surprisingly, there has been no previous biography of this great theoretical physicist, a Nobel prize-winner and a life-long friend of Albert Einstein. Born collaborated with, or taught, acclaimed scientists such as Theodore von Kármán, Wolfgang Pauli and Werner Heisenberg, and, although a pacifist, counted among his students many luminaries who went on to develop the atomic bomb: Robert Oppenheimer, Edward Teller, Eugen Wigner, and John von Neumann among them. So Nancy Greenspan's well-researched record of Born the scientist and Born the private man deserves a very warm welcome.

There is, however, a problem for the general reader. Quantum mechanics is, to say the least, difficult to understand. As David Griffiths explains in his excellent *Introduction to Quantum Mechanics*, aimed at today's physics undergraduates, "Unlike Newton's mechanics, or Maxwell's electrodynamics, or Einstein's relativity, quantum theory was not created – or even definitely packaged – by one individual, and it retains to this day some of the scars of its exhilarating but traumatic youth. There is no general consensus as to what its fundamental principles are, or what it really means." A biography cannot avoid, or entirely solve, these difficulties. Those readers unable to follow the mathematical and physical details – and I include myself among them – will still gain insight into 'exhilarating but traumatic' times, and the part played by Born and others in bringing about this radical departure from classical science. Simplified, non-mathematical descriptions of the process are given in the presentation speeches at the Nobel Prize ceremonies for Heisenburg (1932) and Born (1954), to which I refer below. Greenspan, mercifully perhaps, includes just one mathematical equation, but it is the equation which Born described as his greatest scientific achievement: the fundamental commutation law of quantum mechanics, first jotted down in July 1925. It is carved on his gravestone: "pq-qp=h/2πi".

Greenspan excels in her descriptions of Born as family man, as professor in the "tradition of the wandering medieval German scholars", and as a person caught up in virulent anti-Semitism in Germany even before Hitler came to power. At the University of Göttingen in the mid-1920s: "Hundreds of students, faculty and townspeople marched through the meandering streets and alleys, flaming torches held high, the night sky lit up in the grand Göttingen tradition. James Franck [Professor of Experimental Physics at Göttingen and Born's close friend] and his former research partner, Gustav Hertz, had won the Nobel Prize for their research on electron collisions. The throng of well-wishers eventually collected in the market square in front of the medieval Rathaus for speeches, food, and drink. Born's excitement about Franck's recognition merged with his pride of having brought him to Göttingen." And yet, most ominously, "In 1925, a twenty-two year-old chemistry student named Achim Gercke began to compile a list of all German professors [at Göttingen] of Jewish origin. He called it "The Archives of Racial Statistics for Employment Classes", the purpose of which was to provide "a weapon in hand that should enable the German Reich to exclude the last Hebrew and all mixed race from the German population in the future and expel them from the country." Franck later was to emigrate after protesting Hitler's racial policies. Gercke was rewarded for his odious zeal with the post of director of Racial Service in the Third Reich.

Born was born in 1882 at Breslau, then in Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland). His father was a professor of anatomy; his mother came from a prosperous family of textile manufacturers. Both sides of the family were well steeped in German culture. 'They believed they differed from their neighbours only in respect of religion, for which they had no time,' Max recalled. Poetry, music and science pervaded the household and Max became an accomplished pianist. He was, however, asthmatic and frail. His mother died when he was four, leaving an emotional void, and he retreated into shyness. His father died suddenly in 1900 when Max was seventeen years old and coming to the end of his schooling at the local Gymnasium. He had been deeply influenced by his father and from him inherited a profound dislike of organised religion and the

military. Thanks to the support of a close family friend, who passed on to him his socialist views, he completed his exams at the Gymnasium and entered the University of Breslau to study philosophy, science and mathematics.

The German university system was such that students could change universities almost 'to match the seasons'. Born spent a summer semester in Heidelberg, and another in Zurich, before moving from Breslau to Göttingen, a world-famous centre for mathematics. Here he became an unpaid assistant to David Hilbert, one of three 'high priests' of German mathematics. In 1906, he was awarded a PhD in mathematics and returned to Breslau to do his compulsory military service. This fortunately was cut short by an asthma attack and his friend James Franck then persuaded him to go to the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge University 'to see what real physicists do.' This switch was not a success inasmuch as the experimental tasks he was given were beyond his competence, but the experience did point him in the direction of his major contributions: the application of mathematical techniques to solve new problems in physics.

Born returned to Breslau and again tried his hand at experimental work without much success. He went to Göttingen to work on an aspect of relativity for his Habilitation – a certificate which a German PhD had to take before being allowed to teach at a university. In October, 1909, Born received permission to teach and became a lecturer in the Philosophical Faculty at Göttingen. Lecturers received no salary but relied on payments from those attending lectures. Born at first was not a captivating lecturer and so lived frugally on a small inheritance. Yet, he soon teamed up with Theodore von Kármán to develop a theory of the specific heat of solids. This was the beginning of a program of research on the properties of crystals based on their lattice structure which Born was to pursue for many years, while von Kármán turned to thermodynamics.

In 1913, Born married Hedi Ehrenberg. Their relationship was turbulent – Hedi frequently 'run-down' and retreating to sanatoriums, Born always intensely bound up in his work. Hedi had a long-lasting affair with another professor at Göttingem, but in later life, she and Born grew closer together. Born's innovative work on relativity, specific heat and crystal lattices brought him to the attention of other universities and in 1914 he took up a professorship in theoretical physics at the University of Berlin. Here he met Einstein who frequently visited the Born household to talk science and play violin sonatas, with Max on piano. It was the beginning of a long friendship. With the advent of the First World War Born was assigned to the artillery to work on range-finding. Afterwards he moved to the University of Frankfurt. In 1921, he became Director of the Institute of Theoretical Physics at Göttingen and with the help of two highly gifted assistants, Wolfgang Pauli and Werner Heisenberg, succeeded in turning it into a leading centre for research in quantum theory.

The first breakthrough came from Heisenberg, but this was rendered into a powerful mathematical formulation by Born and his student, Pasqual Jordan. A third paper by Born, Heisenberg and Jordan placed quantum mechanics on a very firm footing. Still, the laurels went wholly to Heisenberg: a1933 Nobel Prize in physics for his creation of quantum

mechanics. Born was deeply hurt that his contribution went unrecognized, but never complained publicly. However a bittersweet refrain running through Greenspan's biography is that Born lost no opportunity to make his aggrieved views known to friends. More than thirty years elapsed before Born received the Nobel Prize for the 'fundamental research in quantum mechanics, especially for his statistical interpretation of the wave function' conducted in Göttingen. Greenspan relates that Born was especially gratified that it cited an area that he had developed alone. To comprehend the achievement a lay reader might benefit from reading the non-mathematical descriptions of these achievements in the Nobel Prize Presentation Speeches for Heisenberg and Born, which are to be found on www.nobelprize.org/physics/laureates/1932 for Heisenberg and /1954 for Born. Briefly,

Born, in collaboration with his pupil Jordan and later Heisenberg also, was able to expand the latter's original results into a comprehensive theory for atomic phenomena. This theory was called quantum mechanics.…The following year Born got a new result of fundamental significance. Schrödinger had just then found a new formulation for quantum mechanics. Schrödinger's work expanded the earlier ideas of De Broglie which imply that atomic phenomena are connected with a wave undulation… Born found that the waves determine the probability of the measuring results. For this reason, according to Born, quantum mechanics gives only a statistical description. This can be illustrated by a simple example. When you shoot at a target it is possible in principle to aim the shot from the start so that it is certain to hit the target in the middle. Quantum mechanics teaches us to the contrary – that in principle we cannot predict where a single shot will hit the target. But we can achieve this much, that from a large number of shots the average point of impact will lie in the middle. In contradiction to the deterministic predictions of the older mechanics, quantum mechanics accordingly poses laws which are of a statistical nature.

His old friend Einstein was not pleased with the statistical direction physics was taking. "God doesn't play dice," he famously scolded Born. Days after Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933 a purge of Jewish teachers began. At Göttingen Franck quickly resigned his post. Born, Courant (head of mathematics) and four other professors were suspended. Born duly was stripped of his doctoral degree and German citizenship. He then took up a three-year lectureship at Cambridge University at a minimal salary and no prospect of a permanent appointment, but eventually accepted a professorship at Edinburgh University. In 1939, with another war looming, he took British citizenship. Eight years after the end of the war, Born, Franck and Courant all were awarded the freedom of the city of Göttingen, which was as much a symbolic gesture, Greenspan observes, to all those who had been exiled (or worse) as much as a recognition of their sheer scientific achievements.

Born and Hedi finally retired to Bad Pyrmont, a spa town near Göttingen. Einstein reacted strongly to the Borns' return to what he called "the land of mass-murderers of our kinsmen," a remark that certainly stung Born. But it was at Bad Pyrmont that Born heard that he had won the Nobel Prize. Born told his son, "As I am too old to use the Nobel money for research, I think I will come nearest to Alfred Nobel's intentions, by attacking the prostitution of science for war and destruction". For the rest of his life Born actively opposed the use of science for the

development of weapons and played a leading part in the founding of the Pugwash movement to make scientists aware of their social responsibilities.

[1] N Kemmer and R Schlapp, “Max Born”, *Biographical Memoirs of*

Fellows of the Royal Society, Volume 17 p. 23, November 1971.

Dr. Colin Hughes *worked for the United Kingdom’s Atomic Energy Authority from 1949 to 1956 and is former Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Defence. He is the author of* Mametz: Lloyd George’s Welsh Army at the Battle of the Somme *(1982);* Lime, Lemon & Sarsaparilla: The Italian Community in South Wales *(1991) and a monograph on the British poet and artist, David Jones (1979).*

Radicals, Rabbis And Peacemakers: Conversations With Jewish Critics Of Israel, edited By Seth Farber

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In the Jewish-American community one can exhibit complete indifference to Jewish culture and be an outspoken atheist and yet remain a perfectly acceptable member of the tribe. On the other hand, any Jew who openly disapproves of the State of Israel is at risk of being branded a traitor, a dupe of the ubiquitous anti-Semitic enemy, and a self-loathing Jew. Most of the writers and activists represented in Seth Farber's *Radicals, Rabbis and Peacemakers* are unapologetic anti-Zionists, and thus "traitors" in precisely that most honorable sense.

Farber's book, lively and provocative, reflects not only the author's commitment to social justice, but, according to a brief biographical note, "his faith in prophetic Judaism as a medium of spiritual/social transformation." So these conversations serve a dual purpose: on the one hand they explore the Palestinian/Israeli struggle from a progressive Jewish point of view and, on the other, they engage the question of contemporary Judaism itself, a post-Holocaust faith that has largely replaced the love of Yahweh with the worship of Israel.

Noam Chomsky, in his conversation with the author, asserts that the very concept of a state that is not the state of its citizens but of the Jewish people is an illegitimate principle upon which to have founded the nation of Israeli. He clarifies his advocacy of the two-state solution by explaining that he conceives such a political configuration to be no more than a stepping stone toward a binational state, but just how the creation of a tiny Palestinian state can lead to Israel and Palestine becoming a single binational nation Chomsky does not make clear, and it is not impossible that his current position reflects his own ambivalence about that issue. He also hedges his bet on the right of return: the Palestinians must not be forced to give up that right, he declares, "but the expectation that it will be implemented is completely unrealistic. And to advocate that is just to cause pain and disaster to the refugees." Although this is a common enough position among progressive Zionists, it is much the sort of logic Alice encountered after tumbling down the rabbit hole. In similar fashion, Chomsky admits that the Jews had no more right to establish a state on land that was not theirs than did the American colonists, but then dismisses this most sticky and fundamental of issues with the casual comment that he doesn't "see a lot of point in these discussions."

Joel Kovel, author and former psychoanalyst, is less equivocal: "Zionism is a horrible mistake." Israel is illegitimate in much the way Apartheid South Africa was illegitimate. Because of its privileging of one racial group above others, it is not capable of "joining the community of nation states that are grounded in universal human rights." Nor does Kovel have a particularly

high opinion of ancient Judaism, observing that despite the "transcendent ethical potential" of its beliefs, ancient Judaism had "not just a sense of superiority but a rejection of everybody else."

Adam Shapiro, one of the founders of the International Solidarity Movement, who became momentarily newsworthy in the United States when his parents were threatened by outraged Brooklyn Zionists, observes that "any anti-Semitism that you find in Muslim countries today is the direct result of the policies of Israel vis-à-vis Palestinians." When Farber suggests how ironic it is that the Jews turned into oppressors, Shapiro replies that he does not find it at all surprising. "Over and over and over in human history those who have been oppressed have turned into the oppressors." And when Farber suggests that something in Jewish ethical tradition might have kept them moral for all those centuries, Shapiro reminds him that those supposed Jewish values are nowhere in evidence in those colorful biblical stories in which various peoples are exterminated by the pious Hebrews under God's mandate.

Phyllis Bennis, author of *Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today's UN*, reminds us of something that is rarely acknowledged: even if the three-quarters of a million Palestinians had fled in 1948 at the bequest of the Arab invaders, as the Israeli version of history had for so long insisted, "those refugees still would have the right to go home. It doesn't matter the reason they fled. Their right to return is not conditional on having fled for the right reason." Bennis also makes the important point that the US Mobilization for Peace and Justice, by making opposition to US support for Israeli occupation a central component at its mass anti-war demonstrations, has helped break through the solid wall of US support for Israeli aggression.

Another conversation is with Steve Quester, an activist with the New York organization Jews Against the Occupation who remarks, in a fascinating aside, that being queer allowed him to figure out that everything he'd been taught about Israel was a lie: "Whereas for straight Jews who've never gone through this process of realizing that they've been systematically lied to by all aspects of the society, it's much harder for them to let go of all the lies they've been taught about Israel." Another conversation is with Ora Wise, the passionately outspoken daughter of a "very Zionist" Conservative rabbi, a young woman who worked with Rabbis for Human Rights in the West Bank and was a founding member of the Ohio State Committee for Justice in Palestine. Dealing head on with the criticism that the Palestinians should organize non-violent resistance, she reminds us that terrorist attacks are "the product of a brutal, vicious, controlling, oppressive military occupation that is destroying the lives of millions of Palestinians and is deliberately destroying Palestinians' ability to organize in non-violent ways…."

The conversation with Norman Finkelstein, perhaps, by now, the most famous Jewish-American critic of Zionist machinations, is peppered with statements by various eyewitnesses to Israeli crimes and with chilling remarks by such luminaries as Moshe Dayan and David Ben-Gurion and is followed by a brief essay by Finkelstein on Israel and Zionism. Finkelstein's discussion of Israeli "race-nationalism" in particular, and Zionist ideology in general, is sharply focused and

forceful, in that incendiary take-no-prisoners polemic style that makes his own books such a sizzling read. When Farber quotes to Finkelstein a remark by the Jewish theologian Marc Ellis, to the effect that those Jews struggling for Palestinian rights "may ultimately decide the future of the covenant… and the Jewish people," Finkelstein dismisses the notion saying "I have no interest in covenants. I don't know who the Jewish people are. These are all metaphysical, extraneous terms for me."

But they are not extraneous for Farber. Rather, for him, they are absolutely central. To focus on such questions, Farber has chosen to include conversations with Norton Mezvinsky, an advocate of the universalist humanism promoted by early Reform Judaism, and with two orthodox Jewish thinkers: Daniel Boyarin and Rabbi David Weiss, both of whom are anti-Zionists.

Mezvinsky, who was singled out by Daniel Pipes' Campus Watch for "spewing anti-Semitic calumnies," is another who believes that Zionism is inherently a racist ideology. On the matter of the two-state solution, he argues that what the Israeli leadership has always meant by a Palestinian state is a small "autonomous region" without any real sovereignty. Considering that 40% of the water for all Israel comes from aquifers the Israelis have built in the West Bank, it is hardly likely, he argues, that they will return the West Bank to the Palestinians. If neither a single state nor two genuine states is currently realistic, why not opt, Mezvinsky suggests, for the better, more democratic and just approach— a binational state.

The two orthodox Jews have a difficult time squaring their hatred of Israel's military aggression with their biblical literalism. Though Daniel Boyarin believes that Zionism is "out-and-out heresy," he is clearly uncomfortable when Farber reminds him of Yahweh's commands that the Israelites commit genocide against various peoples. He insists that such questions are simply "not relevant anymore," though clearly, if one is a literalist, they are indeed relevant. When Farber poses the same sort of question to David Weiss, a rabbi of the Neturie Karta community, the rabbi can only fumble helplessly in response:

But it's not my issue to try to answer for G-d why he would want such a thing which is in the bible which is accepted. I could look and try to find, according to the Kabbalah, reasons, you know… that's secret as far as, you know, there's a deeper meaning for everything…

For Weiss, the reestablishment of Jewish legitimacy over the holy land is a perfectly legitimate goal — so long as it occurs after the return of the Messiah.

If Farber's least favorite Jewish progressive is Rabbi Michael Lerner, who has famously argued that Jews had the right to steal the Palestinian homeland as an act of "affirmative action," the figure whose position the author most fully seems to respect is the theologian and philosopher Marc Ellis, who apparently refused or was unable to participate in this project. Farber has included a brief essay by Ellis and has made that author the subject of both his introductory and concluding essays. Like Mezvinsky, Ellis advocates a Jewish theology of liberation based on the tradition of the later prophets and is opposed to "Constantinian Judaism," the notion that

the secular power of a national state is the true fulfillment of the Jewish covenant. His is another variation of Reform Judaism's early but long abandoned commitment to universal brotherhood.

It would have been useful for Common Courage Press to have hired a decent copyeditor to correct the shocking number of distracting typos and help the author organize the material a bit more gracefully. The conversations seem to have been transcribed to the page unedited, interviewer and interviewee constantly – and at times disconcertingly – interrupting one other. A good editing of the individual conversations would have helped. Those caveats aside, for anyone seriously interested in the question of Zionism, Israeli colonialism, and the Palestinian struggle, Radicals, Rabbis and Peacemakers will be a provocative and absorbing read. The complexity and richness of the discussions are not the least of the book's virtues. And for those struggling with the issue of how believing Jews can frame their faith and confront the disconcerting issues of Israeli aggression and Zionist supremacism, it will prove doubly provocative and doubly a pleasure.

Steve Kowit *has won two Pushcart Prizes and an NEA fellowship for his poetry. His latest collection is* The Gods of Rapture *from City Works Press. His poem* Intifada*, a poem of Jewish solidarity with the Palestinian people, can be purchased from the publisher, Caernarvon Press in San Diego, or directly from the author, skowit@aabol.com. He teaches at Southwestern College in Chula Vista.*

When Presidents Lie: A History Of Official Deception And Its Consequences, By Eric Alterman

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The issue of official deception has assumed new prominence with the war in Iraq. While offering a number of rationales for military action, the Bush Administration's primary one before the war was that the nexus of tyranny, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism posed unacceptable risks for the United States after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The ouster of Saddam Hussein was thus warranted. However, since the invasion, scarcely any evidence has surfaced of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction or of ties with terrorism. Accordingly, as the insurgency escalated, debate ensued over whether the Bush administration resorted to deception to marshal public support for war. In a recent article in the major scholarly journal International Security, Chaim Kaufmann argues that the Bush administration inflated the threat posed by Saddam Hussein to mobilize support. The indictment of "Scooter" Libby for obstruction and perjury reinforced perceptions that official deception is rife: nearly half of Americans agree that the overall level of honesty and ethics in the federal government has fallen since President Bush took office.

Given this distrustful political climate, Eric Alterman's *When Presidents Lie* is an especially timely contribution. The book is a detailed examination of four presidential lies about key matters of war and peace: Franklin Roosevelt and the Yalta accords, John F. Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Lyndon Johnson and the second Gulf of Tonkin incident, and Ronald Reagan and Central America in the 1980's. The book is a potent reminder that official deception predates the Bush Administration and that even presidents who are widely admired are highly capable of dishonesty. Moreover, Alterman's main argument ' that official deception, while pervasive, is ultimately counter-productive ' should resonate at a time when success, as defined by the administration, is proving elusive in Iraq and political fallout continues to accumulate at home.

Indeed, one of Alterman's strengths is that he does not shy away from making bold claims. His message is clear: "Presidential dishonesty about key matters of state 'whether moral or immoral' is ultimately and invariably self-destructive"(22). According to Alterman, the main problem with lying is blowback. As he puts it: "The pragmatic problem with official lies is their amoeba-like penchant for self-replication. The more a leader lies to his people, the more he must lie to his people. Eventually the lies take on a life of their own and tend to overpower the liar"(20). Consistent with this argument, Alterman's four case studies are filled with tragedy: however good their intentions, presidents invariably do more harm than good when they resort to deception.

Perhaps the most persuasive illustrations of blowback in the book are the first two: Franklin Roosevelt and the Yalta accords and John F. Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis. As Alterman puts it, "In each case, a Democratic president cut a deal with his Soviet counterpart that recognized and respected his adversary's interests while simultaneously securing the United States' most important goals. But in neither case was the president willing to confide even in some of his closest political advisers, much less the American people, about the traditional diplomatic give-and-take necessary to close the deal, so threatening did each leader find the notion of a publicly admitted political compromise"(144).

As it turns out, the results in each case were the opposite of what Roosevelt or Kennedy intended: deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union and a poisoned political climate at home. Indeed, Alterman argues that FDR's lies about Yalta provided the immediate impetus for the Cold War while setting the stage for McCarthyism. Kennedy's lies about the Cuban Missile Crisis contributed to Johnson's decision to escalate the Vietnam War. It is hardly surprising, then, that Alterman's central claim is that lying is ultimately counterproductive.

Consider this: if lying is so counterproductive, then why is it so pervasive? Are presidents really so shortsighted that they consistently engage in self-destructive behaviors? This should be puzzling for anyone that comes to the subject with rationalist assumptions. For example, the 'realist tradition' in international relations tells us that statesmen prudently maximize national security while the 'liberal tradition' tells us that statesmen prudently maximize their domestic political fortunes too. Alterman's argument is hard to square with either perspective. Therefore, I feel obligated, as a political scientist, to question his thesis: that lying, while pervasive, is ultimately counterproductive.

First, based on Alterman's evidence we surely can conclude that presidential lying is sometimes counterproductive. As mentioned, each of the case studies is filled with tragedy: ruined careers, a poisoned political climate, costly misperceptions, unnecessary conflict, etc. However, we cannot conclude as yet that lying is generally counterproductive. After all, the four cases examined chosen could be an unrepresentative sample. One suspects that Yalta, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the second Gulf of Tonkin incident, and Iran-Contra were selected because each is associated with failure in some way. The discomfiting question that remains is: what about cases where lying worked? And are such cases more typical than those Alterman chose?

It is not so hard to find such cases. Alterman discusses an important one in his introduction: FDR's less than honest leadership preceding US entry into World War II (16-17). As is well documented, Roosevelt steadily escalated US involvement after the fall of France while promising publicly that he would keep the US out of the fighting. Why does Alterman not examine this episode? Whereas FDR's dishonesty facilitated US entry into World War II, the "Good War," the Gulf of Tonkin incident precipitated US escalation of the Vietnam War, which ended in disaster. Also telling in this regard is Alterman's inattention to the dishonesty involved in rallying support for the first Gulf War and the war in Kosovo. Again, each was a cheap and easy victory for the United States. Where was the blowback in these cases?

Official deception attracts public attention precisely when it contributes to a failing endeavor, as in Iraq. The problem with paying attention only to disasters is that it biases our conclusions: we tend to overestimate the extent to which lying leads to failure. In Alterman's case, he provides evidence that lying can be counterproductive; however, he concludes that lying is always counterproductive. These are very different propositions, as any good Machiavellian will notice. Second, even if we admit that deception generates unintended consequences, it does not necessarily follow that the presidents were wrong in their decisions Indeed, rationally speaking (instrumentally, that is), one can only argue that lying is counterproductive if there were feasible alternatives available in each case, and pursuing those alternatives would have led to better outcomes.

In the Yalta case, it is difficult to imagine what those alternatives would have been. What leverage did the United States have over the Soviet Union, which had just defeated Nazi Germany and occupied much of Eastern Europe? Was the fate of Poland worth risking war with the Soviet Union? Or, is Alterman suggesting that Roosevelt should have been candid about the concessions he hade made at Yalta? Wouldn't a political uproar have resulted? And wouldn't that political uproar have soured relations with the Soviet Union anyway?

Alterman's argument is that, while some version of the Cold War was inevitable, it would have been a less competitive and more honorable one if Roosevelt had been honest about Yalta (46, 89). However, for those of us who believe that the Cold War was largely the result of security competition or ideological contest, it is difficult to credit his case. Indeed, rather than triggering the Cold War, perhaps FDR's lies about Yalta delayed it, affording the United States the time to mobilize for a coming confrontation with the Soviet Union. Any other alternative might have only speeded that confrontation, with unpredictable and potentially terrible results. When seen in this unabashedly pragmatic light, the primary lesson of Yalta is not that lying is counterproductive. It is that presidents operate in a severely constrained environment, both domestically and internationally, and that lying is sometimes the least bad of several bad alternatives.

This brings me to my final point. Alterman's main argument is that lying is "ultimately and invariably self-destructive"(22). However, I think his argument is better stated as follows: Foreign policymaking in a democracy is difficult. This is an old realist insight, and it is one that Alterman himself hints at. For example, in his concluding chapter, Alterman asks, "Why do American presidents feel compelled to deceive Congress, the media, and their country about their most significant decisions?" His answer is that there is a "fundamental contradiction at the heart of the practice of American democracy. American presidents have no choice but to practice the diplomacy of great power politics, but American citizens have rarely if ever been asked to understand the world in these terms"(306-307). As Alterman notes, the problem with foreign policymaking in a democracy, from the policymakers' point of view, is that voters ask presidents to do the impossible: that is, to protect the national interest in a manner consistent with American values while at the same time minimizing the risks and costs of war. Rather than admit the fact that they cannot maximize all these values simultaneously (and so suffer political retribution), presidents opt for deception.

Alterman recognizes this real world dilemma. The real problem may be that lying is just a symptom. The 'disease,' so far as decision-makers and their advisors are concerned, is democracy itself and the contradictory demands it places on decision-makers in the foreign policy realm. Indeed, it seems rather facile to argue that lying, under any circumstances, is such a terrible thing when presidents may have few better alternatives. Of course, I understand why Alterman does not want to place too much blame on democracy itself. However, any adequate account of why presidents lie must deal with this persistent reality.

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* Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," International Security, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Summer 2004), pp. 5-48.

* Richard Morin and Claudia Deane, "White House Ethics, Honesty Questioned," Washington Post, October 30, 2005.

* Eric Alterman, When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and its Consequences (New York, NY: Viking, 2004). References to page numbers appear in text.

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Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution, By Stephen Breyer

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Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer has published a book on judicial philosophy that achieves notice less because of its content than because of the author's post. The book argues for a "sociological" approach to legal interpretation, which Breyer admits has many rivals in approaches based on direct interpretation of legal language, on historical analysis of what led to this use of language, on the meaning of the language when it was written, and reliance on legal precedent pertaining to this language. What Breyer adds to sociological approaches is an imputing of values, which opens up such analyses to criticisms for being naïve, superficial, historically incorrect, short-sighted, vain, arrogant, or just plain wrong. I am not saying Breyer is guilty of all these criticisms, but that he sets himself up for them.

A basic no-no of legal analysis, and of moral analysis too, is bombastic rhetoric. In law schools students are endlessly warned about this reckless inferring of moral effects rather than proving moral effects of certain actions, but they learn when they get out (if they don't know so already) that lawyers are paid to win. In any case, judges, for appearances' sake if for nothing else, rarely come up with the ruling, "I don't know." The result is dependence on 'burden of proof' reasoning where a state of affairs is assumed to exist, not proven to exist, because it is assumed that the existence of society depends on this state of affairs. This is the dead opposite of the ideal of the scientific method where many aspects of the state of nature are not understood, and are openly admitted to not being understandable within the present state of knowledge. Models are used in science, but are not mistaken for reality, or shouldn't be.

Lawyers have noticed the dangers posed by judicial supremacy. Stuart Taylor in Slate quoted Thomas Jefferson in 1819 about John Marshall's Supreme Court: "The Constitution…is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary, which they may twist and shape into any form they please," and Abraham Lincoln regarding the 1857 Dred Scott decision which treated slavery as eternal: "If the policy of Government upon vital questions affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made," Lincoln said, "the people will have ceased to be their own rulers."

The checks and balances among the three branches collapse if the Supreme Court claims to be the final arbiter of constitutional behavior. Judicial supremacy reflects the British tradition, at least of the 18th century, that the judicial branch be free of political interference, plus the natural law tradition (more emphasized in America than in Britain) that judged law by supposedly indisputable moral standards and a common law tradition that the law would not

countenance an absurdity. You might say that since medieval European monarchs were, above all, judges and war leaders, the Supreme Court in our mixed polity is the monarchical aspect of government, sharing the powers of monarchical sovereignty with the President (who gets the war powers part, plus some powers related to foreign affairs), except that the President is not elected for life, Supreme Court judges are. Like monarchs, when judges violate standards the social reaction is unpredictable because there is no defined method for dealing with them. By the same logic, revolutions are justified by arguments of natural law.

Therefore the question arises, does this book reflect an understanding of the place of the Supreme Court in our constitutional scheme of things, or does it reflect special pleading and a desire for aggrandizement of the power of this institution? Just like the monarch who claims to be serving only "the will of the people," Breyer's analysis provides no method for actually determining when "the will of the people" is being served and when it isn't. The reason social science claims that it tries to be a science is because it tries to be objective, and is sensitive to situations where "the facts speak for themselves." Breyer offers no method for determining when "the will of the people" is not being followed since, by definition, institutions that have some connection to an election, no matter how remote, are democratic. Although he says that rules that encourage participation by the mass of citizens in government are a good thing, he never shows what standards he uses since there are times when he obviously doesn't believe democracy is such a good thing, as when it interferes with judicial supremacy in interpreting the Constitution. 'Democracy at work' for him means everything the government does is democracy at work.

Just as predecessors on the late 19th century Supreme Court absorbed too much of Spencer's Social Statics, so that they believed Social Darwinism explained how a modern economy worked, so Breyer seems to have read too much into such works as Gordon S. Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*, coming away with the belief that because the governments that arose after the American Revolution were more democratic than colonial governments that therefore the Federal Government was the perfectly realized Democracy. In fact, all governments of Europe and America in the 18th century derived legitimacy by a bundle of claims, to conformity, to natural law, natural religion, the production of virtue in society, and the standards of "moderate" government, for which democracy, republicanism, and even monarchism were considered means rather than ends.

No doubt crediting a government with reflecting "the will of the people" – no matter the truth – is an important source of legitimacy in our times. It is now the only source of legitimacy, unlike the 18th century which took for granted the importance of community as the source for legitimacy in government, and a model for its proper functioning, even though it was slowly decaying and ceding power to bureaucracy. Breyer's whole concept of democracy is convoluted. He tries to show the American Constitution instituted a democratic government by using an idiosyncratic definition of democratic government based on "the will of the people". This was obviously not the case in the original American Constitution which not only limited the right to vote (not for women, not for slaves, and not for people who did not meet minimal property qualifications), but confined popular control to the House of Representatives, not the

Senate or the Presidency. The Constitution, however, was adaptable to more democratic control later on.

For that matter, 18th century Europe boasted republican governments, particularly the United Provinces of the Netherlands and the Swiss Confederation, which served as models for the U.S. although Britain was more influential. In the 18th century, democracy, given poverty and lack of mass education, widely was considered impractical because of the dangers of mob rule. Even Thomas Jefferson, who supported democratic government, was the head of a party called the Republican Party, later the Democratic-Republican Party (a term used mostly by historians, and originally a faction of the party that supported Andrew Jackson) and only some time after Jefferson's death called the now familiar Democratic Party. It would be as if the present day Democratic Party would be called a socialist party because certain members support socialism.

Breyer moves from his originalist argument of the Constitution reflecting the will of the people to an evolutionary argument that more participation is to be encouraged, so, whatever his glossing over 18th century conditions, he is right that now we encourage active participation of citizens. Thus, he offers an argument for deferring to legislative enactment of laws as reflecting the will of the people, without at the same time giving up the right of the Supreme Court to supervise the process or intervene, without being hampered by original intent.

Now there are circumstances when a small leap is justified, such as when the right to regulate interstate commerce is extended to modern modes of transportation analogous to the way the horse and buggy and maritime transportation was regulated. This latitude doesn't mean a judge can announce himself a cross-dressing monarchist and declare that republican government means monarchy because if only the writers of the Constitution knew what he knows now they would agree with him. There is a basic principle of Constitutional interpretation that a vague generality or value cannot overrule a specific requirement laid out in the Constitution. Even this rule in a sense can be overruled if it would result in an absurdity, but such occasions are few and far between.

Breyer seems to believe in this rule of Constitutional interpretation – except when he doesn't. The same can be said for his general approach to interpreting laws. The second half of the book is actually quite good, and is by far the most useful part. He details the reasoning used to make distinctions relevant to judging cases in free speech, the relation between the Federal government and the states, privacy, affirmative action, and statutory interpretation. Even when he relies on arguments relating to fostering the public good, the arguments have some plausibility. He admits that his views differ from some colleagues on the Supreme Court. It is when he offers special pleading on the preferred status of the Supreme Court, and ignores all the issues regarding the breakdown of checks and balances, that his arguments seem self-serving. I suppose he's just human, which is why "Who will guard the guardians?" is as true of the Supreme Court as anyone else.

What are the consequences of the exalted status of the American Supreme Court for American democracy? A democratic government reflects direct input from the people, unlike Justice

Breyer's definition which is any government that arises from an election and afterward is almost independent of the people. Let's look at examples: In the presidential election of 1876 the disputed returns in a number of Southern states led to a dramatic impasse. Ultimately, five Supreme Court justices serving on a 15 member Electoral Commission together with five members from each house of Congress. The result, with voting on partisan lines, was to give the election to Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican candidate. Fast forward to the disputed presidential election of 2000, and disputed returns in Florida were resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court to favor the Republican candidate, George W. Bush. This was after the Florida Supreme Court resolved the election in a way to favor the Democratic candidate, Al Gore. The election had to be resolved by courts because there was no method in place to determine what to do, other than the courts. Alas, no one but the courts were ready and interested in intervening.

Courts have the responsibility for enforcing the nation's values, not the values of the members of the courts. As a practical matter, however, how can this be enforced? In many ways it can't, not without a public outcry over abuses, or a public monitoring of the courts. Another result is that the abortion issue was not resolved by Rowe vs. Wade since it did not settle public discussion. Instead of discussing the effects of abortion on society, the legalistic arguments of both sides, the right to privacy versus "respect" for life convinced no opponent because both arguments were filled with "rights talk" that avoided dealing with practical consequences. Breyer would like public discussions of practical matters, but this ends up being done by judges and not by the public, and judges are not more practical than the public at large, though they certainly are richer and more secure.

The dynamic basis of democracy is creating and enforcing laws that reflect the concrete circumstances of the public affected by laws, not the vague clichés of armchair moralists and/or opportunists. Yet, just as "Who will guard the guardians?" is a problem for monarchies, so too is it for judiciaries as well. One consequence of trying an 'end run' around Congress by creating ad-hoc "rights" is to guarantee that right-wing activists will push their own version of "rights." In many ways it is harder than ever to rein in giant corporations because of all the "rights" the courts have given them. At a certain point "rights talk" interferes with democracy when the rights are not the creation of the democratic process, but merely the creation of courts and are indistinguishable from mere wants, which always must be judged against a context of reasonableness.

There has been a severe deterioration both of community and of conceptions of the common good. One reason there is a tendency for government to misuse eminent domain is that the concept of public purpose has become muddled. While this mechanism was once used for taking private land for building roads, bridges, and so on, there is a tendency today to favor anything that produces economic growth, even if it only benefits the already rich. So private land is given to real estate developers, as if all economic growth is a public good, which is an absurdity. Meanwhile, many non-business activists act as if they are only victims, demanding equality of result rather than equality of opportunity. While government, and the courts, get whip-sawed between these two ideologies, the common good is ignored. The courts are part of

this vicious cycle of ignorance. The danger is that they step in to create social order because no one else is protecting the public good. ‘Better than nothing’ is the excuse for judicial activism. Better than do-nothing legislatures and do-nothing executives, claim the judges. Well, that isn’t good enough, when we can have real yet unrealized democracy as an alternative.

Absolute Friends, By John Le Carré

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

While a devout fan of British spy novels in general and John le Carré in particular, I think he *really* overdid it in his latest novel, *Absolute Friends*. It is confusing, inept and cut short halfway through the events when things just begin to get interesting. (It beats around the bush even more than *The Tailor of Panama*). Nonetheless, it is disturbingly well-researched and thus deserves to be treated seriously. Le Carre is a former British intelligence officer who has had access to material and insights into international politics that are not be trifled with.[1] Moreover, he represents what could be called the British establishment's ever latent anti-Americanism, people who never believed in the 'special relationship' and know full well how the British empire was dismantled by the US.[2] Although technically a dying breed – his generation is passing away ' le Carre is even more representative of a growing constituency in the UK, the younger anti-Americans who have emerged since Bush became president, even before 9/11.[3]

For the required role of anti-hero we behold Edward Mundy, an out of work British intelligence agent residing ' predictably for le Carré ' in Germany. Mundy is a former everything, from a former double agent for East German intelligence to a failed writer and musician to a bankrupt English teacher to a former flunky of the British Council who unsuccessfully tried to promote his country's culture abroad.[4] Not to mention, a failed husband and father. (He spent so much time behind the iron curtain that his English wife got a divorce, making it easier for her to pursue her political career in Blair's Labour Party, while his son only communicates via e-mail).

Above all, Mundy is a former student rebel, having cut his anti-imperialist teeth in Berlin of the 1960s, where he met his absolute friend, the mysterious leader of Berlin's (passivist) anti-Vietnam protestors, Sasha. Mundy was dragged into the spy trade, sans kicking and screaming, by Sasha in the 1980s. Sasha lost hope in the European left at the close of the 1960s and joined the Stasi, only to switch sides again after finding that Communists are hypocrites too. He bumps into Mundy on one of the latter's cultural escapades behind the iron curtain and their friendship resumes, in a new professional dimension. Both then are forced to close shop with the abrupt end of the Cold War. Sasha makes a run for it, disappearing before the Stasi HQ is torn down by angry protestors and spends the rest of his time traveling through Third World capitals warning everyone about the advent of the unipolar American colossus.

Mundy now ekes out an existence as a tour guide, living with a Turkish, Muslim girl (Zara), and her legitimate son (Mustafa) from an abusive criminal husband. Mundy does this under the advice of the local 'enlightened' imam (no comment). Zara had originally 'offered' herself to him to scrape together enough to feed herself and her son. And to stay out of the reach of her incarcerated ex-husband's Turkish gang. Mundy's substitute family genuinely love, adore and

admire him as he nurses them back to psychological health, a task made all the harder as his frail career goes into the pits. (His school intended to teach the German business executive class the language of globalization, English, but to no avail). Suddenly. Sasha reenters his drab, missionless life with an offer he knows Mundy can't refuse.[5]

The 'art' of mismanaging empires

Mundy is very tall whereas Sasha is partly crippled from birth. This is a famous device in literature, the notion of the 'crippled giant', more specifically in le Carré's case, Britain and/or Germany after WWII. Mundy is the British giant, with much to give to the world but no ability to do so while under the gaze of the two superpowers.[6] He embodies the quintessential Britain that has lost its empire and is searching for a role, usually substituting the glories of its past with its so-called special relationship with the US. Poor Sasha hails from the hub of a European civilization that has been rent by the Cold War.[7] When Sasha meets Mundy he condemns him for working as a tour guide in the palace of some former Bavarian king, describing the regent ' in trademark Sasha fashion ' as a 'fascist'. I believe this is meant to be a condemnation of the current Germany as semi-fascistic in its stance towards Muslims, American imperialism and the violation of civil liberties in the war on terror. Once again le Carré is angry with the German giant, his adopted second country, for not living up to the better side of its past and le Carré's highest expectations.

Mundy, moreover, is the illegitimate son of empire, scarred by his past. His long deceased (in childbirth) mother was Irish. Mundy's father insists on telling him his mother was a British aristocrat. Mundy spent his childhood in India in the last days of the Raj in what would become Pakistan after the partition. His affection for the East, particularly the Islamic quadrant, is shown in his relationship with surrogate mother Aya ' his Pakistani nanny ' whose whole family was massacred by Hindus during the partition. Mundy's father, although a British army officer, instilled a healthy hatred of British imperialism in his son, pointing out how the Brits washing their hands of their colonial responsibility led to the massacres.

Mundy is now making amends with the Turkish Zara and her son Mustafa, a relationship meant to exemplify the kind of relations that should but rarely do exist between Islam and the West. (He also had a Muslim sweetheart as a child). His inability to transform his feelings into literature and music reflects Britain's inability to feel and voice the pains of the downtrodden of the world.[8]

Opposing blasts from the past

When Sasha (Russian for Alexander) makes his derring-do comeback he hitches up with an eccentric pacifist billionaire named Dimitri. In James Bond-fashion Mundy is introduced to this highly unlikely figure ' one of the weaker points of the narrative ' at his plush mansion (later vacated and trashed). Dimirti wants Mundy's help to build a 'Counter-University' ' an educational system that fights conformity and American imperialism. Mundy gladly signs up,

only to be pulled aside later by an old associate, CIA man Rourke, who tells him that Dimitri is really an anarchist terrorist that they have been tracking forever. Dimitri has in mind creating a united terror front against the US, pooling the resources of both the European anarchists left over from the Cold War and the new Islamic fundamentalists. Or so says Rourke.[9]

The perplexed Mundy contacts his old superior who reveals that it's all a ruse. Dimitri was indeed a terrorist but is now working with the Americans! Mundy quickly gets his 'wife' and her son out of harm's way and tries to contact Sasha to warn him and help him escape. But Rourke has both Mundy and Sasha gunned down, snuffing the planned anti-university in the process. It's hailed as a great success of the war on terror, the elimination of a couple of European terrorists trying to team up with Islamic fundamentalists. (The funds Dimitri provides for Mundy's new university come from a Saudi bank account).

Mundy's lady is interrogated by Turkish police because the Americans want someone else taking the blame for torture. (When Mundy himself is nabbed by Rourke's men, who are Austrian security, he is interrogated as a suspected 'terrorist' and strip-searched by having a couple of fingers shoved where they shouldn't go). The enlightened imam who sanctioned their common-law marriage gets detained indefinitely. It turns out that Rourke doesn't work for the CIA anymore but for a private intelligence group funded by the US oil industry and run by neo-conservatives and Christian fundamentalists. In the meantime, the American war machine grinds on towards another confrontation, this time with Iran. End of story.

Give the giant his due

At the artistic level what we have here is a contrast between two duos, Mundy and Sasha, on the one hand, and Rourke and Dimitri, on the other. Rourke, like Mundy, is half Irish, but unlike Mundy only pretends to be a liberal anti-Vietnam War protester. Rourke refuses to learn the lessons of that conflict. He put his Bostonian, East Coast liberal past behind him to find gainful employment with savage West Coast moneyed interests and ideologues. Sasha and Mundy stand for Old Europe; Dimitri for New Europe, despite his age (his accent has an American twang). He represents a Europe that has decided to go along to get along, and specifically the violent leftist, anarchists that Sasha opposed all along.[10]

A girlfriend of both Sasha and Mundy from their rebel days, Judith, becomes a lawyer who puts up with her two-timing husband for his money. More broadly the novel represents a reprisal of themes and issues in international politics and East-West affairs explored in*Our Game* (1995), namely, the "demonization of Islam as a substitute for the anti-Communist crusade."[11] And *Our Game*, while a superior work, suffers from symbolic overload. Admittedly, I belittled *Absolute Friends* allegories because I didn't know just how pertinent and well documented they are. I found out, the hard way, when I chanced upon"Postmodern Jihad", a rather offensive little article by Waller R. Newell.[12]

Newell indulges in the same self-serving accusations and flights of fancy as Rourke. For instance, he charges that:

> *… European Marxists have taken heart from Islamic terrorists who seemed close to achieving the longed-for revolution against American hegemony… Derrida… reacted to the collapse of the Soviet Union by calling for a "new international."… a grab bag of… students, feminists, environmentalists, gays, aboriginals, all uniting to combat American-led globalization. Islamic fundamentalists were obvious candidates for inclusion… Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri… identify Islamist terrorism as a spearhead of "the postmodern revolution" against "the new imperial order."… "its refusal of modernity as a weapon of Euro-American hegemony."*

It's hard to believe that Islamic fundamentalists would 'obviously' rub shoulders with homosexuals and atheists but, then again, not for someone like Newell who understands everything in neo-conservative terms. Why he even relies for gospel truths on Claire Sterling's fanciful and vintage *The Terror Network*. He duly trots out the charge that it was the post-modernism of Michel Foucault and the existentialism of Sartre and (fascism of) Heidegger that engendered Islamic fundamentalism. Similar absurd charges can be found in Victor Davis Hanson, "The Wages of Appeasement: How Jimmy Carter and academic multiculturalists helped bring us Sept. 11"[13], and in Jamie Glazov's "The Last Shah of Iran".[14]

What we should take to heart is le Carré's condemnation of a wishy-washy Europe unwilling to stand up to the US. The whole point of Rourke's intelligence operation was to embarrass anti-Iraq War Germany. As for the novel's notion of a Counter-University, I suspect this is a satirical spin on the American "war on terror" emphasis on post-modern education as the breeding ground for the next generation of terrorists. It's no coincidence that Newell says that 'liberal' education in America has been 'damaged' by "postmodernism… a parlor game in which we 'deconstruct' great works of the past and impose our own meaning on them without regard for the authors' intentions or the truth or falsity of our interpretations." If people instead were educated to reject American imperialism in effective non-violent ways then there would be no need to resort to violence, le Carré seems to be saying. I couldn't agree more.

So, as always le Carré has his literary finger on the pulse of post-Cold War intellectual developments. We really should take heed of his advice. The Counter-University is a must if we want to do something about the causes of terrorism *and* the neo-conservative ideology that stokes the flames of terrorism, whether leftist or Islamic. We all need some reeducating and le Carré is the one to point the way, even if he could have done it in a slightly better fashion than this near absolute tragedy of a novel!

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[1]For the best psychoanalysis of bin Laden I have come across, see John le Carré, "A War We Cannot Win", *Nation*, 273(16), 2001, p. 15-17.

[2] In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy,* (1974) the KGB mole explains that, even though 'rightwing' he turned to the Russians because of his hatred of America, a country that had led to the "death"

of the Western world from “greed and constipation” (p. 354). He adds that his preferences were just as much ‘aesthetic’ as ‘moral,’ if not more so. The attitude of this British archetype is captured in the character of Jim Prideaux who describes America as a country “full of greedy fools fouling up their inheritance,” a country almost as bad as the Soviet Union (p. 18).

[3] See Paul Kennedy, “Has the US Lost its Way?”, *Observer*, 3 March 2002, Sunder Katwala, “Is America Too Powerful for its Own Good?”, *Observer*, 10 February 2002 and Fred Halliday, “Aftershocks that will Eventually Shake Us All”,*Observer*, 25 November 2001. Even the kind of stodgy, British conservative anti-Americanism of yonder is on the rise again, as attested to by the comments made about President Bush by a former cabinet minister from the British Conservative Party: “terrifying… ignorant… a prisoner of the religious right who believes God tells him what to do… like a child running around with a grenade with the pin pulled out.” See J.F.O. McAllister, “Mad at America”, *Time Europe*, 161(3), 20 January 2003, p. 16.

[4] There’s some of this in one of le Carré’s most popular novels, *The Russian House*, with the Russian heroine’s ‘ a thinly disguised mother Russia ‘ passion for English literature, even passing on Dante’s nuclear secrets to the West at a British Council literary exhibition.

[5] They are absolute in their friendship in classic British spy novelist, public schoolboy fashion. Very out of date in the 21st century, if you ask me, but perhaps that’s the whole point.

[6] In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* Jim Prideaux is a bull of a man with a paralyzed arm, making him look like a hunchback. He was shot (proverbially stabbed) in the back. In *The Russia House* Barley Blair is tall and strong but has a bad back. In *Our Game*, both the narrator, Timothy Cranmer, and his ‘common law’ wife (an expression used in *Absolute Friends*) have bad backs. He from old age, she from an injury at the hands of heavy-handed cops during a protest march. She’s scarred by Britain’s empire, exemplified by the old-age establishment of Cranmer’s generation. There’s some of this in*The Constant Gardener* with Justin Quayle, an old-age diplomat who still dresses in a white colonial suit, and his very young, very rebellious wife Tessa. Their child is stillborn, evidence of the inability of these two generations to ultimately reconcile their differences and bear fruit, so to speak. (The movie version doesn’t bring this out).

[7] The East German ‘villain’ in *Call for the Dead* is a built like an Olympic athlete but suffered from rickets as a child. As a Jew he signifies a Germany that is deformed because it turned its back on the Semitic component of its cultural grandeur. He has to put up with his blond, blued henchman whom we discover (in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*) is a former Hitler Youth and who gets British intelligence to frame an honest intelligence officer investigating him, also Jewish.

[8] There’s a hint of this in *Our Game*, the woman Cranmer is ‘living with’ is a musician that tries to play folk music of the Third World by concert standards.

[9] Le Carré may be poking fun of P.J. O’Rourke through this character, the famous Irish American who jumped ship from leftwing politics during the Vietnam era to Republicanism,

author of such books as *Give War a Chance* (1992) and *Peace Kills: America's Fun New Imperialism* (2004).

[10] I suspect that Dimitri is a stand-in for George Soros. Soros did have a role in overthrowing Chevernadze's rule in Georgia, whence Dimitri hails. He's described as Georgian-Russian, and Russia is portrayed in imperial terms in *Our Game*, allowed by the West to pulverize Caucasian Muslims under the pretense of fighting Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.

[11] My contact with le Carré's work began during my PhD studies, coming across this quote first in John Gerard Ruggie's *Winning the Peace: America and World Order in the New Era,* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), p. 163.

[12]*The Weekly Standard*, 26 November 2001, (http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith//courses01/rrtw/Newell.htm).

[13]*The Wall Street Journal Opinion Page*, 10 May 2004,http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110004952,

[14] FrontPageMagazine.com, 6 March 2006,http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=21523.

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Letters To Matthew Abraham On Beyond Chutzpah Review

By | 2006: Vol. 5, No. 2

by Berel Dov Lerner, Maoz Azaryahu, and Jason Jungreis

The following letters were sent to the editor regarding Matthew Abraham's review of Norman Finkelstein's Beyond Chutzpah *in the Fall, 2005, issue of* Logos *(issue 4.4). Click here to read his review. Professor Abraham's reply to his critics can be read in the Winter, 2006, issue of* Logos *(issue, 5.1). Click here to read his reply.*

To the Editor:

Here is the most serious complaint against Israel mentioned by Matthew Abraham in his review of Norman Finkelstein's *Beyond Chutzpah*:

"To justify Israel's 'ethnic cleansing' of the Palestinian population from the West Bank and Gaza, Israel's apologists have had to sustain an untenable ideological juggling act, keeping several balls in the air."

Well, if Israel has been engaged in the "ethnic cleansing" of the Palestinian population, we have been doing an amazingly inept job of it. The Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza has increased in size at a tremendous rate during the decades since Israel captured those territories in the Six Day War of 1967. The only "ethnic cleansing" going on around here has been Israel's recent removal by force of all Jews living in the Gaza Strip. Talk of "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" is the kind of over-the-top big-lying practiced by Israel's radical critics which creates the suspicion that they are motivated by some irrational factor such as anti-Semitism.

If Matthew Abraham thinks that the Zionists have managed to stifle public criticism of Israeli policies, I can only wonder: Does he ever read the New York Times or the Washington Post? Has he ever seen the English Internet editions of the Israeli newspapers? Does he own a television set?

As for Palestinian anti-Semitism – well, what other word is there for those many Palestinians (and Arabs in general) whose understanding of modern history is shaped by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or who routinely refer to Jews as inhuman "sons of monkeys" destined for eventual annihilation?

Berel Dov Lerner
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*** Dear Sir,

Why are progressives so afraid of Zionism? The answer is perhaps very simple: Zionism is the idea that Jews – those who want – should have a homeland and the right of self-determination. This idea obviously poses a real threat to the progressives' dream of a world without Jews who assert their right of self-determination.

I enjoyed Abraham's review. For me, a Zionist Jew, it proved what I knew: the hatred of Israel is a global phenomenon, uniting Islamists, fascists and – yes, progressives. What a strange fellowship! This 'coalition of hatred' convinces me that Israel is as necessary as ever in a world where 'human rights' have become an euphemism for Arab ultra-nationalism and Israel-hatred.

I am sure Dr. Abraham is an immensely important literary scholar. I am less sure about his honesty. He is an anti-Israel activist, which is fine. Only that this should be mentioned explicitly. For the sake of honesty…

Professor Maoz Azaryahu

*** Dear Editor:

It is anathema to critical literature review to appoint a reviewer or publish a review in either of the following cases: when the reviewer is not sufficiently informed as to the book's subject matter, and when the reviewer has a vested interest in the perspective presented by the book's author. A third error would be to publish a review that essentially offers the reader a reviewer's single-sided opinion on a subject with zero balance. You have committed all three of these sins in allowing and publishing Matthew Abraham's review essay of Norman Finkelstein's book *Beyond Chutzpah*.

Mr. Abraham's review is chock-a-block full of unsubstantiated and, moreover, factually false assertions. He demonstrates in his review that he is either not a historian – indeed, his credential does not states that he is, nor does he offer any information to suggest that he is – or that he is not interested in historical accuracy. To the contrary, he presents startlingly little information to the reader to identify any basis for his ability and authority to write his review essay, and this problem is compounded by his reviewer's slant: he spends a vast amount of the review discussing the history of the book and not the book itself. This political perspective is the prerogative of a reviewer who carefully explains to the reader both sides of the dispute regarding the book so that the reader can appreciate the nature of the politics, but here there is no effort made to explain both sides: shockingly, the political perspective is used only to vilify one side without any analysis of their actual concern.

Here, we are told that Mr. Finkelstein's book is the subject of political controversy because one side has concerns regarding its historical accuracy. Good, now we're getting somewhere: we

trust that our reviewer is therefore knowledgeable regarding history and will be able to fairly determine whether the claim is true or false. However, rather than put that line of political analysis to the test under a historical microscope, the charge is essentially ignored. Worse than ignored, the whole of the problem of historical accuracy is compounded by the reviewer's personal interest in the side presented by the author. Mr. Abraham does not explain his own interest (readily inferable from his credentials) and instead proposes statements of alleged fact in support of Mr. Finkelstein which are simply untrue, and in so doing spins the review to positively reflect upon his own position.

In short, this review fails its own premise of analyzing the book's political history. The reviewer is unknowledgeable, biased, self-interested, and essentially uninformative of the issues allegedly covered by the book, other than to provide false historical endorsement. It is a wonder than it got published in a serious forum, unless this question begs its own answer.

Jason Jungreis