GAYS, JEWS, AND THE HOLOCAUST

GYPSY FOLLOWUP
BURAKUMIN
CIRCUMCISION
ASTROLOGY
CAMP POEM
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Four years ago I was given an excellent unpublished article on Gays and the Holocaust. I wanted to run it in *SHMATE*, but despite intermittent effort over the years, I have been unable to locate the original author to obtain permission. Thus it was with great joy that I found in my mailbox a few months ago, along with the daily ream of glossy Lubavitcher musings by ex-hippies, pleas for support for the civil liberties of the Holocaust-Didn't-Happen-Boys, Agenda's reality-by-press-release packet, and 642 individual exercises in therapy masquerading as poetry, Peter Drucker, manuscript in hand, stiff from the cramped confines of the Post Office's cheapest mailbox. He handed me his article on Gays, Jews, and The Holocaust, jumped into the self-addressed stamped envelope he'd brought along, waved goodbye, and hopped into the outgoing mail slot, leaving a most happy editor behind.

Clearly there is more to be said on the subject than is contained in the single article. But, it is *SHMATE*’s purpose to focus on and initiate discussion about important but unpopular or unknown issues, not to pretend it has a monopoly on the truth. Thus, I strongly encourage readers to follow up on this with Letters To The Editor, or articles, if appropriate.

The followup in this issue on Gypsies/Roma, Jews and The Holocaust is rather lengthy. However, I believe subjects discussed in *SHMATE* should not be dealt with in a tokenistic, one shot, another bit of quaint esoterica manner. If it's important enough to be noted, it's important enough to pursue.

I expect most readers know little more about Japan than one glean from Toshiro Mifune movies, newspaper stories about industrial efficiency, the local sushi joint, *Shogun*, and vignettes about subway car packers. When Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone made his infamous comment last fall to the effect that America's problems were largely due to its cultural heterogeneity, its Blacks and Hispanics, most folks were appropriately outraged. However, few, if any, noted the hypocrisy, as well as the racism, of his comments. Thus it seemed an appropriate subject for *SHMATE* to cover. I hope our story on the Burakumin will help readers look past our own stereotypes of Japan, both positive and negative.

Back around 1971 I had the idea that it would be a good idea to make up a set of leftist flipping cards, like with Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Shoots: right; Leaflets: left; Minor League History: pitcher for the 1959 Cuban League Champion Fidelistas; career ending last place finish with the Granma Vets in the old Bolivian International League. Well, like many of my projects, it didn't get very far. But I'm now informed by the Bay Area's most esteemed and stimulating orchestra conductor that the Jewish van-guard, from Jerusalem to Crown Heights, is heavy into "Rebbe Cards". Maybe I can get the Lubavitchers to merchandise my Heros and Heroines of The Revolution cards. I'll leak upcoming deals to Ivan Boesky who, as agent for the Wall Street Hebroids (with farm teams on three continents), can sell *SHMATE* stock very short. With financing like that I'll never have to ask readers for contributions ever again. Worse comes to worst, the Hebroids can always peddle shares in the magazine at the Eaglin Country Club, to which they will probably be optioned for a short season.

Speaking of baseball, bicycling produces about 30% more visits to hospital emergency rooms than does baseball. And speaking of hospitals, a guy in St. Louis blew away his brother for using six rolls of toilet paper in two days. And then there was the car ticketed twice by Meter Maids in Boston while the driver sat very dead behind the steering wheel. It was hours later before anyone took note of the fact that his meter had expired along with that of his car. Meanwhile, in San Jose, California, a man called the state Employment Development Department to request a crew to tear down a house. The Department recruited 75 out-of-work folks, who proceeded to demolish the house in record time. The workers, however, didn't get paid. It seems the owner was somewhat surprised to go to his house and find it leveled; apparently he was not the original caller and nobody had bothered to check to see if the work order was for real. (See, subscribe to *SHMATE* and you'll never have to spend money on the National Enquirer!!)

Speaking again of baseball, since it's that time of year, I regret to inform you that Karl Spooner, 1954's September Sensation, died three years ago. Meanwhile the fact that Dock Ellis pitched a no-hitter for the Pirates while tripping on L.S.D. has Nancy Reagan still huddled with McGruff the dog trying to figure out how to palm off baseball as a Cuban plot. (Actually it's a Dominican plot.) "Hey, Dad, can I sign up for Little League? All my friends are doing it." "Just say no, Johnny; just say no!" The A's News quotes Al Hrabosky as saying when ordered by the Cardinals to shave his beard, "How can I intimidate batters if I look like a goddam golf pro?" Also quoted is Lew Burdette, master of the saliva slider, "My best pitch is one I do not throw."

Warning: The Surgeon Specific has determined that ice cream can be dangerous to your health. It seems that the Very Selective Service has used lists of kids who sign up in stores for free ice cream cones on their birthday to compile files on whom to go after at age 18. Better stick with frozen yoghurt, guys. The army doesn't seem to think real men eat yoghurt.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
Editors are supposed to go on crusades, so since I am trying to be an editor, I hereby declare the following as officially sanctioned SHMATE crusades: this year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Chico Marx, thus an appropriate time to issue the following non-negotiable demands: 1/that a stamp be issued to honor the Marx brothers; 2/that the You Bet Your Life duck replace the bald eagle on our coat of arms; 3/that Don Sutton come out of the closet and admit he's really Harpo Marx's son; 4/that Margaret Dumont be installed in the White House as perpetual First Lady, until such time as we have a woman President; 5/that all references to and images of George Washington be changed to Groucho Marx, as more truly representative of American history. Can't you just see him crossing the Delaware, peering out through his glasses, stogie in one hand, other hand inside somebody else's cape.

Second crusade. Dump the Star Spangled Banner as the National Anthem and replace it with Woody Guthrie's This Land is Your Land. I mean, really, which is a song to live by, a song to inspire love of one's land, a song to give our children something to look forward to: a song about watching the fireworks in a war that not one in ten Americans can tell you anything about, or a song which transcends the politics, policies, and politicians of any given moment and celebrates, instead, the visceral beauty of our land? When I was a kid, I thought the last two words of The Star Spangled Banner were "Play Ball". They would fit much more meaningfully at the end of Guthrie's song.

Methinks the Rev doth protest too much: Jerry Falwell ends up in charge of the P.T.L.'s tax free hundred million dollar soul savers, when Jim Bakker gets caught committing unadulterated adultery. Rev Jerry is going to clean up the act. How can you doubt that Falwell is doing the Lord's work when he distributes packets of holy porn as a fund raiser in a sealed envelope marked "For Adults Only! Explicit photographs enclosed. Please do not let these photographs fall into the hands of innocent, impressionable children." How about guilty but unimpressionable kids? Maybe his next fundraiser will come in a plain brown envelope—one way or the other. Reminds me of the time in 6th grade my friend, Neal, sent away for "guaranteed full color, three dimensional pin-ups without clothes." Pretty heady stuff for 11 year olds. Well, the company delivered. For his 25¢ (gives you an idea how long ago that was) he got back six brightly colored plastic clothespins.

My knowledge of history is not very extensive. Nor do I have a great interest in the subject, especially, since it seems to do little other than confirm my largely cynical outlook on life. So I wasn't very surprised to learn only recently that Jesus didn't die on the cross at Calvary, that, in fact, he was taken from a dungeon by several of his disciples, with another person of similar appearance substituted in his place. Feeling guilty about the whole thing (nice Jewish boy that he was), he committed suicide three days later. What I find interesting is my own reaction. Had I learned this 20 years ago—and probably some history professor did mention this in one of a number of lectures I slept through—I would have produced a rather well-reasoned, highly impassioned leaflet within several hours, saying something to the effect of, "O.K. Goyim, now will you finally drop all this hocus-pocus crap, so we can get down to some real politics." But now, having come to understand that most people really want the world to be defined by tea leaves, ten-point programs, gurus, and flying saucers, my reaction to my new tidbit of knowledge is a yawned, "So what?!

What do Argentina, Paraguay, San Marino, Ireland, Andorra, Malta, and the Philippines have in common? They all prohibit divorce. That's the same Andorra made famous by Pete Seeger when they "spent four dollars and ninety cents on armaments for their defense."

I think it's been a couple of issues since I produced one of my periodic diatribes about the Left's selective sense of awareness, concern, and moral outrage in matters international. So, if you want to believe that all evil stems ultimately from the U.S., Israel, Chile, and South Africa, just skip the next paragraph.

How many of you know about the struggles in India around the Sikhs? A few thousand dead should get some notice from the Left; it certainly takes far fewer Palestinians wasted by the Israelis to elicit resolutions and statements of concern. And Tibet, whose national independence has been denied ever since the Chinese invaded in the Fifties, certainly deserves a few walls worth of spray paint. And do leftist Jews view Israel as such a cross to bear that they can't muster a demonstration, when the Shiite Moslem Amal militia establishes a starvation blockade around the long-suffering Palestinian refugee damps in Lebanon? Couldn't we get past our profound political appreciation of José Cuervo, Kahlua, and Acapulco Gold to delve into the serious inequities and repression in Mexico? One doesn't need to love the Mujahadeen or pretend the C.I.A. isn't involved to state, with some level of passion, that the Soviet Union should get the hell out of Afghanistan. And then there's Libya and Chad. Maybe if some folks from Chad hijacked an airplane someone might notice. Or, maybe, being poor and inconsequential (i.e. no American Solidarity Committees) like the South Moluccans, they should settle for a train. East Timor???? Isn't that a resort on Long Island?!

Everybody has something to say about Contra-gate, and since I really have little to add I'll add little. I've listened to most of the hearings and think they're the best radio since "David Harding, Counterspy", "Sgt. Preston", and "Our Gal Sunday" went off the air thirty years ago. Richard Secord is great — everything Al Haig would like to be but isn't: believable, intelligent, capable, plausibly humble. Hell that guy could talk you into happily selling him the knife he slit your throat with.

Summer 1987
I would have loved to have seen somebody ask Robert McFarlane to piss into a bottle. (Where's Nancy when we need her?) Probably would have made Uncle Duke look like Mr. Clean. I mean if that wasn't drugs keeping him going, we are faced with having to accept the fact that the President's National Security Advisor has the brains, wit, and personality of a slug. Owen was pretty funny, too. A wimpy lackey trying to transform himself into a "foot soldier". I suppose it's major dues to try to live up to a brother who got wasted in Nam. And old A.K.A. Gomez with his scrapbook full of pictures of Chê and helicopters, selflessly peddling his crusade against that great Latino rhythm band, Fidel and the Dominos. And how about Orrin Hatch from the Republic of Mormonia? I bet he does a great rendition of "Hundred Bottles of Beer On The Wall".

By and large the hearings appear to be well-rehearsed valium commercials. Questions endlessly pore over details previously ascertained in depositions, scrupulously avoiding the fundamental issues. Except for Hatch and Hyde, who gleefully remain on the offensive. A committee composed of timid, tepid, ill-informed middle-of-the-roaders and a few right-wing ideologues. And the media is having such fun discovering and uncovering all sorts of shenanigans in Central America. The problem is that the privatization of the war against Nicaragua was well documented long before the story was "broken" by Ed Meese last fall. Had the Committee members bothered, for example, to read The New Right Humanitarians from The Resource Center (Box 4506 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87196) they would have known most of the players and their activities long ago. As long as they can keep the focus on the $12 million shell game and what the Alzheimer's commercial in the White House really knew, they can avoid the important constitutional issues.

From a sportscaster on the evening news the other night: "The A's routed a succession of Orioles pitchers today with a blistering 18 hit attack. Clearly Baltimore is in need of some new arms. I suppose that's why Ollie North is in attendance at tonight's game." Camera zooms in on Ollie in his field level box, looking as sweet as Norman Bates registering you in his motel.

I do have the answer to one question which everyone seems to be asking: who is really in charge? Where did all the ideas come from? The answer, uncovered by Shmate Investigative Services, is Robert Ludlum. It has become clear that what Ollie North shredded were Bill Casey's copies of The Gemini Contenders, The Rhinemann Exchange, and The Parsifal Mosaic.

The Pope is coming to San Francisco in a few months. Now, for many reasons, I go to relatively few demonstrations these days. But sometimes something strikes me as so patently absurd, that I feel an inescapable urge to hit the streets. To begin my semi-coherent harangue, let me make it perfectly clear that I firmly believe all Catholic priests are legally obligated to register as agents of a foreign government; all Jesuits too (and probably some other orders). It's really quite simple. The Reagan Midasministration formally sent an ambassador to the Vatican, for the first time officially recognizing it as a foreign government. The Pope runs the Vatican. Habeus Papum, as they say when all divisions questioning his infallibility go up the chimney in smoke. And priests, Jesuits, etc. are beholden to the Pope for their existence as Catholics. (In the case of Jesuits, by a personal vow to the Pope,) They can, have, and will be excommunicated and/or lose their jobs for not plugging the party line. It's at least as direct a connection as those American lobbyists hired to make South Africa look good in the American press. In fact all they can lose are their jobs. But a priest, he can lose a lot more than his job. Being kicked off the stairway to heaven is pretty heavy dues. So, gang, contact your United States Attorney and Member of Congress. If they won't register, let's get those prospections rolling.

But that's not why I'm going to join a demonstration against the Pope. Nor is it because the old boy had the gall (I won't dignify it by using the word chutzpah) to compare abortion and the Nazis at a ceremony starting a Jewish-born woman killed in Auschwitz on the road to Catholic sainthood.

Nor is it because this powerful homosexual hater is going to visit and pray for some dying gay AIDS patients, while he's out here. (Can't you just see Himmler going to Auschwitz to tell the inmates that he was praying for their souls? Probably would have made a good defense at Nurnberg. Even better than Dan White's Twinkies.)

No, the reason I will demonstrate against the Pope is to help the Jewish community or, more accurately, the machers of the Jewish organizational leadership. You see, they have a problem. How are they going to cover the Pope's visit? They don't really like the guy or what he stands for. It's not just not recognizing Israel. Or the Vatican silence during the Holocaust. It's more visceral than that. All Jews (with the exception of the Birobidjan Aliyah Committee) understand in their guts that the Inquisition is a virus which, though usually dormant, never leaves the body, intermittently producing acute, painful manifestations. And with the Catholic Church dragging its opposition to contraception, abortion, sex education, gay rights, and other matters out of the Church and into the political arena, the vast majority of Jews get a strong allergic reaction. Perhaps AIDS will be the catalyst for the Inquisition this time. Already gay people can see the wood being piled up and feel the heat on their feet. Perhaps this time the Jews will be blamed for poisoning "vital body fluids" instead of the wells.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
But the machers are sure as hell publicly ecumenical. For they are wedded to maintaining the public notion that the Jews in America are merely a religion. All six million of us God-fearing bacon-eating miscreants. Thus to protect the Jews, all the “Great Religions” must be protected, supported, handled with kid gloves. They are no more capable of publically seriously criticizing the Pope and the Catholic Church than they are capable of publically criticizing Israel and its Prime Minister.

Still, they can’t simply pretend the Pope isn’t coming to town. What can they say, since they must say something. And that’s where I come in. I’m starting a group called Jews Against the Pope (that’s what all those JAP jokes really are about). Which will solve all their problems. They can cover the Pope’s visit by devoting all their editorials, press releases, interviews, and news columns denouncing us JAPs. With all due gravity and somber self-righteousness they can decry our lack of tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding. And they won’t ever have to say a word about what they actually think of the Pope.

Steve Fankuchen

State of the Rag

My apologies for the tardiness of this SHMATE. It was supposed to be out several months ago, but some stray virus, out here for the International Epstein-Barr Convention, moved in, and playing host has kept me rather busy for the past four months. Next issue may also be late but, hopefully, not by much, as I catch up on a backlog of lots of things, while trying to rid myself of the convention crasher. Rest assured that your subscriptions are for a specific number of issues, not an amount of time. Please keep those letters, renewals, and changes of address coming. I would like to thank all of you who responded to my fundraising letter. Some of you, whose contributions arrived after I got sick, didn’t receive personal acknowledgements. My apologies! Also, a large thanks to all of you who renewed for two years.

Last issue, I promised to let you know what I did with the money received from the fund-raising letter I sent out last fall. It was all a disaster, but some basic production costs. Most, however, was intended to go for an advertising campaign in other periodicals. Small ads in useful magazines cost anywhere from $150 to $900, and that just gets a couple inches in things ranging from the Nation to the New York Review. I had the ads designed, typeset, and the cost analysis done. Then I was attacked by the creature from the Epstein-Barr lagoon and into limbo went the ad campaign. Several other factors also came into play. The grant I referred to in the last issue came through—almost! The foundation officially awarded the rag $1000. A check was sent to my schule which, per agreement with the Rabbi and Executive Director, was to act as the intermediary agency. A check was then written to SHMATE. At the last minute a couple of members of the schule’s Board of Directors objected. Kaput! Their reasons I will not speculate on in this forum. That money was also earmarked for ads. Next factor: a friend in Chicago offered to paste up the ads for me, since I was fading out. I sent them to her Express Mail. In the time between when I sent the stuff and she received it, she had to have unexpected surgery. Next: most magazines require quite a bit of lead time for ads. At that point, I figured by the time I got things together, the ads would run during the summer, when few people read their magazines, let alone bother to subscribe to new ones. So the ad campaign has been put on hold till October. Hopefully, I will have picked up the foundation money by then.

As of the last issue, SHMATE had 290 subscribers, who were paid up through that issue. Since that time, the expirations have approximately equalled the number of renewals and new subscriptions. This issue is not being sent to anyone whose sub expired with #16 or earlier. Those of you whose subs expire with #17 will receive this issue and not have your name deleted until just before I send out #19. However, the recent renewal notice I sent, will be the last. The process of dealing with yearly renewals is getting out of hand, so I want to ask all of you who can possibly afford it to renew for two years at the new reduced rate of $25. And if you can renew now, or at least before your subscription expires, it will save me a tremendous amount of unproductive paper pushing. If you look at the 4-digit number after your name on the mailing label, the last two numbers are the issue with which your sub expires.

One further request: SHMATE’s main problem at the moment is that nobody knows it exists. It has been entirely dependent on word of mouth. The magazine counts on its subscribers to bring in new readers, either by giving gift subscriptions or enlisting new subscribers. Please, if there is any way you can do it, try to get at least one new subscriber. Maybe, since SHMATE is such a well-kept secret, I can get the Israelis to hire Jonathon Pollard to spy on the magazine. Then, when Meir Kahane leaks the news to one of his Hezbollah buddies, the magazine will get lots of free publicity.
I was especially pleased with Issue #17. The focus on Gypsies and The Holocaust was not only fine historical reporting, but an act of justice.

David Lilkker
Davis, California

I think having an issue devoted to the Gypsies/Roma was an excellent idea. Last year I tried, in vain, to get some information on the Roma, particularly in regard to the Holocaust. I used our local public library (not good) and the University of Victoria Library (quite good), but could get nothing. Now comes your issue and it provides a great deal of information plus a bibliography. Thanks!

By the way, have you established any contact with the Tikkun people in Oakland? Perhaps you can symbiose (is that a word) with them.

Eugene Kaellis
Victoria, British Columbia

I was extremely interested in the last issue, Gypsies-Roma. The lack of consideration given to the Gypsies who suffered in the Holocaust by American Jewish organizations is appalling. Gypsies and Jews were considered equal pariahs in many areas of Eastern Europe long before the Nazis came on the scene. There is documented evidence of Judaized Gypsies organizing and playing in Klezmer bands. In areas of the Crimea bordering on the Ukraine, there are legends of Gypsies, Krimchuki (Tartar Jews, descendants of the Khazars), and Ashkenazi Jews getting all mixed up in some of the villages. My momma claims that’s where our slanty eyes and rotten disposition come from.

Walter Jackman
New York, New York

Fascinating issue on Gypsies!
Emily Stoper
Oakland, California

Thanks so much for publishing Ian Hancock’s articles on the Gypsies and their suffering during the Holocaust. It is very important that, as Hancock concludes, the Romani Holocaust “cannot be allowed to fall through the cracks of history, dismissed and untold.” Moreover, the decision to deny Gypsies representation on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council is a disgraceful injustice that should be protested by concerned Jews.

Bob Lamm
New York, New York

I don’t mean this to sound like a back-handed compliment, but yours is the first publication to receive a multi-year subscription from me. I do enjoy SHMATE. The recent articles on Gypsies/Roma and the earlier piece on the Farm Crisis were especially good.

Saving you a little resubscription paperwork is the least I can do. Persevere.

Harlan Shays
San Francisco, California

The Gypsy/Roma articles [in Issue #17] were excellent. Finally something tangible, refreshing. Good luck.

George Miller
Los Angeles, California

Thank you for the issue on Gypsies!!!
Brenda Rothberg
Brooklyn, New York

The stories of the Gypsies in [Issue #8] is too real, too ugly and too close to home and, yet, what are we doing? I wasn’t surprised on learning of the German annihilation, nor was I shocked that the Republican White House and FBI were having trouble “finding” a Gypsy representative, but I am truly horrified and disturbed that the former great state of Brotherly Love, Pennsylvania, has a statute which makes it unlawful for any Gypsy to settle within any county in the state without first obtaining a license. Perhaps Pennsylvania should stop hiding behind its flag and run up the South African colors!

Ebb
Lafayette, California

Reading Hancock [in Issue #18], I have the eerie feeling that he would like to model Gypsy ethnicity on that of American Jews. Can’t Gypsies find some other way to define themselves? Is American culture so morbid that ethnic groups can only reach some recognition by entering into a guilt sweepstakes in which each group tries to show that it has suffered most in the past? Certainly some American Jews are too far gone. They have spent too long worshipping, alternately, killers in Israel and the killed in Germany and Eastern Europe. They have little left, but a culture of death. Must the Gypsies follow them? Don’t they have some healthier way to develop their ethnic pride?

In the same issue Zev Maghen’s neo-Zionist, neo-Orthodox opinions are completely out of touch with the reality of Jewish life. Over the last century many Jews—an especially high proportion of SHMATE readers, I suspect—have developed a conception of the Jewish people independent of religion. We no longer feel that Jewish national culture or peoplehood is defined by religion. Maghen, however, like some hangover from the 18th century, is oblivious to any definition of Jewishness outside of religion.

Worse, Maghen combines his limited definition of Jewishness with appalling chauvinism. His statement that “the Torah is the greatest national survival blueprint humankind has ever known” is the sort of thing one expects from right wing kooks. In fact, with a few changes—Bible for Torah—it sounds just like the twaddle regularly peddled by Christian fundamentalists like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
Maghen's articles are especially disturbing because they are followed by Eugene Kaellis' equally wrongheaded article. Both Maghen and Kaellis ignore a growing and impressive body of evidence by social researchers about the actual state of American Jews today. Most of that research is admirably summarized in Charles Silberman's *An Uncertain People*. It is disappointing to see Maghen abruptly dismiss that entire body of work as an attempt by Silberman to "save his diaspora conscience", just because it does not validate Maghen's prejudices or erroneous belief that "assimilation continues to decimate us."

Anyone who has read Silberman or sociologists like Calvin Golscheider (who Silberman relies on), knows that all the dangers that Maghen and Kaellis list do not exist. In fact, many of those supposed dangers—intermarriage, assimilation, Christian missionaries, dispersion of Jews outside of traditional neighborhoods—are phantoms created by establishment Jewish organizations eager to scare Jews into joining their organizations. I think that *SHMATE* should do more than spread the propaganda of the Jewish establishment. They have their own organs to do that.

A. Cattimarit
New Haven, Connecticut

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난 Zev Maghen's article on Jewish sectarianism was compassionate, stimulating, and well-intentioned. But I think that there will never be enough common ground for the many types of Jews to find a common philosophy.

The solution is for Israel to be a democratic Jewish state (for the various types of Jewish people and its non-Jewish minorities), where "church" and state are separate. Diaspora Jews similarly should endeavor to maintain a unified Jewish nation (though scattered as to locale), but not a unified spiritual perception.

I do think that the Reform movement went too far at this stage of evolution in legalizing patriarchal descent, only because I cherish Jewish unity. Theoretically, I believe that the sperm and ovum are equally sacred in the Eternal's eyes, as far as the 50% of genes that go to a Jewish baby, if only one parent is a Jew. Such a decision is political rather than spiritual, and I would forego my need for sexual equality for the sake of unity.

I personally think that Halakha is silly. Why perpetuate it? The Tanakh was written by heterosexual men. (This does not detract from the Purity of the Sender of the message, but rather says something about the imperfect receivers of the message of Love and Respect). Heterosexual men have had their say now for thousands of years, and it's brought the world to the brink of oblivion. We need something new.

As a Gay man, I could care less of the mekhitzah is in the balcony or in the middle of the synagogue. Its purpose is to separate heterosexual women and men (and mostly because the women are seen as causing temptation among the men). As a Gay person, I'm not even supposed to exist. In fact, I'm supposed to be killed according to the Torah, which was written by narrow-minded men. The true Torah of Love is constantly being revealed to those who wish to hear. I'm not willing to die for the silly *halakhah*.

Our only common premise as Jews is that we are the Jewish people, the Jewish nation. Our philosophies need never coincide. We simply need to learn to respect each other, at least stop killing each other, and stop taking our philosophies so seriously.

Dave Levy
Berkeley, California

---

As I read *SHMATE*, there comes to my mind a poem by Einstein:

Schau ich mir die Juden an,
hab' ich keine Freude dran.
Schau ich auf die Andern hin
freut's mich dass ich Jude bin.
which translates as:

As the Jews I contemplate
naught I find to celebrate.
Then I look at others, too:
Now I'm glad that I'm a Jew.
(transl. by yours truly).

A caviar: I don't like your attitude on your own "Bad Attitude-- [issue #17—ed]. It's fashionable with the Jewish Left, and was very "in" with the now antiquitating New Left. You take pride in your Bad Attitude. This pride is what keeps bringing about our fall. There is a vast difference between the courage to be different, when ethics (or even less noble considerations) demand it, and the weakling's urge to constantly test and assert his/her difference. And those for whose benefit we like to display our chronic defiance, realize that anyone who is against everything is for nothing. The true revolutionary does not trivialize Revolution by practicing it "for the hell of it."

Let's agree that "Bad Attitude", when sincere, is like chronic irritation: red eyes, hives, anything up to the full blown auto-immune disease. It is no crime—the best and most concerned people are more vulnerable to suffering than your average s.o.b. (apologies to canines). Consience does make cripples of us all. But this kind of damage is nothing to cultivate or flaunt. If it can be controlled, cured, or even disguised, it should. We don’t need to put others off unnecessarily. They are put off enough at our claim to a special relationship with God—and is He giving us a Special Relationship—poor Jesus, self-appointed Messiah, dying on the cross, convinced that he had been abandoned, as a prime example.

I liked the material on the Roma.
Ruth Friedlander
Berkeley, California

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Issue #17 was full of provocative ideas. Thanks. Zev Maghen’s article on Jewish sectarianism was compassionate, stimulating, and well-intentioned. But I think that there will never be enough common ground for the many types of Jews to find a common philosophy.

The solution is for Israel to be a democratic Jewish state (for the various types of Jewish people and its non-Jewish minorities), where “church” and state are separate. Diaspora Jews similarly should endeavor to maintain a unified Jewish nation (though scattered as to locale), but not a unified spiritual perception.

As I read *SHMATE*, there comes to my mind a poem by Einstein:

Schau ich mir die Juden an, 
hab' ich keine Freude dran. 
Schau ich auf die Andern hin 
Freut sich, dass ich Jude bin.
which translates as:

As the Jews I contemplate 
naught I find to celebrate. 
Then I look at others, too: 
Now I'm glad that I'm a Jew.
(transl. by yours truly).

A caviar: I don't like your attitude on your own "Bad Attitude-- [issue #17—ed]. It's fashionable with the Jewish Left, and was very "in" with the new antiquitating New Left. You take pride in your Bad Attitude. This pride is what keeps bringing about our fall. There is a vast difference between the courage to be different, when ethics (or even less noble considerations) demand it, and the weakling's urge to constantly test and assert his/her difference. And those for whose benefit we like to display our chronic defiance, realize that anyone who is against everything is for nothing. The true revolutionary does not trivialize Revolution by practicing it "for the hell of it."

Let's agree that "Bad Attitude", when sincere, is like chronic irritation: red eyes, hives, anything up to the fullblown autoimmune disease. It is no crime—the best and most concerned people are more vulnerable to suffering than your average s.o.b. (apologies to canines). Conscience does make cripples of us all. But this kind of damage is nothing to cultivate or flaunt. If it can be controlled, cured, or even disguised, it should. We don't need to put others off unnecessarily. They are put off enough at our claim to a special relationship with God—and is He giving us a Special Relationship—poor Jesus, self-appointed Messiah, dying on the cross, convinced that he had been abandoned, as a prime example.

I liked the material on the Roma.
Ruth Friedlander
Berkeley, California

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Issue #17 is very good. What I was impressed by most was your Rag Talk! I work at a high school which had a sing-it-yourself Messiah, so your part on "Bad Attitude" was most welcome. It is interesting that we have approximately 25% Jews in
the student body, but I heard nothing much about the heavy Christmas emphasis around here. I talked with some of the students and found they HAD been discussing this among themselves, but didn’t want to say anything. I explained that in the “real” world they would always have to deal with this, but in our progressive (ha!) little school, we can ask for more. To be continued . . .

The above leads me into a pet sore spot of mine. When I was in my early 20’s, I was pretty blindly left wing. As I matured, I began to see the shades of gray and now what I would like to ask you to emphasize in your publication is a continuing spot on Jewish self-negation or Jewish anti-Semitism, or anti-Semitism from the Left. Jews and women seem to have in common the ability to fight for everyone’s needs but their (our) own.

The issues of Shmate that I most enjoyed have been #3, #5, #10, #11-12, #13, and 16; all of which I am ordering here for a friend! And, as long as I’m at it, I am renewing my own subscription.

Finally, to your idea that those who write Letters to the Editor pay less — phooey! Perhaps you know something that I don’t, but it seems to me that getting a letter printed is an ego boost which wouldn’t call for a cut in payment.

Rachel Moses
San Francisco, California

Sorry, I do not choose to resubscribe. Also, your issue mailed at year’s end should not have missed me. Finally, the tone in your letter on “appropriate” replacement to be picked up by “Dear Folks” is snotty, as is the entire letter, really. The tone, not the contents, really pissed me off.

Sherri Rosenthal
Durham, North Carolina

Thanks for your persistence. Enclosed is my sub for two years.

Goldi
Farmington Hills, Michigan

All right, alright—stop nagging already! [I’ll subscribe.] 

Beverly Axelrod
Pacifica, California

Thank you for your willingness to keep up with me. I’m not going to renew, although I am enclosing $10 to cover whatever costs, confusion, etc. I may have created. Much luck in the future!

Karen Baum
Hillsborough, North Carolina

I’m renewing for 2 years and wish to pay the full $30, rather than take advantage of the $25 reduced price. I continue to enjoy receiving SHMATE I look forward to reading anything that you write. I’ve become a fan of yours and the subjects SHMATE deals with continue to inform, enlighten, and challenge me. I wish more folks would recognize and support the magazine.

Guy Manheimer
San Francisco, California

Please cancel my subscription. Save yourself work and don’t send me renewal letters.

Hope Friedman
Berkeley, California

Just when I thought SHMATE was irrelevant, you pulled the Farm Crisis issue on me and I found a reference which I need for a book I am writing. I’ll contribute more when I get last year’s pay.

Lee Felsenstein
Berkeley, California

O.K., O.K. Enough guilt — here’s my renewal. I have every issue, including #1; there’s really no good reason I should stop now. I hope your promise of an exciting feature on Gays And The Holocaust is sincere. Keep up the good work.

Sharon Fried
Baltimore, Maryland

The return of Russian Jews (to the Soviet Union) might make a provocative piece, as would an article on who is telling the truth, North or Kimche. A critique of Tikkun would also be worthwhile.

Sol Zeltzer
San Jose, California

I love SHMATE and all it represents. One of these days I’ll write something special for it.

Evi Beck
Washington, D.C.

During one very heavy snowstorm, I had a chance to even read “Rag Talk”. I really enjoy your style, especially your behind the scenes report on finances, so enclosed are three gift subscriptions. Hopefully this will enable you to have added time to put energy into SHMATE’s contents.

By the way, what does mean in issue #17?

Rick Bankhead
Dorchester, Massachusetts

[Ollie North—ed.]

I really liked the Farm Crisis issue. But so discouraging.

Toni Gross
Oakland, California

Your Farm Crisis issue was sent to a lovely 89-year-old widow of a W.P.A. artist, Avram Tromka. She is still a sassy politico. She has become a fan [of the magazine]. SHMATE with Jewish Currents and memos to all the museums that overlooked her husband’s sizeable body of work.

Ronica Stern
Berkeley, California

Here’s a modest double chai donation, as my way of saying thank you for the rag and carry on the good work.

Phil Levenson
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Have you considered future articles related to gay/lesbian issues, the Jewish sanctuary movement, bicultural marriages, varied kinds of families, children’s rights, and education?

Jan Ursa
Berkeley, California

I let my sub expire, because with two small children, I have no time to read.

Jackie Schirn
Ballwin, Missouri

I enjoyed the articles on Jewish Sectarianism and Proselytizing. Excellent—both of them.

William Leffler
Lexington, Kentucky

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I think highly of your publication. While I don't agree with some of its biases nor am I concerned with some of its concerns, certain articles have been highly enjoyed and stay in my mind. I especially like your writing style and one article I remember "fondly" was your piece on Bitburg. Many articles — especially by contributing writers—are far too lengthy and wordy. Maybe my attention span is short these days — and that's the reason I enjoy reading the Letters To The Editor.

Recently I was asked to substitute for a 7th grade Sunday School class where the curriculum includes the Holocaust. I was very surprised that the students, while learning about the racism against our people, expressed very negative attitudes toward immigrants today. Specifically, they showed complete lack of compassion or understanding for the newcomer who is just learning English. They view these people as "them", not "us", and aggressively displayed a sense of superiority in their evaluations. This racism troubles me far more than anti-Gypsy trends and seems a more topical concern for your rag.

Judy Roth
Santa Clara, California

I know SHMATE is frightened to touch the issue of circumcision. Much has been written in the past few years of such mishegas as to be beyond belief. I could turn your stomach (but won't).

The issue of conversion has rocked aspects of Judaic thinking from here to Israel and beyond. Progressive Jews must overcome their hang-ups regarding circumcision and tackle the issue in a sane, sober manner and not leave the issue to the "crazies". Let's see how you handle the conversion issue.

Edward Wallerstein
New York, New York

It's a pleasure to see standard ("YIVO") Romanization of Yiddish make its way Berkeleyward. [Regarding the spelling of SHMATE.—ed.]

David Miller
Columbus, Ohio

What you did with SHMATE was brave, useful, and inspiring, but with the creation of Tikkun, don't you think that the progressive-Jewish front is well-covered? Shouldn't you be thinking of giving them some of your talents? Best wishes.

David Gurin
Brooklyn, New York

This subscription is overdue. I've picked up your journals here and there and like it.

Rebecca Rosenbaum
Iowa City, Iowa

Your magazine is unique. I've enjoyed every issue and enclose a donation for your worthy endeavor.

Hilda Grunblatt
North Creek, New York

I really enjoyed your fundraising letter; it is the best I've read. Rather than making me ill — as most do — it made me want to give you money. I appreciate your honesty and I only hope that you can continue, financially, for many, many years to come. You know, I rarely have enough time to read an entire SHMATE, much to my dismay. I wasn't going to renew, but the existence of SHMATE is very important to me.

Debbie Levoy
Northampton, Massachusetts

I picked you up hitchhiking last week and you gave me an issue of SHMATE. Congratulations. It's obvious from the letters that you reach a very literate audience.

Ray Storch
Oakland, California

The fictional Mr. Wexler in the Glittering Prizes, quoted on p. 12 of the Winter '87 edition of SHMATE, asked for the names of 10 famous Rom (Gypsies). While realizing that the names of few Rom are household words in this country and that those few whose names are household words here are not generally recognized by the public as "gypsies", to use the public's own uncivilized & now contaminated name, immediately upon reading the passage, I set out to see how many Rom I could think of, strictly off the top of my head, who have achieved some measure of fame in some area or other. Naming only those of whom I had been aware before reading the articles in SHMATE, I came up with no less than twenty-one, some of whom are household words in other countries, generally Hispanic:

1. Yul Brynner—movie actor & Rom activist.
2. Ian Hancock
3. Ronald Lee
Rom intellectuals & activists
4. Robert Varra — well-known photographer & author
5. Joselito
6. Juan Belmonte
Generally considered the greatest matadores of all times
7. Cagancho—matador
8. Rafael El Gallo—Matador, Jose­lito's older brother
9. Rafael Gil—matador
10. Pastora Imperio—flamenco dancer, married to El Gallo
11. Isabel La Pantoja — Flamenco & popular singer
12. Gypsy Smith—evangelist
13 & 14. The Petulengros — father & son — wrote books on medicinal herbs
15. Jango Rheinhart—folk singer & guitarist
16. Mateo Maximoff—novelist & pioneering clergyman of the evangelical movement amongst the Rom
17. Steve Kaslove
18. Tene Bimbo
Traditional Rom leaders whose fame, admittedly, stems from criminal activities
20 & 21. Miller & Ephraim Stevens — traditional Rom leaders from Tacoma & Seattle who have gone to Washington, D.C. to speak on behalf of their people.

Later, after having completed the list I learned that Freddie Prinz, late star of "Chico & the Man", was a Rom.

I have heard of many other famous toreros & flamenco singers, dancers, & guitarists who were Rom & some famous Rom craftsmen who

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Summer 1987
GAYS, JEWS, AND THE HOLOCAUST

by PETER DRUCKER

In the fall of 1979 an unusual play opened on Broadway. The play, _Bent_, traced the lives of three gay men through Nazi Germany, to concentration camps and their eventual deaths. To most people who saw or read about the play, the fact that the Nazis had put gay men in camps and killed them came as news. To many Jews the fact came as disconcerting news, unwelcome news, or even suspect news. One response came from Raul Hilberg, author of _The Destruction of the European Jews_ and a member of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Hilberg said that only "a relatively small percentage" of "practicing homosexuals" could have been "arrested, let alone mistreated to death" by the Nazis. "Any attempt to consider them, along with the Jews, as victims of the Holocaust is," he said, "a travesty."

Disquiet among many Jews on the subject of Nazi persecution of gays, and resistance to seeing it as comparable to the Nazi genocide of Jews, has persisted since the 1979 controversy. These attitudes are significant, symbolic obstacles to unity between Jews and gays, both of whom face a new militancy among the prejudiced, right-wing Christian fundamentalists of the Moral Majority, as well as among secular anti-Semites and homophobes. A careful look at this emotionally fraught issue may help clarify what is at stake.

The almost universal ignorance about the fate of gay people under the Nazis is easy to explain. It illustrates how the writing of history is shaped by the political and social climate within which history is written. By the time people learned about the Holocaust in 1945, public opinion in the United States was about ready to abandon the kinds of open anti-Semitism shown in university quotas for Jews and many other forms of discrimination. The "discovery" of the Holocaust, a revelation of the horrors to which anti-Semitism could lead, served as a catalyst in making open anti-Semitism unfashionable. The foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 reinforced this development—the more so since Israel soon became an important instrument of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The Cold War provided one more reason to acknowledge and dwell on the history of the Holocaust, since Soviet anti-Semitism could be used as evidence for the crucial ideological equivalence between communism and National Socialism. All these political contingencies made attention to the history of the Jewish Holocaust known and respectable in the mainstream of U.S. society.

The history of Nazi persecution of gay men was received in a completely different way. After 1945 the West German authorities considered that those put into Nazi camps for homosexuality had been and still were criminals. West Germany kept not only Paragraph 175, pre-Nazi Germany's "sodomy" law, but also Paragraph 175a, the Nazis' more sweeping prohibition of homosexual offenses; as part of its criminal code until 1969. Gay men who had been released from the camps, no matter where they settled later, knew that any public account of their sufferings under the Nazis would only expose them to social condemnation and possibly hostile attention from the police. Those who somehow found their way to the United States had to conceal their homosexuality in order to get in, and would have faced almost certain deportation if they had revealed it later. Unsurprisingly, accounts over the next thirty years of the Nazis' crimes, camps, and murders paid little attention to gays.

AN EXCAVATED HISTORY

New attention to gay people's fate under the Third Reich came only with the rise of lesbian/gay liberation movements in the late 1960s. Only in the past few years has the basic information become available in English. We know now that the Nazis expressed their hostility to homosexuality clearly and publicly before they took power. Explaining its opposition to the campaign to repeal the anti-homosexual Paragraph 175 in 1928, the party declared, "Anyone who even thinks of homosexual love is our enemy. We reject anything that emasculates our people." The Nazis made this attitude public policy as soon as they had the chance. On February 23, 1933, a decree banned the pro-gay rights League of Human Rights; another decree ordered hotels and bars frequented by gay people closed. In May a mob of Nazi students wrecked the offices of Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute of Sexual Science and World League for Sexual Reform, destroying the result of over 30 years' work. Thousands of books were burned in a public ceremony, and a bust of Hirschfeld was thrown onto the fire.

There was still some margin of tolerance for homosexuality in Germany for another year, thanks partly to the homosexual inclinations of SA leader Ernst Röhm and his cohorts. (Widespread knowledge of Röhm's sexuality enabled German Communists, turning against gay rights under Stalin's influence, to propagate the myth that homosexuality was rampant under the Nazis.) That last margin of tolerance disappeared on June 28, 1934, "the night of the long knives," when Hitler had Röhm and other SA leaders killed. On October 24, 1934, the Gestapo ordered police headquarters throughout Ger-
many to send in lists of men charged with homosexuality. On the first anniversary of the purge, June 28, 1935, the government promulgated Paragraph 175a. This law, following the Ministry of Justice's December 1934 declaration that not only homosexual activity but homosexual intent was now punishable, criminalized for the first time nine homosexual acts between men, including kisses, embraces and even fantasies. (In Nazi Germany, as in pre-Nazi Germany and many other countries, lesbianism was not dealt with in the criminal code.) Prosecutions for homosexual offenses skyrocketed, from 853 in 1933 to 8721 in 1937, and totaled about 50,000 during the 12 years of Nazi rule. A special division of the Gestapo, division IIb, was formed in October, 1936, to deal with homosexuality and abortion.

The Nazis used charges of homosexuality, whether true or fabricated, whenever their target of the moment could be smeared with it with any plausibility. They used anti-homosexual rhetoric and frame-ups with special zeal to destroy non-Nazi youth groups, to attack the Catholic Church and to push aside high military officers who balked at Hitler's war plans. But they also considered gays a major enemy in themselves. In 1936, Gestapo head Heinrich Himmler decided that all those convicted under Paragraphs 175 and 175a, after serving their legal prison sentences—and being castrated as required for second offenses — would be taken into "protective custody" and sent to Level 3 camps, the same camps to which Jews were sent. All past offenders recorded in police files were similarly sent to the camps, and with the occupation of Austria in 1938 and other countries later, the police files were combed again, and thousands of new internment orders issued. Gay prisoners all wore pink triangles as their distinctive badges — as Jews wore yellow triangles or stars, politicals wore red triangles, Gypsies wore brown triangles, etc. It was soon understood that pink-triangle prisoners, like almost everyone in Level 3 camps, were not supposed to leave the camps alive.

MORE EXTERMINATED THAN THOU?

Discussions of gay men's fate in the camps continually circle around the issue of whether they suffered more or less than Jews. Numbers of deaths are sometimes used as a measurement in this calculus of relative suffering. Most people accept that the Nazis killed about 6,000,000 Jews, though scholarly estimates vary by as much as a million either way; the number of gays killed was clearly smaller. The number was undoubtedly far higher than the 50,000 legal prosecutions; the Protestant Church of Austria has estimated gay deaths at 220,000. The drive to exterminate gays began earlier (1936-37) than the drive to exterminate Jews (1941-42); it also apparently slowed down late in the war as the effort to kill Jews accelerated. Late in 1943 German gay men in the camps were given the "opportunity" to be castrated if that had not yet been done to them, and then sent to the SS Dirlewanger penal division on the eastern front, where death was as certain as in the camps. Even leaving aside the fact that from 1942 the routine punishment for homosexual activity in the armed forces was execution by firing squad, the Dirlewanger division was deliberately sent into the most deadly battles against partisans. In January 1945, at the Floosenbürg camp and, perhaps, other camps, all remaining German prisoners, including Austrians and Sudetens, but not Jews, were promoted to camp police, but by that time they were only a small fraction of those in the camps.

Of course, almost all the Jews killed were killed as Jews; many thousands of those killed for other reasons were undoubtedly gay as well, and did not choose to inform their murderers. Among the Poles who were killed for being Poles, the Gypsies who were killed for being Gypsies, the Marxists who were killed for being Marxists, there were undoubtedly thousands who were sexually attracted partly or mainly to their own gender, as has been the case with every human group ever studied. (Non-Germans were not sent to camps for homosexuality; the Nazis saw homosexuality and abortion as sources of weakness for non-German peoples and did not usually interfere with them.) Ironically, pink-triangle prisoners were often less likely than other prisoners to have homosexual sex in the camps themselves. Except for a few that were chosen as sexual partners — "Puppenjungen," "doll boys" — by camp seniors or guards, they were carefully watched and isolated.

Just as obviously, gay men outside the camps had an easier time concealing their sexuality than Jews had concealing their Jewishness, so a higher proportion of them managed to survive. This is no fault of the Nazis. They rounded up and killed all the gay men and Jews they could.

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There seems to be little basis on which to distinguish the brutality with which Jews were abused from the brutality with which gays were abused. Both were fed less than would enable them to survive. Both were used on work brigades in clay pits and quarries and on other tasks that amounted to slow murder in themselves. Both were used for gruesome medical experiments and SS target practice; both were tortured simply to give pleasure to their torturers. Since no polls were taken among prisoners were viewed, though people have not hesitated to pronounce on this issue as on others.

From a simple human point of view, the Nazis inflicted incomparable sufferings on both Jews and gays. To remember those sufferings is essential. To measure them is impossible.

**HOMOPHOBIA AMONG JEWS**

Why, then, have many Jews persisted in denying the reality and significance of gay oppression? Jews are obviously not immune to the prejudice against homosexuality that exists in the larger society, any more than gay people are immune to anti-Semitism. But gay subcultures have been historically and geographically rare and fragmented; for at least a thousand years they could not exist openly anywhere in Europe or where Europeans settled. The existence of a visible, organized or self-conscious lesbian/gay community is a very recent development, and gay people have suffered enormously from its absence, including the Nazi camps. (Unlike criminals or politicals, gays in the camps had little group cohesion and no aspirations to become camp leaders, and so got little protection from each other or other prisoners.) There has, for these reasons, never been much of a specifically gay tradition of anti-Semitism.

Jews on the other hand have lived continuously in communities together and had a common culture for millenia. Jewish tradition and culture contain particular sources of prejudice against homosexuality. Prohibitions of homosexuality probably began among Jews as one means to distinguish them from the more urbanized peoples among whom they settled in Palestine. The harshest prohibition was in Leviticus 20:13: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death...” Such prohibitions continued to set Jews who lived under Hellenistic Seleucid rule, Roman rule and Arab rule apart from their more tolerant or even pro-homosexual rulers. Evidence suggests that traditionalist Jews did not always succeed in maintaining the anti-homosexual taboo, and that Jews who were willing to learn from the philosophy and culture of those around them were also sometimes willing to question or abandon prejudices against homosexuality. (The biblical same-sex romances between David and Jonathan and Naomi and Ruth have also provided Jews with ammunition against homophobia. But the continued re-

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article on the Sodom story from Tik
to's first issue, for example, makes only one reference to homosexuality.

The narrator offers no comment on the homosexual aspect of the threatened act of violence, though it is safe to assume he expects us to consider that, too, abhorrent, but in regard to this episode's place in the larger story of progeny for Abraham, it is surely important that homosexuality is a necessarily sterile form of sexual intercourse....

More important than the author's poor biblical scholarship — scholars have come to believe that the Sodom story originally intended no reference to homosexuality — is his apparent agreement with the "abhorrence" he attributes to Genesis' authors. His reference to the "sterility" of homosexual sex might be interpreted in isolation as a non-judgmental statement about human biology. But in its heavily weighted moral context, which speaks approvingly of an entire city being condemned to death for homosexuality, it shows the conception of sexuality on which he bases his abhorrence: a view that considers as fruits of sexual intercourse, not pleasure, creativity, fellowship or love, but only procreation.

The same issue of Tik
to contains another reference to gay people, in an article by Christopher Lasch. As for the other "alternative" forms of the family, so highly touted by liberals — single "families," gay "marriages," and so on — it makes no sense to consider them as families and would still make no sense if they were important statistically, as they are not. They may be legitimate living arrangements, but they are arrangements chosen by people who prefer not to live in families at all, with all the unavoidable constraints that families place on individual freedom.

Compare that passage from Tik
to with another quotation, this time from Midge Deeter in the pages of Commentary.

[Heterosexual men] feel mocked most of all for having become, in style as well as in substance, family men, caught up in getting and begetting, thinking of mortgages, schools, and the affordable, marking the passage of years in obedience to all the grubby imperatives that heterosexual manhood seems to impose. In assuming such burdens they believe themselves entitled to respect, but homosexuality paints them with the color of sheer entrapment.

One of these two passages was written by a "radical" for a progressive Jewish magazine; the other was written by a "neoconservative" for the Jewish magazine progressives love to hate. But both passages draw on the same long-standing images of gay people in order to express resentment and hostility toward them. Both portray nongay people in families as burdened with honorable commitments, required by the need to love and provide for this generation and the next one. Both perpetuate the stereotype that lesbian and gay people are irresponsible and shirk these commitments. This stereotype is as vicious as it is inaccurate.

I agree with Lasch that the most useful definition of the "family" as a historical institution restricts it to a pair or group of adults bringing up children together. But even by this narrow definition, many gays and lesbians are in families. Many gay fathers and lesbian mothers are fighting to bring up their children, against both the practical indifference with which our society treats all parents and the special bigotry it reserves for gay parents. Many married people with children, who are considered straight by their neighbors and acquaintances, lead emotionally and erotically rich homosexual lives (or difficult and confused homosexual lives), and choose concealment as the price of keeping their families together. Many gay children and adolescents are trying desperately to survive with dignity inside traditional families.

Even lesbians and gays (like me) in less traditional living arrangements (which Lasch says "may" be "legitimate") struggle with constraints and choices far more than Lasch is willing or able to admit. As Lillian Rubin asked in her cogent response to Lasch, "By what reasoning do we decide that two people who live and love in a long-term, stable relationship, perhaps even raise a child together, are any less subject to the constraints of family life simply because they sleep with someone of the same sex instead of the opposite one?"

The inability of Tik
to to deal with gay realities in a constructive manner is further demonstrated in the current issue. Tik
to published a review on Gay and the Holocaust by Martin Gilbert, Winston Churchill's biographer. Although the review talks about Nazi persecution of gays as "odious" and "cruel," it minimizes the mass murders in significant ways. Gilbert says that besides a few subscription and club membership lists, "no lists existed that could in any way identify homosexuals" — a statement that forgets the police files that existed all over Germany identifying those prosecuted under Paragraph 175. He concludes that gays suffered "persecution of a racial or group sort, but in this reviewer's opinion it is not easily described as genocide" — because (1) no attempt was made to persecute gays'
parents or siblings (a peculiarly irrelevant point) and (2) "the camps to which homosexuals were sent were not specifically geared to their torment as a group but to their destruction primarily as individuals" (an incomprenhensible point). The review bears witness to Tik- kuan's and Gilbert's good intentions. But it also shows their inability to grasp the magnitude of anti-gay bigo- try even under democratic regimes, and the meaning of the Nazis' war on gays as the conscious, logical and hor- rifying culmination of that bigotry.

WHICH WAY TO GAY—JEWISH UNITY?

Jews and gays are bound to one another in this soci­ ety by common predicaments and battles. We are bound together—or should be—by our horrible memories of the suffering and destruction caused by bigotry. We are bound together—or should be—in the fight against right-wingers like Lyndon LaRouche, who, at the same time as he blamed the world’s problems on a Jewish-KGB-Trilateral Commission conspiracy, put a proposal on the California ballot to intern all "suspected carriers" of AIDS. But we can be bound together in a common attempt to define a vision and heal the world only by full acknowledgment of our diversity and of all our rights and needs. Right-wing fundamentalist Jews offer lesbian and gay people excommunication at best, execution at worst. Progressive Jews need to find comp­elling reasons to offer something much better: genuine understanding and acceptance.

Genuine understanding requires deepening our ex­amination and critique of religious Judaism. It requires coming to grips with issues of women’s control of their own bodies, compulsory heterosexuality and the crit­ique of the family, which have been central to con­ temporary feminism. It means challenging the outdated, unreal division of human beings into "normal hetero­sexuals" and "abnormal people," to which so many Jews still cling, and exploring instead the multiplicity and multi-dimensionality of human sexualities. This kind of examination, this thoroughgoing approach to gay-­ Jewish unity, is not easy. But it is necessary; it is urgent.

Peter Drucker is a gay activist in San Francisco and an advisory editor of the socialist magazine Against the Current.

Notes for Further Reading

The best book on the subject in English appeared only in 1986: Richard Plant's The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals (New York: Henry Holt and Co.). Although Plant’s account of the broader causes of Nazism (22-28) is conventional and inconsistent and his chapter on Himmler too long, the book is valuable not only for its thorough research but for the author’s personal history and emo­tions (he fled Germany when the Nazis took power, leaving gay friends behind). James D. Steakley gives a good, short account in his The Hom­osexual Emancipation Movement in Germany (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 103-121, which is my source for most facts about gays under the Third Reich (Plant also acknowledges his debt to Steakley (223)). There is an important (though anonymous) memoir by an Aus­ trian gay survivor of the camps published under the name of writer Heinz Heger: The Men with the Pink Triangle (Boston: Alyson Publica­ tions and London, Gay Men's Press, 1980—originally Die Männer mit dem Rosa Winkel, Hamburg: Merlin-Verlag, 1972), with an excellent introduction by translator David Fernbach.

The text of Martin Sherman’s Play Bent (New York: Avon, 1979) is also worth reading. Much of the controversy surrounding Bent came from the fact that Sherman had one of his gay characters exchange his pink triangle for a yellow star in hopes of better treatment—of course, Sherman did not say whether these were realistic hopes. On the other hand, Frank Rector’s The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), is a book to be avoided rather than read. It consists mostly of confused speculations about Nazism and Nazi leaders’ sexual psychology. It also takes much of its material on the camps word-for-word from James D. Steakley’s The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany with or without quotation marks or attribution: for example, compare Rector, 104-105 with Steakley, 104-105; Rector, 119 with Steakley, 110; Rector, 121 with Steakley, 113.

For a good discussion of early Jewish attitudes toward homosexuality, see John Boswell’s Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexual­ity: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chi­ cago Press, 1980), 92-102.
Gypsy/Roma Followup

by Ian Hancock

In the last issue of *SHMATE*, I published two articles: one, a brief history of my people, the Gypsies, and the other an account of our fate under the Nazis. In that article, I expressed my hope that more involvement and concern from outside could be generated for our situation, which has been consistently overlooked. We sent copies to forty-two Holocaust centers and organizations. Although only one of them responded — the Holocaust Memorial Center in Dallas — its directors expressed great concern and a willingness to involve us in their program in the future.

At the beginning of January, the Romani Union offices in Austin and Minneapolis also sent out a press release package to nearly seventy news agencies and national newspapers to draw attention to our plight in the Holocaust. This was done in connection with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council’s conference in February on “Other Victims.” We received not one single response from the media. That conference contained sessions on Jehovah’s Witnesses, gays, and Poles, besides Gypsies, but the Romani presentation included no Gypsies, and was organized by special advisor Sister Carol Rittner, a non-Gypsy with no contacts within our community. Two non-Gypsy specialists were flown in from Europe, although the involvement of neither myself, a Special Advisor to the Holocaust Council, nor Dr. Gabrielle Tyrnauer, a Jewish scholar who was engaged to write a report on the Romani Holocaust for the Council, and who lives in Vermont, was sought. When the conference was first announced, I wrote to Sister Rittner telling her that Dr. Jan Kochanowski ought to be invited to speak. Dr. Kochanowski is himself a Rom; his family in Latvia helped to hide Jews from the Nazis before it, too, was taken to the concentration camp at Byalistok, from which only he survived. He is a university professor, has two doctorates, speaks English, went on French television to protest the granting of a degree there for a dissertation claiming that the Holocaust never happened, and was very willing to come to Washington. I received no reply.

In the April 13th, 1983, *Washington Post*, a Mr. Berenbaum is quoted as saying that the make-up of the Holocaust Memorial Council “made many survivors on the Commission uncomfortable, for it included non-Jews among the victims of the Holocaust.” My own continuing agitation for proper recognition of the fate of the Gypsies, the Holocaust’s first and last victims, is making at least some Council members uncomfortable. In the first issue of the Council’s new Newsletter, a column is devoted on page two to our Day of Remembrance last September, although Romani victims are referred to there simply as “casualties” of the Holocaust. There used to be two of us who were Special Advisors to the Council on Romani-related Holocaust matters: the other one was the late John Megel, who lived in Arlington. But the then executive director Richard Kireger fired him from the post, because he was making a “nuisance” of himself.

I wrote a long letter to Elie Wiesel, whose advisor I was until his resignation, asking him to address certain points. That letter is reproduced below. So is his reply, which dealt with none of the issues I raised. I wrote again, asking why, on the only two occasions that we had ever met personally, the most acknowledgement I got was a nod; his five-line reply this time was that my letter “ought to be addressed to my successor, since I have resigned as Holocaust Memorial Council Chairman”. Professor Wiesel is still a Council member, however, and he has said publicly that he was “somewhat” embarrassed at not having done enough to recognize the fate of the Romani victims, and would do more. I then wrote to his successor, Harvey Meyerhoff, on February 10th expressing a hope for better things, but so far have received no reply.

Regarding the proposed appointment of two Rom to the Council, the White House Office of Presidential personnel now informs us that only one is being considered, although eleven new places are open. At the urging of the Romani Union, the Congressional Committee on Appropriations testified on February 5th, 1986, regarding “the expenditure of funds for Gypsy-related concerns without consultation with any representatives of the American Romani community” (letter dated January 28th, 1987). We have heard nothing so far about the outcome of this, but perhaps this will lead to a better involvement of Gypsies in the workings of the Council.

Television producer Barney Rosensweig was quoted in *Newsweek* (Feb. 9th) lamenting that “we can’t even use the word ‘gypped’ any more because it offended the Gypsies”. In February, too, Robert Silverberg’s new novel *Star of Gypsies* appeared in which the Rom are presented as beings from another planet, while CBS aired its program *Wizard* on February 3rd entitled “Gypsies, tramps and thieves”, a story involving Gypsies who kidnapped children, picked pockets, were arsonists, and practitioners of black magic. NBC’s evening news on February 10th also reported on Gypsy children, who are being stolen in Yugoslavia and trained for crime, dealing not with the tragedy of the situation, but with its sensationalistic “Gypsy as thief” aspects. When telephoned by a Romani Union representative, NBC claimed that it had no idea that there were Gypsies in America, or that they had of-
fended any section of the population. ABC's "Growing Pains" (Feb. 10th) and "Mr. Belvedere" (Feb. 20th) both contained references to children being taken by Gypsies, while the February 10th issue of Women's World, published by Heinrich Bauer, Inc., contained a spiteful article about "Gypsy gypsters"; editor Dennis Neeld answered our protest in a letter telling us that we deserved what we got. I have listed some of our calendar of Gypsy-related media coverage for February to emphasize just what the media, and presumably the public, finds interesting about Gypsies. It obviously isn't anything which is of concern to Gypsies themselves, to judge from the total lack of response to more serious issues generated from within the community. We are still being manipulated and defined from outside, and this must stop.

Although the title of the keynote address at the "Other Victims" conference, given by former deputy Prime Minister of Sweden Per Ahlmark was entitled "First it starts with the Jews", it was Gypsies, who first began to be incarcerated in camps and sterilized in 1933, the year Hitler came to power. And as late as 1947, two years after the end of the war, Gypsies remained in the camps, fearful of leaving them, because they were subject to arrest and confinement in labor camps under the terms of a 1926 law, still in operation, which placed Gypsies under police jurisdiction. As late as 1954, police authorities in Bavaria set up a special office, in cooperation with Interpol, to register Gypsies, and between 1950 and 1967 in the Cologne region, identity papers given to Romani survivors of the camps were systematically withdrawn on the grounds that they were unable to provide written evidence of their German nationality.

I should like very much to see a Romani-Jewish Alliance for the Holocaust established to help us make the public understand these things; we can't do it alone. Such a group already exists in an informal way, and I know there are Jewish friends who are hurt and offended by what is being done to bury these aspects of history. Again, I ask you to consider these things, and to do what you can to get people thinking. Write to our main U.S. office (World Romani Union, P.O. Box 856, Buda, TX 78610) and we will put you in touch with others sharing your interests. Perhaps together we can break this wall of silence.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
PAR 106 • Austin, Texas 78712-1164

Professor Elie Wiesel
University Professors
Boston University
Boston, Mass. 02215

25th November, 1986

Dear Elie,

Sister Rittner called me last week to solicit my involvement in the forthcoming conference on Other Victims... I have one or two reservations which I feel should be shared with you.

By categorizing us as "other" (i.e. "other than Jewish") victims, the Council is putting us firmly in our place, a place secondary to the Jewish tragedy. In your statement in the Washington Post for April 13th, 1983, you made it clear that there would be "no omission" of other victims, but "no equation" either. Does this mean that you believe the fate of no other victims equates with that of the Jews? You have said as much on many occasions, but you have never said why.

In our own case, the facts are clear: the Romani people were unequivocally the first victims of the Nazi machine, anti-Gypsy laws had been enforced since 1899 and sterilization and incarceration began the year Hitler came to power. Criteria for classification as a Gypsy were twice as stringent as those applied to Jews; Raul Hilberg discusses this in The destruction of the European Jews — if Gypsies had been categorized according to the criteria applied to Jewish victims, nearly 20,000 of our people would have escaped death. And yet you say, in the enclosed document, that "the detention of Jewish as target for death transcended all boundaries". We were slated for extermination for exactly the same reasons as were the Jews, and we lost the same overall percentage of our people in Nazi-held territories. Not only were we the first victims, but we were the last, as well. As late as 1947, two years after the end of the War, many Gypsies were still in the camps, fearful of leaving because they were subject, once out of them, to being arrested and sent to labor camps for violating pre-War anti-Gypsy laws which were still on the books. These are facts, and they are based on predominantly Jewish scholarship; they are documented in my book. The only people to challenge them have been individuals associated with neo-Nazi groups such as Otto Mueller; certainly no Jewish scholars have; it must be assumed, then, that however grudgingly, they are accepted. I say grudgingly based on my own experience: one professor of Holocaust studies at my own university refused angrily to consider dealing with any victims other than Jewish, for example; in the same newspaper article I mentioned above, Mr. Berenbaum is quoted as saying the proposed make-up of the Council "made many survivors on the commission uncomfortable, for it included non-Jews among the victims of the Holocaust". When I came to Washington to address the Council last June, I certainly felt that my presence made several people uncomfortable. Twice remarks were made in my hearing about "getting in on the act"... CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
You have expressed sympathy with Armenian victims of the Turkish massacre, and Armenians are represented on the Council. They were not victims of Nazism; Gypsies were, yet we have no representation. This is an inexplicable situation. Over the past couple of years, we have been put in the charge of several individuals, none of them Gypsies, none of whom seems to know anything about who or what we are, and none of whom has made a demonstrable effort to deal with us as anything other than a nuisance. Some have come and gone, such as Mr. Pfefferkorn; Dr. Cargas was to have been a new liaison for us, but letters to him remain unacknowledged. Mr. Feen and Sister Rittner deal with us now, but neither remained in the room to hear my talk in June, and thereby learn something about us, and neither even extended the courtesy of attending our Day of Remembrance, which only five Council members bothered to attend, and which you, as the first and principal speaker, left as soon as you had said your piece during the preceding invocation, incidentally. Prof. Pawlikowski reminded Gypsies that Jews were the Holocaust's "supreme" victims. How are we to interpret this? It certainly doesn't inspire confidence, and the whole business has taken on aspects of a competition.

The White House voted not to include us on the Council earlier this year, despite our efforts since 1983 to obtain recognition. We still have received no explanation for this; certainly we deserve one. If the Council was created to honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, and we were victims of the Holocaust, why are we not being honored too, with representation? Can you give me any reason, other than prejudice, that would account for this? At this stage of the game, it cannot be ignorance of the facts.

Returning to the matter of the February conference. It is a matter of perspective. I suppose, but imagine Jews being relegated to the status of "others" in the Romani Holocaust. The very fact that our Day of Remembrance was held separately from your own, says something about how we are perceived. At that ceremony, Gypsy speakers were outnumbered by non-Gypsies three to one and we were not even allowed to sing our anthem because it would have "disturbed office workers in nearby rooms", according to Roberta Wasserman. We are being similarly segregated and dealt with regarding the upcoming conference: the Gypsy panel is. I understand, being chaired by Mr. Kanfer, who is not himself a Gypsy, and whose novel dealing with the "Romani Holocaust" has not been well received by Romani scholars. Once again, matters directly concerning our people are being managed by non-Gypsies. This is not because Gypsies are not out here; I have frequently proposed the names of suitable individuals....

Sister Rittner is a special advisor, like myself (although in a published statement Mr. Naftalin told the press that my appointment was only "honorary"). She specializes, according to the Council's latest newsletter, in "ethnic outreach", which includes us. And yet last week was the first time she has ever reached out to me or any of our people; even at the June meeting when the late John Megel introduced us, she was most reluctant to talk. Why are we not being allowed to take charge of our own affairs in all of this? Why must we be "managed" by people who have demonstrated nothing but impatience or indifference toward us, who know very little about us, and who have not been present at a single H.M.C. event involving we Rom? We are not "naive" as former director Micah Naftalin told the press, nor are our aspirations "cockamamie", as another former director, Seymour Siegel, also told the press.

You are on record as opposing appointments to the Council on political grounds, and this is certainly laudable. However, it has been made crystal clear to myself and William Duna, who is now being considered for an appointment next year, that whoever is appointed must not only be a voting Republican, but be able to give evidence of demonstrable support of the Republican party. Surely this is a gross readjustment of priorities, when the issue is the memorial to genocide. It seems to be the case as well, looking through the huge amounts of H.M.C. related literature over the past six years, that money has much to do with how the group is perceived. Would we be less of a nuisance if Romani businessmen were making substantial contributions to the Museum fund? You know enough about our history now to understand our circumstances; American Rom are just four or five generations from Rumanian slavery, and uneducated, the subjects of unconstitutional, but very real anti-Gypsy laws in this country. Gypsies are the victims of their own past, and are paying the price because they can't pay the price. Again, priorities are called into question. It is only the presence of those laws which stops me from taking out American citizenship. I cannot swear to uphold the laws of the country (which I would have to), as long as they operate against my people. When they are removed, I will be proud to apply for citizenship, and then request that I be considered for an appointment to the H.M.C. We recently managed to get all such laws stricken from the books in the state of Pennsylvania, incidentally, with Congressional help and intervention from the B'nai B'rith. It is an irony filled with anguish for me, that so much support for our cause comes from Jewish friends, while it is Jewish resistance in Washington and elsewhere which is stubbornly stifling our voice.

I have been very frank with you because I know you will give the points I raise due consideration, and because you have expressed to me personally how strongly you feel about these matters. I cannot interact with anyone in the Washington office so satisfactorily. Twice now, after having sent letters like this, I have been asked to write follow-up letters disclaiming my expressions of discontent. There have been times when I have felt that nothing is to come of my efforts; that I'm flogging a dead

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horse. But still I persist. I would rather work with the Council as a legitimately-appointed advisor, than attack it from without, having finally resigned in exasperation. . . .

Elie, forgive my bluntness, and understand the turmoil within me. See yourself as a Rom and understand that more is going on in Washington involving Gypsies in charge of Gypsy matters; I have tried to generate support to bring Miriam Novitch's exhibition of the Gypsy Holocaust here for a tour from Israel, but no one is interested. I have tried to ensure that, when the unexamined archives in Pennsylvania are gone through for new Jewish-related data, Gypsy-related data are also put aside. Again, indifference; this particular issue I have raised several times; it seems to be an especially important one to me.

This has given you plenty to think about, so I will stop here. One day I should like to sit with you and discuss these things face to face. Please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,
Ian Hancock

LETTERS: continued

I have heard of many other famous toreros & flamenco singers, dancers, & guitarists who were Rom & some famous Rom craftsmen who made exquisitely inlaid flamenco guitars, but their names escape me.

I realize that the regular readership of SHMATE does not think of tauromaquia as a positive way to leave one's mark on the world, but I also realize that most Jews eat beef & wear leather shoes. I have personal friends (not Rom) who have faced bulls on the sand (the use of the word "fight" in this context is an outsiders' misinterpretation), who as part of their training, had to visit a slaughterhouse to see how much more painfully cattle die in the slaughterhouse than in the bullring. The torero is in at least as much danger as any other daredevil. Joselito was almost instantaneously killed by the bull Bailador. Isabel La Pantoja recently lost her gajo husband, the popular Paquirri, to the bull Avispado. And some of my own friends have been pretty badly hurt. So one must at least drop the charge of cowardice that has sometimes been brought against the Rom by such august accusers as the venerable Encyclopedia Brittanica. May the God of Isaac & Abraham bless you.

Charlene Bevins
Seattle, Washington

I discovered SHMATE with issue #2 when a friend asked me to deliver it to my next door neighbor. It was interesting enough to convince me to subscribe. More than anything else, reading SHMATE makes me realize that "I am not alone," that there are other people with similar ideas out there. It also contains a lot of information that I do not get elsewhere. Keep up the good work.

Roger Colten
Santa Barbara, California
MRS. KATZ

Many books and shows are produced about the Jewish resorts in the Catskills. An occasional article deals with the Jewish farmers who antedated the resorts. But little, if anything, has been written on the other major Borscht Belt institution, the Jewish camps. The following poem on camp stationery was found in a book at a garage sale in Berkeley.

NEW YORK OFFICE
Camp Shiroh, Inc.
802 Avenue "N"
Brooklyn 30, New York
PHONE: DEwey 9-1179

For Boys - For Girls entirely separate
IN PARKSVILLE CALL— LIBERTY 2266

Ruthie Friedman is kind of a snob
Elehanon Ealig don't do his job
Lanny Oppenheim may never get rich
But Mrs. Katz is a son-of-a-bitch

Leah Kleinman is not very glib
Tova Figirla is a genuine dib
Ira Epiler is a bit dead
But Mrs. Katz is a big shithead

Rabbi Levy is a fat tub of lard
Marvin Ammer is the one and only God
Shorty Garber is built like a truck
But Mrs. Katz is the scum of the earth

Jackie Katz has a large Jewish nose
Miriam Becker wears sexless Jewish hose
Frank Bruekheimer's not the picture of mirth
But Mrs. Katz is the sum of the earth

Diana Ehrman is as dizzy as they come
Michael Strick may be a bit numb
Alan Kaufthal may be slightly slow
But Mrs. Katz stinks from head to toe

"We Invite Comparison"
Kimikazu Nomura bitterly remembers the first time he realized he was different. "I was only seven years old," said Nomura, now 50, "and my elementary school teacher refused to call be by my name. Instead, I was called by the name of my family's ghetto. I was so ashamed that I stopped school for four years."

Nomura's teacher's reference to his Osaka home is a common way in which Japanese slight the Burakumin, or "people from a specialized community."

With an estimated 2.5 million members, the Burakumin are Japan's largest minority. They look and speak no differently from the average Japanese, but they carry a lingering stigma, as descendants of an underclass that once performed the nation's most degrading jobs: digging graves, working in slaughterhouses, tanning leather, and executing criminals. Though they have often been compared to India's outcast class, the untouchables, unlike their Indian counterparts, the Burakumin are almost unknown outside Japan.

Their obscurity is partly the result of Japanese insistence on the homogenity of their society. Last October, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone emphasized the point in his now-famous speech in which he disparaged Black and Hispanic Americans, adding that Japan's strength was in its lack of minority groups. Not surprisingly, social scientists have dubbed the Burakumin as "Japan's invisible race."

But a militant civil rights group called the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) threatens to make this "invisible class" more visible. With branch offices all over Japan, except for the most northern island of Hokkaido, the 200,000-member group is organizing courses on human rights at hundreds of universities, forming alliances with large labor unions, researching ghetto conditions, holding nationwide conferences, and publishing books and newsletters.

Its aim is not only to stop discrimination, but to erode the average citizen's reluctance to discuss the Burakumin's plight. In Japan, the question is so sensitive that encyclopedia and dictionary publishers purposely omit references to them. Even foreign journalists based in Japan are hesitant to write about them. "It's the kind of story you do just before you leave the country," said one Tokyo-based American journalist.

But reminders of the lowly status of the Burakumin are common, if one knows where to look. On ghetto walls, graffiti dubs them, "dog killers," "night soil collectors," "animal men," "leather women" and "four leggeds."

The Burakumin have long been outcasts from the nation's economic prosperity. BLL studies show that only two out of three have continued their education past primary school. They are twice as likely as the average Japanese to be victims of disease, 10 times as likely to be unemployed and four times as likely to be on welfare.

These miserable conditions have caused many disgruntled youth to join the ranks of the Yakuza, or Japanese mafia. In the recently released book "Yakuza: The Explosive Account of Japan's Criminal Underworld," authors Alec Dubro and David Kaplan say the Burakumin comprise about 70 percent of the membership of the Yamaguchi-gumi, the largest Yakuza gang.

"The Japanese underworld is an equal opportunity employer," said George De Vos, an anthropology professor at the University of California at Berkeley, who has written one of the few books on the Burakumin. "They don't ask you where you come from."

Myths abound about Burakumin origins. But most historians agree that their beginnings go back to the late 16th century and the rigid feudal society of the Tokugawa era. Divided into four classes — warriors (samurai), merchants, craftsmen and peasants — that society needed an underclass to handle the most undesirable occupations. Those who were forced to perform such jobs lived in designated ghettos, and in some areas were even required to wear special identification marks, such as a piece of leather or a yellow collar.

Shinto and Buddhist priests made their lives more miserable by barring them from worship, because they offended religious concepts of purity. Shintoists were preoccupied with pollution — blood, disease and death — while Buddhists scorned those who killed and ate meat.

The early Burakumin became known as "eta" (full of filth) or "hinnin," (non-people), and were not mentioned in any population count, nor were their communities included on any maps.

In 1871 an emancipation edict abolished their demeaning classification. But unlike the samurai, who were given government loans to help adjust to a new order, the Burakumin received no official help. They remained in their ghettos and continued as society's lowest class.

What today is known as the Buraku Liberation League was first formed in 1922 by a group calling itself

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the National Levelers Association. Since its inception, the civil rights group has relied heavily on the “kyudan,” or denunciation as its principal tactic. Whenever a discrimination complaint arises, the organization demands an apology either to them or to a newspaper or insists on the appearance of the discriminator before a public meeting.

In the past several years, BLL denunciation campaigns have centered around the use of “Buraku lists” and family registers to weed out Burakumin for job and marriage opportunities.

In 1975, an employee of a large Osaka company informed the league that hundreds of lists mentioning names and locations of some 5,300 Burakumin communities throughout Japan were being sold to more than 200 of the nation’s largest and most influential companies, including such corporate titans as Toyota, Nissan, and Yasuda Trust Bank. Labeled “top secret,” the lists were used to identify anyone with Burakumin ancestry and to deny them employment or promotion.

Although BLL “kyudan” campaigns prompted the government to seize and ban the clandestine directories, most sources concede that similar name slates are still being used.

“It’s officially prohibited, but many large companies have lists or use private detectives to obtain Burakumin names,” said Eiji Nakahata, head researcher of urban problems for Osaka City government.

Many parents also resort to background checks of their child’s potential spouse to prevent Burakumin from entering their families. Typically, they make use of the “koseki,” or family register available at most city halls, which indicates not only one’s address, but ghetto background, if the family has moved away.

For those Burakumin who are living outside the ghetto and “passing,” the existence of the “koseki” means they cannot escape the psychological fear of exposure. Each time it reveals one’s Burakumin roots, weddings are usually called off. BLL studies have shown that this has caused many nervous breakdowns and numerous suicides.

In 1976 BLL persistence spurred the government into action. No longer would the “koseki” be available to the public, and any person seeking access would have to notify and state the purpose of the investigation to the person in question. But after 10 years, this law has proved to be more of a nuisance than a deterrent for those looking for information.

“City hall workers are easily fooled by individuals or private detectives pretending to be tax accountants or lawyers on a case,” said Kimikazu Nomura, who is now the director of a BLL office in an Osaka suburb. “They usually give them the information.”

More recently, the BLL has been battling to protect the leather industry — still a Burakumin preserve. Their efforts to safeguard Burakumin jobs intensified last year after the Reagan administration challenged the Nakasone government to open itself to imports of leather and leather products. Japanese protective measures include high tariffs on imports — 20 percent on finished leather — and quotas of about $40 million a year each for finished leather and leather shoes, according to the Asian Wall Street Journal.

So far, the Japanese government has stonewalled American attempts to change its policy. Nor is it likely, say some regional experts, that the policy will change.

“It’s stupid to push them on leather goods since it would not create that many jobs here and it’s such a delicate issue for them,” said Chalmers Johnson, an Asian trade specialist, who has written 12 books on Japan. “It’s Japan’s one way to compensate a people they’ve discriminated against for so long.”

BLL leaders, however, concede they’ve been compensated in other ways as well. Hundreds of Burakumin ghettos have been renovated by government programs to construct new housing, schools, sanitation facilities and local roads.

“We’ve spent $25.6 trillion yen since 1969 to improve Burakumin communities,” said Akihiko Kumashiro, a spokesman for Prime Minister Nakasone.

But Burakumin leaders are now lobbying for at least one more concession: a “fundamental” national law against discrimination. While the Japanese constitution theoretically guarantees human rights to all citizens, there is currently no penalty for those who discriminate in housing or employment. The BLL’s “fundamental law” would enact them.

Since the passage of such a law would denote the acknowledgement of minorities and discrimination, nobody sees it passing anytime in the near future. Moreover, many people believe it will take more than a statute to curtail prejudice against the Burakumin.

“The Japanese are too sensitive about social status to allow it to disappear,” said George De Vos. “They’re still aware of who’s a descendant of a samurai.”

Jack Epstein, author of On the Gringo Trail, is a writer from Berkeley, California.
When the Israeli invasion of Lebanon began Bernie wasn’t taken by surprise. Weeks before he had already started worrying. Why wait until the last minute? His pre-invasion worries were of a diffuse nature, but as events unfolded he was able to be more specific. How strong was the PLO? Would there be many Israeli casualties? How long would the fighting go on and what would be the effect on the already strained Israeli economy? How would the Arabs, particularly the Syrians react? What about Europe and the USA? But not all of Bernie’s worries had to do with Realpolitik. Would the Israelis develop a garrison state mentality? Would their culture become brutal and insensitive? How would this affect feminism among Jewish women? There was plenty to keep him busy.

As the fighting progressed and Beirut was besieged, Bernie’s worries became more intense. Every night he would see television footage of bombed-out apartment blocks, bodies dug out of rubble, shots of women and children in emergency wards interspersed with pictures of Israeli artillery, tanks, and jet bombers manned by fit-looking, lean, hard-faced young men.

Along with most people Bernie had a sense of balance and symmetry Newtonian in its moral application — for every action there was an equal and opposite reaction. Individually and collectively, if you violated certain precepts, eventually (call it karma if you like), you’d get it back, sometimes in spades, if not in this lifetime, in the future. It could even be hundreds of years from now but you could count on it. It was like a very mild winter is eventually followed by a severe one. It never fails.

All right. Bernie was no fool. He knew that there were at least two things wrong with his thinking. One — if you wait long enough anything is bound to happen, call it karma if you like. And two — there are vagaries. Every August hundreds of thousands of people gather to commemorate the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki while even in Nanking, Manila, Singapore, or Hong Kong no one commemorates those slaughtered by the Japanese. But, after all, there was something special about The Bomb. And what about Dresden and its marathon fire-bombing? Lots of guilt on that one too, even in Coventry, Rotterdam, perhaps not so much in Warsaw. And who, over forty years later, still memorialized the Holocaust victims? Only the Jews, droning on and on and on.

Well, all right, there is this dialectic, this little circle of Yin in the larger, comma-shaped area of Yang. Guilt, it turns out, is the price of victory. It’s really not that bad; guilt purifies and anneals. It acts as an antidote for excessive pride. It helps keep a nice, wholesome balance in the wholly unwholesome business of winning or losing, killing or being killed. Life at the cost of a life would be unbearable without guilt.

Bernie knew all this because Bernie was no fool. But even for someone as clever as Bernie there is a tripping point. Enough is enough. The days dragged on and almost every night it was the same. The same crying children and the same hard-faced men. He hoped the media would go away. Just stop. Do a number elsewhere. Somehow get a TV crew into Teheran and tape the executions there; cover some massacre of opponents somewhere, in Africa; do a feature on deadly indifference in Bangladesh. No. No let up. The screaming children and men in their uniforms week after week. Bernie was getting mad, really mad. How are we behaving? What will they think of us? We’re not really like that. Maybe they are but I’m not. I care. I really care. Who went to Washington for the Blacks? Who marched for the Vietnamese? Who sells UNICEF cards on Halloween?

Every day Bernie changed buses in front of St. Michael’s Church. Occasionally a nun or a priest waited at the bus stop. Today he searched for one in vain. There was just one older woman, garbed in black and with a hairy upper lip. Did she just come from Mass? Maybe she’d lit a votive candle before the Virgin. Bernie tried to catch her eye. When the bus came, he pushed in front of her so that he could let her precede him. For a moment she stared at Bernie. He smiled and repeated his “after you” gesture. Her face was immobile, even hard. She knew. From her eyes came the penetrating look of accusation. “Bernie Serota, Bernie Serota, kill enough kids for your daily quota?”

Two days later he was luckier. A priest was at the stop. Again Bernie pushed ahead and with a grandiloquent gesture offered his recently captured position. “After you, Father,” (he’d even called his old man “Pop”). The priest looked at him and smiled. Bernie was forgiven.

But it wasn’t enough. The guilt and resentment gnawed at him daily. They started dominating his life. If the Jews couldn’t learn the lessons of history, who could? If they, in their centuries of suffering at the hands of Christians and Muslims were to return fire with fire, where would it all end? Would it ever end or would hatred just seep saw through centuries of violence and retributionary violence?

At first Bernie held it all in. His blood pressure went up and he ate less. He tossed and turned at night. Then

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he started fulminating — against Menachim Begin, against Ariel Sharon, against the Knesset, against the entire Israeli people, and then against the Jews. The Jews were a stiff-necked people. They were supposed to be the Light of the World, the Great Beacon of Righteousness, and they ended up being just as violent, just as vindictive and uncaring as anyone else. Bernie was fed up and he acted. Decisively. He took his children out of Jewish camp before the season was over. He cancelled their fall registration in Hebrew school. He resigned from the congregation. It should have been enough but it wasn’t. He sat up at night and brooded. How could they do this to him? No, he would have to go a step further. He would have to go to the final solution.

In the morning Bernie called and made an appointment. Joel had been his friend for years. They had even grown up in the same slum neighborhood. Each had escaped, Bernie through the school of commerce, Joel through medical school. Their friendship resumed when they bought homes in the same suburban area and joined the same congregation.

“Hello, Bernie,” Joel extended his hand. “How are you? How’re Anne and the children?”

“Fine. Fine. Listen, Joel. I’m here to see you on a very personal matter. I told your receptionist to set aside half an hour. Don’t look so glum, I’ll cover it. I don’t have a health problem but there’s something I want you to do for me. I don’t want your personal opinion, just your professional one. I just want you to tell me if it’s possible and if you’ll do it, okay?”

“Well,” Joel smiled, “I don’t know what you’re talking about but you’ve roused my curiosity. What did you have in mind,” he leaned forward in mock conspiracy, “a nose job?”

Bernie stared at Joel. For a moment there was silence.

“Listen, I don’t want to get into an argument with you. You know I left the congregation?”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. I heard. That’s your business, Bernie.”

“Well, it’s more than that. I’m sick and tired of the whole schlazel. I’m very disappointed. Maybe I’m impulsive but my mind’s made up. I want out.”

Joel waited for the punch line, ready to laugh.

“I want to be de-coventilized,” Bernie continued, “separated, finished. I want a new start.”

“Are you serious?”

“I’ve never been more serious.”

There was silence.

“All right. All right,” Joel conceded. “How do you feel about being a Jew is your concern. But I don’t understand why you came to me? I’m not a rabbi, or if that’s where you’re at, a priest or minister. I’m not even a shrink. You want a shrink? I’ll send you to one,” he said reaching for his pen.

“No, Joel. I don’t want a shrink. I don’t want a priest. I want is a surgeon. You hear what I’m saying? I want a surgeon. You do do surgery, don’t you?”

Joel nodded. “Yeah. Lots. Why? What did you have in mind?”

“I want you to de-circumcise me. I want the end, the foreskin, I want it restored.”

“You what?!” Joel leaned forward ready once more to dissolve in laughter. You’re putting me on, momser.”

“No. No put on Joel. I told you. I’m completely serious. If you won’t do it I’ll go elsewhere but I’m going to have it done. I’m tired of all this bullshit. I want out.”

Joel looked at Bernie intently without even a trace of a smile on his face. The guy was obviously a meshugeneh. You think you know somebody but how often you’re fooled. There were no secrets in the community and he knew that Bernie had already taken his children out of camp and cheder and then he’d quit the congregation. What if the manic is really serious? What if the answer is no and he goes to a goyishe doctor? What a shame, what a shandez, it would be for the Jews. The whole world would know and laugh at our shame.

“Listen, Bernie,” he said. “I don’t know if I can perform a procedure which is not medically justified. We have a committee in the hospital, you know. Every hospital has.”

“But don’t give me that crap. What about all the nose jobs you recommend? Don’t tell me they’re all deviated septums.”

“Hey, listen,” said Joel still trying to convert the whole episode into a joke. “Why don’t you get a nose job instead. How many people see your pecker compared to how many people see your nose, even from a distance?” he giggled. “Y’know what? I could snip off a piece of your nose and graft it on to your shmekel, and every time you sneezed you could have an orgasm,” he exploded.

“Don’t try to jolly me up, Joel. I told you already a few times, I’m serious. If it’s symbolically important for a mohel to cut off the tip of my penis, it’s just as symbolically important to replace it. Just tell me if it can be done and how. You need a graft, right? Some of my own tissue.”

“Well, probably the simplest thing would be a sausage graft.” Joel paused and giggled. “Listen, no pun intended. I’m serious.”

“What’s a sausage graft?”

“All right. Let’s say you’ve burned a piece of your forehead and you need a skin graft. I make two parallel incisions about three inches long and a half inch apart on your ass. Then I lift up the skin in a flap and cut one end. I join the long edges and stitch them so that it looks like a sausage attached to you. Okay? Then I tape your left arm into place near the sausage and make a short incision on your arm so I can stitch the unattached end of the sausage to it, wound to wound. After a while a new blood supply grows in from the arm and I can cut the attachment to your ass. Then you move your arm up to your forehead and I do the same thing until there’s a new blood supply. When that’s ready I just cut it from your arm and sew the remaining edges onto your forehead. It’s just like tailoring but you don’t have to cut on the bias.”

Joel paused and looked serious. “There’s only one problem.”

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"When your ass itches you scratch your head," Joel dissolved in laughter. "No, really, I was only kidding. Actually, in your case it could be a lot simpler. We wouldn't have to use your arm. How long is your prepuce?"

"It varies. Why?"

"It doesn't really matter. I could take skin from the inner surface of your thigh and graft it directly behind the head of your penis. I'll tell Blue Cross you burned your tip on something really hot and you needed a graft. Let them figure out how it happened." he chuckled.

"Will I be able to pee?"

"Good question. There may be a little swelling and we may have to catheterize you."

"How long will it take?"

"The surgery will take only a half hour. You'll be able to go home in about three days but you'll have to come back for me to change the dressing and remove the stitches."

"Okay. When do we get started?"

"I have to call the hospital," Joel reflected. I don't know if I should call it preputioplasty. That might raise some eyebrows. I think I'll call it a glans penis reconstruction."

"I don't care what you call it." Bernie stood up to go.

"Just do it."

"Bernie," Joel paused. "What?"

"You'll be the living end."

After Bernie left Joel sat thinking for a while. The whole thing was ridiculous of course. But he'd been in medicine long enough to know that a lot of ridiculous things go on all the time. His main concern was that the secret remain with him and Bernie, and of course, Anne. No, it would never do for the goyim to find out. We'd be the laughing stock. The novelty of the surgery appealed to him. He visualized the procedure, thinking of how he'd make his first incision in the hollow of the thigh. Hah! The hollow of the thigh! The place where the Angel of the Lord touched Jacob after they had wrestled a whole night at the Jabbok. Then God made him lame and named him Israel. Some joke! Anything that ironic couldn't be all that bad, Joel snickered.

Bernie had to wait a couple of weeks after he got out of the hospital to try out his new accessory, but he was no longer catheterized and he could pee normally. At every opportunity, in the bathroom, in the bedroom, or when he'd pee into a public urinal, he would stare at his new prepuce and smile. He remembered his high school locker room and the Italian and Black kids who had foreskins. It made his own organ seem longer, more mysterious, a part now hidden and venturing forth only when it was interested enough to peek out from its little nest of flesh. Some of the spinoff Bernie had hoped for didn't happen. He'd heard that the glans of the Gentile penis was more sensitive because it didn't normally rub on clothes. Maybe it would have been that way if he'd never been circumcised. His new prepuce looked natural but it didn't secrete smegma, so Bernie had to make do with cold creme. For Anne, after her initial curiosity had worn off, it was all the same. But the important thing was that Bernie had annulled the covenant. Maybe now he could relax and enjoy life a little more and get a different perspective.

Bernie's problems were over but Joel's were just beginning. In assuming that he could maintain secrecy Joel was wrong. Maybe Anne had let something slip. Who knows? People didn't talk about it openly but it seemed like everybody in the Jewish community knew. You could tell from the sly remarks they made. He just hoped that the information stayed in the community. But one day he got a new patient from Connecticut. This man, a Jew in his forties had somehow heard about the procedure. Despite Joel's agitated questioning he couldn't or wouldn't give the details. He'd just heard, that's all, he insisted. He too had been brooding about the transgressions of Israel and he too had made the ultimate decision. At first Joel resisted as he had with Bernie but without the jollying up because this man was grim. Joel couldn't think of any good reasons for doing the procedure. He didn't know the guy and it couldn't be considered a personal favor. His initial surgical curiosity and pride had been satisfied and he couldn't think of any other reason to do it except this man from Connecticut threatened to go to a Gentile surgeon if Joel refused. That settled the matter. In a few weeks another de­covenantized Jew was walking the streets, this time in Waterbury.

In the months which followed two more similar incidents occurred. Both times, acting to protect the reputation of the Jews and to avoid Christian ridicule Joel performed the procedure. He was becoming a preputioplasty surgeon par excellence. At the hospital
he was already being referred to as “Dork-tor Tippet.” It was evident that he couldn’t do more procedures there and still maintain his reputation and his secret. So, to protect the honor of the Jews he set up two small operatories and several private rooms in the basement of his home and became a surgical consultant. To avoid problems with insurance companies it was cash on the line. Joel had become the world’s first anti-mohel.

At first business was uneven. After some retaliatory raid by Israel, complete with television coverage of the weeping victims, there was usually a pileup and patients had to be booked ahead. Otherwise, it was just a trickle. But fate stepped in. On, off — in the minds of laypeople a man who can handle a penis is a man who can handle a penis. Despite the semi-clandestine nature of the clinic, he started getting adult fundamentalist Gentiles who had decided that they were incomplete Christians without the mark of Abraham placed there by someone who had, by now, become the world’s leading penile surgeon. Joel happily accommodated them but he was careful to keep them isolated so that they did not come into contact with de-covenantilizing Jews. Religious polemics in the corridors of his clinic he didn’t need. With a little prompting from Joel, the Gentiles naturally assumed that the other rooms were occupied by similarly determined brethren and this strengthened them in their decision.

Even a man more humble than Joel would have his pride affected once he realized that he was covenantilizing and de-covenantilizing. The one surgical error of his career was traceable to hubris. But he made it with the best intentions. While performing one of his circumcisions he remembered that ten minutes later he had a preputioplasty scheduled. To Joel it looked like a clear message from fate. Let the discarded mantle of one fall upon the other. He carefully placed the fundamentalist foreskin in sterile saline and took it with him to the discontented Jew in the next operatory.

“Good morning, Mr. Glick,” he began cheerfully enough. “You’re very lucky. We have just developed a new procedure which takes less surgery and half the amount of healing. It’s also only half the fee. Okay?”

Three weeks and several heavy doses of rejection-suppressing cortisone later, Mr. Glick, angry to the point of threatening a “lawyer letter” was finally mollified by a free, more conventional prepuce from the inside of his own thigh. Well, how do you know unless you try, thought Joel. That’s how medicine advances.

More satisfying was the simultaneous appearance of two refugee Iranians fed up with the violent strictures of the Ayatollah Khomeini and also seeking freedom from the mark of Abraham. They too were accommodated.

Life had become good for Joel. He was busy. He was sought after. He was appreciated for his skill. He was wealthy. Only his enforced obscurity grated. He longed to give slide presentations on the “Kramer Procedure” to his colleagues with dozens of “before” and “after” shots in profile and “full face,” and pictures of himself, instruments in hand, smiling confidently. But his enduring loyalty to the honor of the Jewish People held him in check, and his procedure, bruited about, was never acknowledged or confirmed.

But Joel’s success was not without its disturbing qualities. Sometimes, mildly in his cups and alone, he sat and thought. It would be too much to say he brooded, he was too cheerful a person for that. But these were among the few times when his feet, hands, and mouth were still silent. At these times he worried about being a surgical Eichmann, a de-Jewer, one who claimed that the decisions were being made elsewhere, that he was merely following orders, supplying Ordnungsgemäß. In Joel’s case he was protecting his people from the collective embarrassment and ridicule, which would result from disclosure, if the procedure were performed by surgeons not so discreet. If there was to be foreskin, at least let there be foresight. Anyway, a little bit of skin was the end, not the beginning of a process of decision — the tip of the iceberg, he grinned.

His thoughts stopped at Bernie. He had heard that Bernie had recently become a Presbyterian. A man Joel knew had gotten a whole earful about how carefully Bernie had selected his new religion. It was a perfect compromise between the Episcopalian model and the Congregational model. Bernie had insisted. The Presbyterians were nice. They welcomed him and made him feel right at home. Nobody spoke during services about vacations or gall bladder operations. The church was always beautiful and clean. The children didn’t scream and yell. They sat quietly in their pews. Everything was perfect the way Jesus was perfect — conceived in perfection (nobody stuck his prick into anybody), demonstrating the perfect triumph of innocence over wisdom in his Epiphany, living a life of perfect obedience to his Father, and dying as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. And now Bernie, in the perfect balance of his newly found church, could also strive for perfection.

Joel’s thoughts were making him nervous and his drink was filling his bladder. He rose and hurried to the toilet. He lowered his pants and shorts and sat down. For a moment he stared down and out vacantly, listening to the stream of his urine against the cold, white porcelain of the commode. Then, when it stopped, he reached for his penis and held it warmly. Slowly it started to stir and harden. No, he mused, his right hand had not lost its cunning. The glans swelled and its skin became taut and shiny, almost like mucous membrane rather than like skin. There it was, a Jewish prick with its defect bold and unconcealed. Like the insolence of Moses, the madness of Saul, the lust of David, it was bold and unconcealed. Like the transgressions of Judah and the railings of the prophets, it was bold and unconcealed. What chance did it and its seed have in a world striving for perfection?

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Summer 1987
SOME OF US READ THE NEWSPAPERS FOR THE NEWS, BUT MANY PEOPLE READ THEM FOR ADVICE OF ALL SORTS: LEGAL, FINANCIAL, MEDICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, ETIQUETTE, DIET, FITNESS, FOOD, CHOOSING A COMPUTER, COLLEGE CAREER, MATE OR SEXUAL POSITION. THOSE WHO REGARD SUCH EVER-ENCROACHING DEARABLYISM WITH DISTASTE MUST RECKON WITH THE FACT THAT PUBLISHERS, UNFORTUNATELY, REGARD THE MATTER IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT ENTIRELY. THEY KNOW JUST HOW BEWILDERED, DEPENDENT, LONELY, BORED AND INSECURE TENS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE AND HAVE THEREFORE CONCLUDED THAT IT PAYS TO PANDER TO SUCH FEELINGS BY OFFERING HIGHLY IMPERSONAL "PERSONALIZED" FEATURES—A KIND OF MASS MEDIA MINISTRY.

Although the range of advice has proliferated enormously, some types seem to remain eternally popular. Noteworthy among the hardy perennials are the astrology columns, which appear in most American newspapers and a large number of magazines. Millions, apparently, turn for daily guidance to these columns. Of course, many people won't admit this, and if caught reading the stuff are likely to say that they do it for laughs or because they're just curious. Still, when "curiosity" becomes habitual one suspects at least mild addiction. It was Maimonides who said that astrology was not a superstition but a disease.

How does it happen that in a supposedly scientific age such a discredited atavism survives? Or is the very fact of survival taken as evidence of pseudo-Darwinian fitness? Perhaps before we make any general pronouncements on the subject, we ought to read some of the columns for ourselves. Of course, connoisseurs of the genre are generally dismissive of mass media charts, contending that unless you have your very own horoscope cast by a duly certificated soothsayer, you are not getting the "real thing." Since such custom-casting is likely to cost a tidy sum (depending on the number of bogus or real but nonrelevant degrees appended to the astrologer's name) the great unwashed are more likely to strain their credulity than their finances. Gresham's Law operates, it would seem, even in the spiritual order. Thus, a horoscope whose cost is included in the price of a daily paper is more likely to be consulted than the "real thing."

Enlightened readers may object that "no one" takes these things seriously. Ostensibly, "no one" takes advertising seriously either—in the sense of believing its claims. Still, billions are spent on advertising by hard-headed businessmen, who instinctively understand that statements do not have to be "believed" in order to be accepted and, therefore, have an effect. One can believe weakly as well as fervently on bases as disparate as logic, anecdote, reputation, or simple familiarity—which is more likely to breed assent than contempt. The mere fact that astrological charts appear so widely and so frequently may be sufficient "proof" for the multitudes, who tend to accept whatever exists.

NEWSPAPER HOROSCOPES TEND TO SAY THE SAME THING, AGAIN AND AGAIN. WHAT IS SAID TO TAURUS TODAY IS REPEATED TO AQUARIUS TOMORROW. THE ADVICE IS BITE-SIZED, REMINISCENT OF THE PETITE PAPER PLATITUDES ENCAPSULED IN CHINESE FORTUNE COOKIES. THE PRONOUNCEMENTS CONSTITUTE A KIND OF CAUTIONARY WORLDLY WISDOM OF THE KIND MOM DELIVERED JUST PRIOR TO YOUR LEAVING FOR GRAM SCHOOL IN THE MORNING: "BE CAREFUL AND DON'T FORGET TO WEAR YOUR GALOSHES." IF THERE IS A LARGER, OVER-ARCHING THEME IT IS TO ADJUST, ACCOMMODATE, SWIM WITH THE TIDE, AND NOT MAKE WAVES. THE READER IS CEASELESSLY ENJOINED TO ESCHEW CONTROVERSY, AVOID TROUBLE, AND REFRAIN FROM ANSWERING BACK. AGAIN AND AGAIN HE OR SHE IS TOLD TO CONSIDER A "FRIEND," A "MATE," AN "ADVISOR," OR A "POWERFUL FRIEND." THE ENORMOUS IMPORTANCE OF LUCK IS STRESSED—LUCK, THE GREAT SOURCE OF HOPE FOR THE HAPLESS, INCOMPETENT, AND WEAK, WHO FEEL THEIR INFERIORITY ACUTELY. SUCCESS IS ALWAYS "UNEXPECTED" AND OR COMES FROM AN "UNEXPECTED" SOURCE THAT THE SUBJECT IS PRESUMED TO HAVE PLEASED CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY. WHAT WE HAVE TO DO WITH THEN IS A BELIEF IN MIRACLES TO BE ACHIEVED BY SUBMISSION TO AND PROPITIATION OF THE POWERFUL.

THERE IS A CLASSIC ASPECT TO THE ADVICE. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OFFERED TO THE MASSES BY CHARLATANS. THE SATIRIC DRAWING OF A POSTURING PHONY BY THE ITALIAN ARTIST MILITELLI, DONE IN 1690, HAS A SUPERSCRIPTION WHICH, TRANSLATED, READS: "TRUE WORLDS WISDOM CONSISTS OF SAYING GOOD THINGS ABOUT THE MIGHTY, FEARING THE STRONG, ESTEEMING THE RICH, AND PRAYING THE WINNER."

WHAT FOLLOWs ARE TYPICAL GLEANINGS FROM A NEWSPAPER HOROSCOPE THAT APPEARED OVER TEN CONSECUTIVE DAYS. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TEDIous TO REPRINT THE COLUMNS IN THEIR ENTIRETY. I HAVE INSTEAD SELECTED CHARACTERISTIC READINGS AND KEY RECURRING THEMES, WORDS, AND PHRASES.

MARCH 23, 1986

SUNDAY BIRTHDAY: "MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS ARE IN THE OFFING FOR YOU IN THE YEAR AHEAD. LADY LUCK WILL HELP YOU ACHIEVE THEM THROUGH WAYS YOU'D LEAST EXPECT."

TAURUS: "YOU'D BE SMART TO TAKE A BACK SEAT TODAY, IF YOU ENCOUNTER A DOMINATING CHARACTER... WHO WANTS THE WHOLE STAGE FOR HIMSELF."

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
Gemini: "For the sake of harmony...let everyone be heard concerning a major family issue."
Leo: "...it's best not to tell another how to handle his funds."
Virgo: "Don't air your differences."
Libra: "When something fortuitous develops, act upon it immediately."
Scorpio: "Don't feel you have to be the center of attention."
Sagittarius: "Don't brag about your accomplishments today."
Capricorn: "Even though you may secretly feel your ideas are superior to those of others today, nothing will be gained by starting a debate. Button up."
Pisces: "Don't take it upon yourself today to make a major decision without consulting your mate. If it goes wrong, you'll catch a lot of heat."

The horoscope for the next day strikes a somewhat different note:
Cancer: "Worry can interfere...minimize fretting..."
Libra: "Your tendency today is to worry too much."

It is as though the astrologer sensed the deep insecurity of the kind of people who would trust him rather than themselves. That the astrologically inclined are likely to be dependent is an old observation. They seek certainty in the stars, powerful, mysterious, remote, and seemingly eternal. The paradoxical notion that these distant entities are somehow concerned with the destiny of each individual restores order to what might otherwise seem to be an utterly capricious existence. At the same time it lifts the weight of responsibility from shoulders too frail to bear it.

The column returns to a major truisms:
Libra: "Remember your good manners."

We are introduced to another recurring device of the soothsayer—having your cake and eating it too:
Aries: "The day begins on a sluggish note...a conversation with a friend is a pick-me-up."

After all, if the astrologer too frequently stated that the day would be a total loss or a total gain his devotees, experiencing instead the kind of day most of us have most of the time; i.e. a mixed bag, might begin to doubt his predictive powers. To minimize the risk, he hedges his bets with what I call a.m./p.m. forecasting—a little of this and a little of that; the morning bad/good; the evening good/bad.

March 25, 1986

We are again cautioned to keep a low profile. The astrologer's lack of confidence in his readers obviously reflects their lack of confidence in themselves. Thus, he has no hesitation in telling acolytes what they expect and, perhaps, want to hear. A kind of soft sadomasochism may be involved:
Sagittarius: "Stressing your rights now will only get you in hot water with higher ups. Curb ego." [N.B. The Ego of "higher-ups" is never questioned; their authority is assumed.]

Capricorn: "Keep controversial opinions to yourself for now." [I never found in these columns a day when you were urged or even allowed to fully and frankly express yourself. And it is never a question of whether your "opinions" are right or wrong, or of having anything more conclusive than "opinions." The point always seems to be that you should not offend anyone, especially not if they are "higher-ups" and that you should temper your ideas, or at best hold them for the right time, which never comes. Clearly, honesty is not the best policy and policy is what we are supposed to be interested in.]
Aquarius: "Before you speak up, you must be sure of your facts. [A useful, if banal caution. The subtext cautions you to wet your finger, wave it in the air, and depending upon which way the wind is blowing, incline your facts in the approved direction.]

Along with these weighty admonitions, there is a continuing admixture of the marvelously mundane and the terribly trivial—for a mass media ministry must be sure to meet the needs of everyone, and, if sinking to certain levels means sinking to one's knees, so be it: Virgo: "Be careful not to misplace the house keys. Guard against breakage of fragile possessions. Keep a good account of spending. Don't let money slip away!"
Libra: "Be careful driving."

There is another recurring caution: Sensing that his devotees are likely to mistrust others because they mistrust themselves, we encounter:
Aries: "Guard against deception in business dealings."

And, again on March 26:
Pisces: "Don't be imposed upon in the name of friendship."

Fortunately, Pisces also offers a heavy dose of the balm of balms dangled from time immemorial before the weary and despised:
Pisces: "New chances for gain are just around the corner."—along with the other sovereign remedy for the walking wounded:
Leo: "Love at first sight is possible tonight."
Aries: "Evening hours are romantic."-
Capricorn: "Social life is thrilling tonight."
Libra: "Romance is exciting with pleasant surprises in store."
Gemini: "Tonight has a touch of glamor and you're up for the occasion."
Scorpio: "Some meet with romance on the job."

One has the impression that the column is written for women and it may be that women constitute most of the readership for astrological materials. Certainly, enough women's magazines carry the stuff—often interlaced with material on women's liberation paradoxically enough.

No day (not even a "thrilling" one) is complete without at least one warning:

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
Sagittarius: "You may be asked to help a friend out today. Be leery of get-rich-quick schemes."

The circle is now closed; we are back to basic mistrust after brief detours down the side-streets of gain and love.

With Scorpio, we re-encounter Lady Luck:
Scorpio: "An unexpected chance to increase income may arise."

Augmentations of income and status are invariably unexpected—not a matter of hard work, competence, training, education, etc.

March 27, 1986

The astrologer, like our latter day politicians, rediscoversthe family today. It is as though he felt compelled to pull back from all of yesterday’s romantic hanky-panky in order to redress the balance for those of his readers who may in reality have little “thrilling” love in their lives:

Gemini: “Turn down an invitation from acquaintances in order to spend more time with a loved one. Togetherness is today’s happy theme.”

Cancer: “There seems to be too much to do at home base to accept an invitation out. Toward nightfall, the accent switches to your nearest and dearest.”

Of course, basic insecurity bordering on paranoia is always appropriate:

Capricorn: “You shouldn’t talk so much about your plans.”

Scorpio, fortunately, allows us to have it both ways:

Scorpio: “Financial plans get the go-ahead, but keep your business to yourself. You needn’t be so secretive though, about other matters.”

Money, you see, is sacred, hence secret. Other matters—well how important can they be by comparison?

Good and bad come mostly through luck or a “friend”. About the former little or nothing can be done (fortunately for those unable or unwilling to do more than wish for good luck). But where friends are concerned, the ability to sell oneself, or at least the negative ability not to offend, is important. Still, you’d better watch even your friends, especially where all important business and money matters are concerned.

March 28, 1986

Taurus: “Luck comes through friends.”

Cancer: “Meetings with advisors are fortunate.”

Aquarius: “It’s a good time to ask for raises or to discuss other important business matters. You’re better off not to involve a friend.”

The astrologer obviously keeps up with the news—or is it more accurate to say that even the planets read the papers? For March, ’86 was a time when the media were filled with stories about a surge in home buying and the refinancing of mortgages to take advantage of lower interest rates. So the stars tell us:

Leo: “Real estate negotiations are favored. Investigate the possibility of refinancing a loan or mortgage. Househunters have luck.”

You might think that the cosmos had more on its mind than keeping up with interest rates. But then, in our world at least, a rise or fall of one percent in the interest rate appears to be a cosmic concern—perhaps, indeed, the only one.

The theme for March 29 seems to be “shopping”—which again makes one think that the column is written with women in mind. Parenthetically, we may note that March 29 fell on a Saturday. The astrologer could hardly be considered particularly prescient for predicting shopping on Saturday:

Taurus: “Partners go shopping together. Though you’re not likely to make a major purchase, you still have a pleasant time together.”

Cancer: “You may take the children shopping.”

Scorpio: “Shopping for personal items is recommended.”

But “Mom” always throws in a couple of warnings:

Virgo: “Consult with partners before making use of credit.”

Libra: “Spend your money judiciously.”

Pisces: “Watch expenditures.”

Aquarius: “Don’t sign any agreements today, but do listen to the business proposition of a friend. Then think it over carefully.”

Note again how cautiously “friends” are treated where money matters are concerned.

This column, like many others of its ilk, has a section offering special insight to those whose birthday it is. Since the writer has to sound as though he knew each and ever one of his millions of readers personally, recourse to contrarieties is of the essence. This is, of course, the staple of all mass characterological analysis:

“You born today are both idealistic and practical, but many have difficulty reconciling these qualities”—I shouldn’t doubt it.

Of course, every individual is a mass of contradictions—which is why what the “real person” is turns out to be largely situational: a function of time, place and circumstance. Tea-leaf readers, palmists, astrologers—and psychologists have always understood this and used it to their advantage. Naturally, every individual leans a bit more in one direction or another; e.g. extrovert/introvert—but what is most important for those who seek fame and fortune as “experts” at reading character is the fact that everyone is a little of both—so the expert can never be entirely wrong no matter what he says.

On March 30, the watchword seems to be avoidance of family friction. The stars are well aware of the ceaseless petty bickering that characterizes much of family life—whose “happy theme” we were told just three days earlier is “togetherness”:

Cancer: “Avoid fretting with relatives.”

Virgo: “Don’t let nervousness cause you to fuss with loved ones.”

Sagittarius: “You seem more tolerant of a romantic interest’s weak points than you are of a family member’s.”

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE
Leo: "It's a good time for reconciliation or dealings with people from your past."

On the following day, we seem to touch on every leit-motif. Is this barmecidian feast spread by the astrologer in honor of his foolish readers — it is, after all, April 1? Conjecture aside, let us simply enjoy his winged words on such familiar topics as: luck, secrecy, hoarding, the motif. Is this barmecidian feast spread by the astrologer in honor of his foolish readers — it is, after all, April 1? Conjecture aside, let us simply enjoy his winged words on such familiar topics as: luck, secrecy, hoarding, the motif.

Aries: "Opportunity is with you ... but play your cards close to your chest."

Taurus: In business, deal with financial institutions where you're already known."

Gemini: You're still in no position to tender loans."

Cancer: "Friends are a source of luck."

Virgo: "Luck comes through partners ["Partners like "Friends" is a key word. In most contexts it does not seem to mean business partners. The ambiguity may be due to the fact that the astrologer is as hard put as the rest of us to find a "respectable" word that covers bed "companions" in an age of shifting sexual arrangements. Occasionally, he uses "mates" but that too sounds odd and perhaps overly biological; while "spouse" is entirely too precise for a column that must be vaguely couched in order to appeal to everyone."

And, of course, no day is complete without the terribly trivial:

Aquarius: "You may owe a friend a thank-you note."

Pisces: "Be sure to return a business call."

April 2, 1986

Aries: "Rise above temporary discouragement."

It should be noted that for newspaper astrology all discouragements are temporary. Your horoscope never says that you will experience horror — or death, or disease. These are simply not part of its reality. Nor is surgery, bankruptcy, unemployment, racism, suicide or famine. Indeed, climactic events, except for miraculous positive interventions, do not exist in the mass media astrological lexicon. The tone is "trepid up-beat". Such realism as is displayed is conveyed through reiteration of the trivial and mundane. The negative side consists of flyspecks—the habitual loss of keys and the "tragic" failure to send a thank-you note or return a call. The column may scold, nag, or even tell you of your shortcomings (although never of society's lacks), but there is, in the last analysis, only one direction to go—UP.

Sometimes, "Mom" seems to change into a stern father figure. Then, the tone, too, changes to the peremptory. Instead of advice, commands are issued:

Sagitarius: The sweet tooth tempts you. Begin a program of diet and exercise."

Taurus: "Friendship and business don't mix favorably."

Cancer: "Be sure to follow through on promises made to close ties."

"Pop" even orders you to relax. Compulsive obsessives need to be told not to feel guilty occasionally:

Scorpio: "Concern about material security is justified to a point, but you needn't be a martyr about it. Allow yourself some fun and relaxation."

On the other hand:

Gemini: "Be careful how you use credit."

And the usual "helpful" hint about the value of ingratiating oneself:

Leo: "Contacts in high places are helpful."

It is not just that the astrologer is a substitute parent. It is that parents are our first authority figures. Perhaps the fragmentation of family life—dispersion, divorce, the one-parent (and that parent away at work) family—means a loss of authority, except as the media—including the personal advice items contained therein—are substituted. The astrologer can issue direct commands to you. He is not merely providing a role-model; i.e. a suggestion, but a directive, as it were.

His advice is not only straightforward, simple and serious, it is traditional and conventional as well. The very triteness of the injunctions strengthens the impact of advice, which resonates with memories of the kind of stuff mom and pop dealt with... only it's easier to take because, unlike our parents, the astrologer is as remote from us as the stars, whose secrets he is supposedly transcribing.

Astrology has always fed on general insecurity for whatever reasons the latter may have manifested itself at any particular time. Self-evidently, a basic source of latter-day insecurity is the decay of the family, as it used to be understood. Thus, that source of anxiety feeds popular astrology today. The "parental tone" of the astrologer's exhortations appear to confirm this hypothesis.

A lot of people who consult newspaper horoscopes never pay their exhortations any mind — or so they say. And certainly the advice offered doesn't directly, immediately, and measurably affect behavior in the way propaganda, advertising or P.R. seems to. Perhaps "all" astrology does is re-enforce the structure of authority as such.

If so, it is not without its interest. It was Orwell who schooled us to pay close attention to the artifacts of popular culture for the clues they provide for understanding society and its effect on the masses. Orwell's early essays on the crudely commercial aspects of mass culture were pioneering. Such openings to understanding remain useful.

Murray Bob of Jamestown, New York is a library administrator whose essays have been published in several periodicals, including The New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.
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