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I've been searching for a compelling image with which to welcome our new readers—some 2000 of them this month—to these pages. I've played with comparing a magazine to a cafeteria, to a concert, to this 'n that. Perhaps it is the season; the image that keeps crowding out the others is of a summer camp. Coming to a new magazine is a bit like coming to a new camp. There are traditions specific to the place. There's a staff to get to know, and diverse idiosyncrasies. On your first day, you feel a bit at sea—but if you hang in, things fall into place, and by season's end, when you're a veteran, you're at home; next summer, it will be your turn to show the newcomers around.

I shan't press the image; no lectures about writing home or getting to activities on time. My real purpose here is to pen a hearty welcome to all of you who're new.

Which, done, permits me to say some things about this issue.

I had a visitor the other day, a gentleman who during World War II served as head of the Jewish resistance in France. Back then, he was a Communist; at war's end, he returned to his native Poland where he directed press activities for the new regime. Eventually, he came again to France, where he now lives, and where he has recently published a book entitled *Our Lost Illusions*—the story of his break with Communism.

We spoke, during the course of a lengthy conversation, of his erstwhile hostility towards religion—Judaism along with all the others. And we spoke as well of his détente with religion in more recent years. "Religion," he said, "is still beyond me, but now I have respect for it."

His is one of a thousand such stories, stories of an earlier time of fierce battle between the religious and the irreligious. Today one may now and then encounter its sullen residue, but for the most part the battle's over. There aren't many folks left who will

denounce religion as an opiate; there are very many who will defend it as an elixir. Secularism won the battles, but lost the war; with its victories, its limitations were revealed.

Secularism lost the war, but religion didn't win it. There's been no victor yet, nor will there be so long as each views the other with such dark suspicion. Which is the point of Gene Borowitz's article, a proper essay for this new year, as once again we search for a way that makes sense, that works, that heals.

In the meantime, there's good news and bad news. The bad news is that the ugly divisiveness within our community demeans and diminishes us. Harold Schulweis writes about that, and about one way we may begin—all of us—to heal the fractures before they compound. These past 15 or 20 years, no person has come up with more ideas that work, that have been picked up and have helped shape our ideas and behaviors as Jews, than Harold Schulweis. It is an honor—and a pleasure—to have him as a contributing editor, one whose writing appears in these pages frequently.

That's good news, and so is this: Charles Silberman's long awaited book, *A Certain People*, is on its way to the bookstores. In our interview with Mr. Silberman later in these pages you can get a sense of why the book has been so eagerly anticipated. I commend both interview and book to you.

And more, plenty more, and no need to squeeze it all in between Wake Up and Lights Out. Cults and maps, praying and lawyering, politics and anti-Semitism and fashioning a language—and a marvelous story from a newly-translated novel by the late S. Y. Agnon, Nobel Laureate in Literature in 1966.

So, to new readers and to veterans alike, enjoy.

But before you go off to your next activity, a word about irony.

You will recall that in mid-July, an Israeli court found 15 Jews—members of "the Jewish underground"—guilty of diverse crimes. Three were convicted of murder.

Now comes Herut Zionists of America, Inc., claiming 120,000

members, with a public letter asserting that "last week, some of our boys were convicted in Israel of doing nothing more than protecting their lives. . . . These boys did what anyone of us would have had to do in a similar situation. . . . The president of Israel must pardon each and every one of them. . . . They must be freed to go on, to continue building and settling the land." (This bizarre attack on Israel's judicial system was, in somewhat more subdued form, transmitted as well to Israel's president.)

I cannot recall, in all the years of Israel's independence, a more direct challenge by American Jews to Israel's government. I have long defended the right of American Jews to dissent from Israel's policies, but it never occurred to me that there were those within our community who would dissent by demanding that people convicted of heinous crimes—of plotting to blow up the Dome of the Rock, of planting bombs in the cars of Arab mayors, of wantonly spraying a college classroom with machine gun fire, killing some students, wounding others—should be set free "to go on." It is one thing to encourage policy debate, to insist that Israel's security is best protected this way or that. It is quite another, it seems to me, to condemn Israel's courts ("our boys were convicted . . . of doing nothing more than protecting their lives," which is simply not so) and to demand that murderers be pardoned. What monumental chutzpah!

And what irony, given Herut's readiness to condemn those who have raised other and more temperate questions in the past.

That's a sour note to end on, so that's not the end. This is: May your new year be sweet, and healthy, and filled with love and kindness.

Conrad Fein

LETTERS

Cosmetic History?

To the Editor:
Golda Meir is dead and cannot answer her critics. She did, however, leave a reply to those who, like Joseph Alpher in the May MOMENT ("Wagner and Arafat: Demonology and Survival"), charge that a "dehumanized image" of Arafat and the PLO was "carefully nurtured initially by Golda Meir ('there is no such thing as a Palestinian people'), and more recently and effectively by Menachem Begin."

Toward the end of her life, Golda, concerned at the way in which her interview in the June 15, 1969, issue of the *Sunday Times of London* had been misused, wrote an op ed piece for the January 14, 1976, issue of the *New York Times*. It began, "To be misquoted is an occupational hazard of political leadership. . . . I have been charged with being rigidly insensitive to the question of the Palestinian Arabs. In evidence of this I am supposed to have said: 'There are no Palestinians.' My actual words were, 'There is no Palestine people. There are Palestinian refugees.' The distinction is not semantic." She went on to explain her position in some 20 paragraphs, none of which could be remotely construed as "dehumanizing" anyone.

Alpher to the contrary, Begin's obsession with the PLO owed nothing to the views of Golda or her colleagues. It was idiosyncratic, as was disconcertingly revealed in 1982, when he startled us—and the Israelis—by comparing Arafat in Beirut with Hitler in his Berlin bunker. Begin's own subsequent tragic emotional and physical deterioration has put his obsession in perspective.

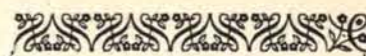
Begin's successors in both the Shamir administration and the present National Unity Government, together with the Israeli people, take a decidedly unhysterical view of Arafat and the PLO, as witnessed not long ago by their relaxed response—

or lack of it—to the potentially devastating PLO seaborne operations recently thwarted by the IDF and by the general indifference that greeted the pilgrimages to Arafat, noted by Alpher, of Uri Avneri, Matti Peled and company.

If the Israelis disturb Alpher by having voted Arafat as "Satan of the Year" by a landslide, over Khomeini and Khaddafi, it is not only because the latter two have not massacred Israeli schoolchildren. It is an understandable reaction to the beautification and canonization of Arafat by the European Economic Community, the Soviet bloc, the non-aligned nations, much of the Socialist International, and by the UN and its agencies.

If the Israelis distress Alpher by rejecting the PLO's claim to represent the Palestinians, their rejection could be due to their having seen, at closer range than anyone else, how wretchedly the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza have been represented since 1967 by a PLO preoccupied with power struggles reflecting the bitter divisions within the Arab world.

Joseph Alpher has written a clever and imaginative article, but he has attributed to Professor Yehoshafat Harkabi a statement that the former director of military intelligence would probably not acknowledge. This January at his home in Jerusalem, I heard Professor Harkabi's view that, while Arafat and his intimates are hesitantly beginning to consider readiness to live with Israel, the rebellion within Fatah and the opposition by the PLO radicals to coexistence could well defeat any such move. Nowhere in Harkabi's remarks or writings in English could I find the categories of "differentiating and de-demonizing Israelis" that Alpher puts in Harkabi's mouth with respect to the thinking of the PLO leaders. The central facts are that Arafat—if he ever could—cannot now deliver the PLO, and that the PLO, by its very nature, cannot make peace at this time. As for the PLO leaders' thinking, Harkabi is on record that the PLO "rejection of Israel is neither an emotional outburst nor a rhetorical expedient; it is a thoroughly worked-out doctrine with a well-constructed ideology. It is not blind hatred but reasoned hostility, not only on the



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