

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

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## ***Time Bombs***



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FOR & the BDS Movement**

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Stefan Merken

## Occasionally We Have Disagreements...

**O**FTEN we share space and time with those with whom we share some commonality. Either our kids are the same age, our political leanings are similar, or our value systems are in sync. Whatever it is, we seem to be drawn together. But occasionally we have disagreements.

For years, the Jewish Peace Fellowship office has been housed in the building that Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) owns in Nyack. Rabbi Michael Robinson lived across the river from Nyack and felt that we were similar organizations and it would be “right” to rent a small office from the FOR and be close. We have been together ever since.

Over the past two years FOR’s National Council has been discussing whether to adopt a BDS (boycott/divestment/sanctions) resolution with regard to Israel, in hopes of bringing some changes for the Palestinians. The JPF considered this issue years ago, and our Board concluded that the

BDS movement is not the correct way to bring about change. The FOR National Council recently passed a resolution in support of BDS. No one on the JPF Board was consulted or asked to offer an opinion on the issue. Finally, after much debate and conversation, FOR’s National Council adopted its resolution. When I learned of this, I wrote to the FOR and informed them that the JPF could not and would not stand with them in support of this resolution. We are opposed to BDS.

What followed was a friendly but frank conversation between Rabbi Phil Bentley (for the JPF) and members of the FOR’s National Council and staff. Rabbi Bentley’s article, which appears in this month’s SHALOM, is the result of the JPF’s desire to share our disagreement with both the BDS movement and the FOR’s resolution, which is also included in this issue.

We’re anxious to hear your views on the issue. Feel free to write to us. ☆

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STEFAN MERKEN *is chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.*

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Carol Ascher

## A One-State Solution Ahead?

**T**WO NEW BOOKS by outsiders, one a RAND analysis of economic data and the other drawn from interviews conducted by long-time conflict negotiator, Padraig O'Malley, suggest that the intractable problems dooming peace negotiations for more than twenty-five years — how to honor Palestinian refugees' right of return, whether Israel should be defined by its 1967 borders, removal of Israeli settlers from the West Bank, and division of Jerusalem into functioning capitals of both Israel and Palestine, to name the most obvious — will not be peaceably resolved in the near future. Nevertheless, they will soon be irrelevant to the deeper problems facing both Israelis and Palestinians.

Despite the very different strategies used by O'Malley in *The Two-State Delusion: Israel and Palestine — A Tale of Two Narratives*, and the RAND Study Team in the *Costs of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, the two books offer ample overlapping details concerning the unequal daily lives of Israelis and Palestinians, and provide equally ample context for the violence and hostilities we too often read about or see in the news. Both view Yitzak Rabin as the last leader with the capacity and will to bring the two peoples to a two-state solution; and both conclude with dark assessments of any peaceable resolution in the near future.

Both O'Malley and RAND also see several forces as likely to change the terms of the current stalemate — though not

necessarily in ways that either Israelis or Palestinians would choose.

First is the general instability in the Middle East, including the debacles in Iraq and Syria and the rise of ISIS, which have taken international attention away from the Israel/Palestine stalemate. Though both O'Malley and RAND assume that the conflict will simply continue out of the spotlight, they see new geopolitical unknowns as destined to influence the stalemate.

Second is the demographic time bomb. Families of Jewish settlers have an average of five children, compared to an average of only three children among Jews residing inside the Green Line; in contrast, Palestinian families have an average of 3.5 children. Since the growing population of Jewish settlers in the West Bank will make it increasingly difficult to create a Palestinian state there, RAND sees Israel as needing to make a core policy choice: “whether to be a Jewish state



*Israel's continued occupation and settlement expansion beyond the Green Line poses a 'demographic time bomb.'*

with a predominantly Jewish population living side by side with a Palestinian state, a democratic state with a diverse citizenry that is treated equally, or a Jewish state comprised of all the lands between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea ... with preferential rights for Jews.” O'Malley, depicting the same choice, with typical bluntness, calls this “an unmistakably apartheid state along the lines of the old South Africa.”

Though Jews constitute almost eighty percent of the population in Israel proper (6 million vs. 1.6 million Palestinians), Jews constitute only about half the population in greater Israel, including the West Bank and Gaza. By 2030, Palestinians will constitute a majority (fifty-six percent) in

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CAROL ASCHER, a novelist and essayist, has written frequently for *SHALOM*, most notably about Martin Buber's creation of a Jewish school in Nazi Germany. For more of her work, see [carolascher.net](http://carolascher.net).

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this area of greater Israel between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. As O'Malley writes, "Time is on the side of the Palestinians."

Third, among the regions most affected by climate change, the Middle East, which already suffers water problems, will become hotter and drier. Though Israel has several desalination plants, desalination will not entirely solve the problem. How much water flows from the Jordan River and the West Bank aquifers to Israel and the sea, already a controversial issue, will only grow more contested as a diminishing water supply must serve a growing population. However, during the next century or more, the Mediterranean will rise by several feet, pushing back the coastline of both Israel and Gaza, causing new population shifts.

These are among the reasons why both O'Malley and the RAND study team believe that the door may already have closed on a two-state solution, and that the two sides may be marching toward becoming one state. As O'Malley notes,

"officials in many Israeli and Palestinian circles are already planning for a bi-national state."

Nevertheless, both authors are willing to counter these apparent facts accomplished with unanticipated turns of events. The RAND study team offers examples of apparently intractable situations, such as South Africa and the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the wise reminder that "even gridlocked highways have exit ramps"; and O'Malley concludes with apparent frustration, "Nothing is etched in infinity. The Middle East is being reshaped, and neither Israel nor Palestine can escape indefinitely the repercussions of that reshaping ... History does not indulge illusions: it's time to seek another way forward."

Though both Israelis and Palestinians may remain too obsessed with time-honored issues — borders, security, refugees, settlers, Jerusalem — that have divided them to pay attention, in their very different voices, both O'Malley and RAND make clear that several freight trains are coming around the bend. ☆

## *Israel: Danger Ahead - II.*

Peter Dreier

# Israel's New McCarthyism

## *Inside the campaign against its progressive community*

**A** **S INTERNATIONAL** discontent with Israel's occupation policy continues to rise, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and Israel's ultraright-wing movement have escalated their attacks on the country's progressive community, which opposes the forty-nine-year-old Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the ever-expanding government-subsidized settlements. In February, an "NGO transparency" bill, backed by Netanyahu and his allies, passed a first reading in the Knesset. The measure seeks to require Israeli nongovernmental organizations that expose and challenge the government's human rights

abuses against Palestinians to register, in effect, as foreign agents.

Some Israeli activists call the legislation their country's version of McCarthyism. Others liken what's happening as similar to the current attack on Planned Parenthood by Republicans and their successful campaign several years ago to dismantle the community organizing group ACORN.

The attack includes publication of a report and the release of a video, both sponsored by the ultra-nationalist group Im Tirtzu (literally, "If You Will It"). Both target a hit list of Israeli human rights groups that Im Tirtzu demonizes as traitors and subversives.

The most controversial of those groups is Breaking the Silence (BTS), an organization of former Israeli combat soldiers who report on the human rights violations they wit-

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**PETER DREIER is Dr. E.P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of politics at Occidental College. This article originally appeared in The American Prospect.**



nessed while enforcing the occupation in the territories. Since 2004 BTS has published hundreds of testimonies from former combat soldiers about their military service in the West Bank and Gaza, including the 2014 Gaza operation that left more than twenty-one hundred Palestinians and seventy-three Israelis dead.

BTS and other progressive groups have been a thorn in the side of Netanyahu's Likud Party and its allies, especially the settler-based Jewish Home Party headed by Education Minister Naftali Bennett. Though the pending legislation is intended to stigmatize progressive groups for receiving support from foreign governments, the Israeli right relies heavily on support from such wealthy foreigners as American billionaire Sheldon Adelson, who owns *Israel Today*, a newspaper distributed for free throughout Israel, which is a mouthpiece for Netanyahu.

Since the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel's image in world opinion has gradually changed from that of a quasi-socialist underdog battling hostile neighbors to a powerful high-tech capitalist society that has used its military might to occupy large swaths of former Arab areas. More than half a million Jews now live in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem — land that Israel captured in the 1967 conflict. Palestinians in the West Bank live either in land nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority, subject to Israeli oversight and interference, or are directly ruled by Israeli military authorities.

Although Israel's progressives maintain their voice in the Knesset and in the media, the country's center of gravity has shifted to the right over the past two decades. A growing number of traditional Orthodox Jews, immigrants from Russia and North Africa, and the growing number of settlers in the occupied areas account for much of this transformation. As more Israelis moved into the Occupied Territories in government-backed settlements, the power of the "Greater Israel" ideology and lobby increased, and found its political expression in the Jewish Home Party, comprised of hard-line militants who combine religious orthodoxy with ultra-nationalism and who play a growing role in Netanyahu's coalition.

**I**SRAEL'S ultra-nationalists have long sought to dismantle the country's progressive movement. They believe that by exposing the government's violations of civil rights and expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas, progressive human rights groups undermine Israel's reputation in the international court of public opinion.

The new assault on the Israeli left coincided with a conference held in New York City on December 13, co-sponsored by *Haaretz*, Israel's respected liberal newspaper, which has been a persistent critic of Netanyahu and the occupation



*Tel Aviv, December 9, 2011: Right-wing Im Tirtzu activist bearing sign "The residents of Sderot also have human rights."*

movement, and the New Israel Fund (NIF), a US-and-Israel-based foundation that is the largest funder of many of Israel's progressive advocacy, human rights, and civil liberties groups. The event brought together more than a thousand American progressives, including some leaders of the Jewish community, with liberal Israeli politicians, academics and activists. Speakers included the US's UN Ambassador Samantha Powers and former chief Palestinian peace negotiator Saeb Erekat, as well as a friendly video message from President Barack Obama.

After the conference, Yair Lapid, a centrist member of the Knesset who is seeking to expand his base to the right, blasted Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (a moderate within Netanyahu's Likud Party who has jostled with the prime minister over basic democratic principles and the government's treatment of Arabs) for speaking at the event because it included (on a panel at a different time from Rivlin's opening remarks) a member of BTS. In lockstep, most of Israeli media reported this manufactured controversy as real news. "As a president, he [Rivlin] cannot spit in the face of IDF soldiers," said Channel 20, Israel's version of Fox News.

Within twenty-four hours of the start of the NIF-*Haaretz* conference, Im Tirtzu launched its video, further stoking the storm against NIF and its grantees.

The one-minute video focused on the leaders of four progressive organizations that, they claim, provide propaganda ammunition to the country's enemies. It began with a Palestinian-looking man preparing to stab a passer-by. It then displayed grainy headshots of four prominent Israeli human rights activists, as though they were "most-wanted" posters. The video, which quickly went viral and sparked a nationwide controversy, labeled the four activists *shtulim*, which literally means "moles" or "plants," but which Israelis recognize as meaning "traitors" in the pay of foreign organizations.

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## *Every version of the bill was carefully crafted to avoid touching right-wing, pro-settlement, anti-Arab groups.*

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The video suggested that the four activists — Avner Givryahu of Breaking the Silence; Hagai Elad, director of B'Tselem, which monitors, videos and reports on Israel's human rights violations in the Occupied Territories; Ishai Menuchin, chair of Amnesty Israel and director of the Public Committee Against Torture, which monitors the treatment of Arabs in Israeli prisons; and Sigi Ben-Ari, a lawyer for Hamoked, which assists individual Palestinians whose rights are violated — were seeking to protect the stabber. In light of recent incidents in which Jews have been stabbed by Palestinians in the streets of Jerusalem, the video played on Israelis' most visceral fears. "While we fight terror," the narrator says, "they fight us," referring to the human rights groups.

Im Tirtzu also released a report, titled "*Shtulim 2015*," targeting twenty groups that, it claimed, receive funds from Palestinians, defend anti-Israel terrorists, and undermine international support for Israel. In addition to the groups vilified in the video, the report focused on Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel; Yesh Din, a volunteer organization working to defend the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population; the Association of Civil Rights in Israel, the country's counterpart to the ACLU; Machsom Watch, which monitors violations against Palestinians at checkpoints; as well as Rabbis for Human Rights and Physicians for Human Rights. Contrary to Im Tirtzu's claim, none of these groups receive any funds from Palestinian organizations. Fifteen of the twenty groups receive funding from the New Israel Fund, which the report attacked as well.

Im Tirtzu also erected a huge billboard on Rothschild Boulevard, the main street in one of Tel Aviv's most liberal neighborhoods, that echoed the same inflammatory accusations against alleged "foreign agents" among progressive groups.

Two of Netanyahu's top cabinet members quickly poured fuel on the fire. Education Minister Bennett banned BTS members from speaking in public schools, claiming that "[t]he operations of Breaking the Silence caused the slander of Israel in the world, as they made it their target to harm their brothers, who protect us." Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon said that Breaking the Silence had "malicious motives" and banned its members from taking part in activities involving Israel soldiers.

Piling on, Netanyahu demanded that Isaac Herzog, leader of the opposition Labor Party, denounce BTS. Herzog refused, demanding instead that the prime minister condemn the incitement against Rivlin as well as the Im Tirtzu video. "Take responsibility," Herzog said. "Tell Im Tirtzu that its video is beyond the 'separation wall' of what is acceptable

in our democratic society. Stop those who stain your whole camp with hate."

Herzog reminded Netanyahu that a similar wave of vilification led to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by an ultra-nationalist Jew who opposed Rabin's efforts to promote peace with the Palestinians.

In response to the defense minister's attack, Breaking the Silence responded: "[Ya'alon] has appointed himself minister of intimidation and silencing when he joined the incitement campaign being waged in by right-wing organizations against Israel democracy."

Zehava Galon, chair of the left-wing party Meretz, accused Ya'alon of "McCarthyism." Golan said that the defense minister was uncomfortable with the fact that the Israeli army does not have a "monopoly on the information that comes out of the territories regarding wrongful actions of the army."

"Our critics try to paint us as anti-Israel," said Sharon Abraham-Weiss, executive director of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, one of the groups targeted by Im Tirtzu's campaign. "I'm pro-Israel. But a better Israel is a more democratic Israel. That's what we're about."

"Israel may be a democracy for Jews," said Ivonne Mansbach, a leader of Machsom Watch, another target, "but it is a prison for Palestinians. We want a democracy for everyone."

**NETANYAHU'S** and Im Tirtzu's ultimate goal is to demonize their political opposition and safeguard the Jewish settlement enterprise, which constitutes a growing segment of the Israeli right. For several years, Netanyahu's government has tried to pass a bill to defund and isolate its progressive critics and, says *Haaretz* columnist Carlo Strenger, "silence dissent."

An early version of the bill would have eliminated the tax-exempt status of nonprofit groups that receive more than half their funding from foreign governments, a formula designed to hamper progressive organizations that get funds from the European Union, Sweden, Germany, and even the US government. It would also have imposed heavy fines on such groups.

Every version of the bill was carefully crafted to avoid touching right-wing, pro-settlement, anti-Arab groups, which are exempt from the proposed law because little of their funding comes from foreign governments but instead from wealthy individuals (including many Americans like Adelson), evangelical churches, and the Israel government, which allocates tax dollars to settler groups that promote the hardline "greater Israel" movement.

The proponents of the bill claim that they are simply interested in "transparency," but studies by Peace

# כשאנחנו נלחמים בטרור הם נלחמים בנו



*A screen shot from an Im Tirzu video, “outing” four progressives as traitors who defend terrorists. The caption reads: “When we fight terrorism, they fight us.”*

Now and *Haaretz* found that most of Im Tirtzu’s financial supporters are impossible to identify. (One of Im Tirtzu’s earliest and largest financial backers was the American right-wing fundamentalist minister John Hagee.) Another investigation by *Haaretz* found that American donors gave the settlements more than \$220 million over the past five years, funneled through American nonprofit organizations. That money funds everything from air conditioning for settlers to payments to the families of convicted Jewish terrorists.

When they realized that such draconian legislation would probably be upended in the Israeli Supreme Court, its sponsors watered it down. A new version was approved by the Cabinet on December 27 and sent to the Knesset for deliberation. It requires staffers for progressive groups to wear a name tag indicating that they received more than half their funding from foreign governments, a provision Israeli progressives call a “badge of shame.” It also requires these groups to identify themselves — in media interviews, written communications to elected officials and civil servants, and in publications and online — as being funded primarily by foreign governments. Each violation of these provisions will cost nonprofits a fine of \$7,500. Political observers predict that the bill will be adopted by the Knesset.

Ironically, the same foreign governments that support Israel’s human rights network also support Israel’s government. The US provides Israel with about \$3 billion a year in economic and military aid. The EU is Israel’s largest trading

partner and gives Israeli goods preferential treatment. But the EU doesn’t recognize the Occupied Territories, taken after the 1967 Six-Day War, as being a legal part of Israel, so it recently began labeling goods made in those areas. The Israel right has called this EU policy anti-Semitic, and charges that it amounts to support for the movement to boycott goods produced in the Occupied Territories.

**AT THE CENTER** of the Jewish diaspora’s opposition to the occupation and the new wave of McCarthyism is the New Israel Fund (NIF). The group’s CEO, Daniel Sokatch, a forty-seven-year old lawyer and one-time rabbinical student, has a sign posted on the bulletin board in his San Francisco office: “It’s the Occupation, Stupid.”

“Israel always faces external threats and challenges, but there is just as critical a threat to Israel’s survival that comes from within,” said Sokatch in a recent interview. “The occupation is the biggest single threat to Israel’s democracy.”

Founded in 1979 by American and Israel activists, NIF is now the largest financial backer of Israel’s progressive movement. It provides funds to hundreds of organizations which, over time, have helped change the country’s social landscape. It funded Israel’s first rape crisis centers in the 1980s and its first gay rights organization the following decade. NIF grantees helped pass a law forbidding torture in civilian interrogations and Israel’s equivalent of the Americans with Disabilities Act. NIF-funded groups successfully pushed for landmark court decisions for land rights for Palestinian Is-



raeli and Bedouin citizens, laws protecting the rights of foreign workers and “contracted” temporary workers, and laws guaranteeing women equal rights. (It was the NIF-funded Israel Religious Action Centre that in 2011 persuaded the Israel High Court to overturn the policy of making women sit in the back of the bus in religious neighborhoods.) In January 2013, the Tel Aviv Magistrates’ Court struck down the statute of limitations in sexual assault suits, in a precedent-setting case presented by NIF grantee Tmura. Another NIF grantee, Mahapach-Taghir, does community organizing in seven Israeli cities by bringing low-income Jewish and Palestinian women together to work on common concerns, such as improving local schools, providing child care, and gaining access to clean water.

But what has made NIF a target of Israel’s ultra-nationalist right has been its support for groups that challenge the Jewish settlements and oppose the mistreatment meted out to Palestinians: displacement from homes, abuses in prison, physical harm from the Israeli military, and violations of their right to work and move freely within Israel and the occupied areas.

In addition to funding the civil and human rights groups attacked by Im Tirtzu, NIF has also been working to create and strengthen an infrastructure of progressive organizations, including think tanks, social media projects (such as Zazim, Israel’s version of MoveOn), and a new media monitoring project similar to Media Matters in the US.

Im Tirtzu first attacked the NIF in 2010, accusing it of funding human rights groups that were sources for a UN report investigating alleged war crimes in the first Gaza war in 2008. It also launched a harsh billboard campaign against NIF showing its then-president, former Knesset member Naomi Chazan, with a horn on her head. Im Tirtzu followers, dressed as stereotypical Palestinians, also organized a demonstration at Chazan’s Jerusalem home.

This January, NIF itself launched a campaign that included billboards featuring a photo of Rabin with the headline “They have already dealt with this ‘foreign agent.’” The Jerusalem municipality quickly barred the NIF billboards, arguing that it “slandered” Im Tirtzu, even though it had previously permitted Im Tirtzu to erect its own sign attacking NIF president Chazan. NIF is appealing the ruling to Israel’s attorney general.

Several years ago, some left-wing Israeli activists started a Facebook page to defend NIF, entitled “Im Tirtzu is a fascist organization.” Im Tirtzu promptly sued in court, but in 2013, an Israeli judge, Raphael Yahacovi, found that Im Tirtzu did indeed have “fascist attributes,” and found the defendants not guilty.

Im Tirtzu’s attacks aren’t confined to the NIF and its grantees. In 2010, it threatened a boycott campaign against Ben-Gurion University due to the alleged “anti-Zionist tilt” of its political science department. And it recently began a social media campaign against a number of Israel’s most prominent artists. It termed two internationally acclaimed

authors, Amos Oz and David Grossman, “foreign agents in the cultural world,” and identified a range of film, theater, and television artists as foreign-supported provocateurs.

This latest round of attacks was too extreme for even longtime allies. Netanyahu condemned them, and Bennett tweeted, “The campaign against the artists is embarrassing, needless and disgraceful.”

Im Tirtzu’s founders and ethics have come under repeated scrutiny since the group began in 2006. Erez Tadmor, one of its founders, was convicted of stealing military equipment, including explosives and bullets, while serving in the army. He was sentenced to forty-five days in prison. In the most recent Israeli elections, held in March, another Im Tirtzu co-founder, Ronan Shoval, son of a wealthy Israeli businessman, attempted unsuccessfully to run for Knesset with the settlers’ Jewish Home Party.

Despite the repudiation of the group’s attack on various artists, Im Tirtzu’s campaigns against NIF and its grantees have generally enjoyed the support of high-level government officials, and have been widely reported in the Israeli media, with little scrutiny about its claims. Several key Im Tirtzu figures have also worked for right-wing parties in Netanyahu’s coalition. Moshe Klughaft, the political operative who has orchestrated Im Tirtzu’s attacks on the Israeli left and produces its attack videos, is a close political advisor to Education Minister Bennett and ran Bennett’s Jewish Home Party’s election campaign earlier this year.

**EVEN BEFORE** its attack on leading artists, the backlash against Im Tirtzu, and the government’s proposed legislation, was growing. In the wake of the attacks, several high-ranking members of Israel’s military and intelligence sector came to the defense of Breaking the Silence. Yuval Diskin, the former head of Israel’s domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, described the groups attacked in the video as “a very important part of every democratic regime and an important part of its strength.” Former Shin Bet security services chief Ami Ayalon and Israel Police Major General (retired) Alik Ron published an advertisement in *Haaretz* in support of the BTS under the heading “I too am breaking the silence,” as, separately, did Amiram Levin, one of Israel’s most distinguished generals. “As someone who was a combatant and a commander, and who is currently a father of two combat paratrooper officers who have been there as witnesses,” Levin wrote, “I too am breaking silence.”

Ben Caspit, a well-known Israeli journalist who had been the mouthpiece for Im Tirtzu’s attack on NIF several years ago, has now reversed himself, writing that he regretted his vilification of the progressive foundation. Even the conservative *Jerusalem Post* editorialized that the attacks on President Rivlin “crossed the line separating legitimate criticism from hateful incitement.”

The Im Tirtzu attacks have also triggered revulsion by many American Jewish groups, including some, like the Anti-Defamation League, that have usually been reluc-



tant to criticize the Netanyahu government. On January 3, *The Washington Post* ran an unusually strong editorial against the legislation designed to stigmatize progressive groups.

“Whenever Im Tirtzu attacks us, I should write them a thank-you card,” said NIF’s Sokatch. “They help our fundraising and our community-building in lots of ways. The attacks are awful, but they stiffen the spine of those who stand with Israel’s human rights defenders.”

In fact, NIF’s coffers have been steadily increasing. Its donations swelled by fourteen percent in 2014. Last year it

distributed over \$25 million to Israeli activist groups. After NIF sent an email in December about the Im Tirtzu attacks and the non-profit bill, more than two thousand supporters wrote to Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon to ask him to vote against the bill, while online donations increased dramatically.

“As tough as things are right now, there are tens of thousands of Israelis who don’t want their country to drift away from liberal democratic values,” said Sokatch. “And there are tens of thousands of us outside Israel who stand shoulder to shoulder with them.” ☆

## *BDS: FOR & Against*

Rabbi Philip Bentley

# FOR-USA’s BDS Resolution

**J**PF HAS ALWAYS supported Israel’s absolute right to exist, though it has never hesitated to criticize it for violating human rights and using its military in ways we consider unjust. At the same time, during my time as Chair of JPF (1988-98), we always refused to support groups or projects hostile to Israel’s very existence.

For seventy-five years JPF has been associated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), and we maintain an office at Shadowcliff, FOR’s national headquarters. I mention this because FOR’s Executive Committee has passed a pro-BDS resolution (*see the next page for its text*), and JPF was never consulted, even though JPF members Lily Baxter and Stefan Merken have served FOR, as in the past did JPF members Leo and Freda Pfeffer, Naomi Goodman, Rabbi Michael Robinson and many prominent rabbis.

JPF opposes the FOR’s resolution supporting the BDS (boycott/divestment/sanctions) movement, which we regard as hostile to Israel’s very existence. It is not the resolution of a group seeking an end to conflict, but of a group wanting to

take sides. The BDS movement includes anti-Israel groups, as well as those who want to ban Israeli intellectual and performing artists. It would be one thing for FOR to pass a resolution calling for its own BDS policy; it is quite another to provide this kind of blanket endorsement that specifies no limits or nuances.

When I learned of the resolution, I informed FOR of our strong objections and reminded them of our lengthy history dealing with the Israel-Palestinian conflict. We are committed to helping find a way to end the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and to end the injustices, which are integral aspects of the Occupation. As part of that effort, I served for a time on FOR’s task force on Middle Eastern issues. JPF’s policy was to work with Israeli, American Jewish, and non-Jewish peace-oriented groups.

Since it is clear that the FOR will not consider rescinding its resolution, I propose follow-ups that are far more in keeping with FOR’s historic role of seeking justice and peace. Here, then, are ten recommendations I have made to FOR’s leadership for a new and modified resolution.

1. FOR does not condone violence by any parties to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
2. An acknowledgement of Israel’s absolute right to exist as a Jewish state, part of a two-state solution. (I know of no

**Rabbi PHILIP BENTLEY, *Honorary Chair of JPF, has served congregations in the US and abroad, and has published widely on peace, human rights, the environment, and the rabbinic tradition.***

example of a successful binational state. I am aware of the Jewish movement for a binational state led by Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and others before World War II.)

3. A call for both parties to commit to democratic rule for all those living within its borders.

4. A commitment to work with human rights and peace organizations in Israel/Palestine.

5. Opposition to those aspects of BDS that prevent either side from openly expressing themselves by way of lectures, performances and art.

6. A clear statement indicating limits to BDS activities seek-

ing to damage Israel. Effort should be directed instead towards boycotting products and services of settlement businesses.

7. Promotion of Palestinian and Israeli-Palestinian businesses and social partnerships.

8. Calling on Israel and Palestine to prosecute acts of violence or terror by their people.

9. A confirmation that FOR-USA will consult JPF when making decisions or planning programs regarding the Occupation, BDS, the settlements, responses to terrorism, etc.

10. A statement condemning Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. ☆

### FOR National Council Statement Supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement

In 2005, Palestinian civil society made the historic call upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose “non-violent” measures until the State of Israel “complies with the precepts of international law,” most critically, by exiting the West Bank. Ten years on, the land grab in the West Bank has only grown and its illegality become ever more clear.

We recognize that the State of Israel’s settlement expansion policy and program — together with pervasive detainment, severe com-

promise of freedom of movement, destruction of lives and homes — amount to the displacement of Palestinian people from their land and a general ethnic cleansing resulting in cultural erasure. We also recognize the complicity of our own United States government as the chief financial supporter of, and weapons supplier to, the State of Israel.

From this place of demoralizing violence and abiding injustice, there comes, since 2005, an inspiring, courageous call to nonviolence. We hear the call.

For more than 40 years, the Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FOR-USA) has supported the non-violent actions of sister and brother Palestinians and Israelis working for a just and lasting peace. Carrying this legacy forward, FOR-USA now responds to the call by expressing our solidarity with the BDS movement. We stand in unison with this multi-faith, multi-ethnic, and multi-national movement that includes Palestinian and Israeli people of conscience as well as a broad global family. ♦

## SHALOM *Jewish Peace Letter*

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**HONORARY PRESIDENT** Rabbi Philip J. Bentley • **CHAIR** Stefan Merken • **VICE PRESIDENT** Rabbi Leonard Beerman z”l  
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## Murray Polner

# Seven Memorable Men

**E**DITIONS often like to list the most famous crimes, deaths, scandals, and never-ending political and military battles. So allow me to offer my own list of seven heroic people, four of whom I knew well. I want to remember them because in different ways they refused to surrender to the liars, frauds and chicken hawks who manipulate and distort our lives.

1. **RONALD BOSTON AND HIS FAMILY.** Ronald was a student in the high school where I taught during the Sixties. I remember him as a shy, intense African American boy, curious and interested in my subject, social studies. After graduation he was drafted. Months later, my ailing and Alzheimer-afflicted mother was in a nursing home where her attendant turned out to be Ronald's mother. One day, while visiting my mom, she called me aside. My sister had told her that I knew her son. "I had a dream last night," she began, "and I dreamed Ronnie was dead." Nonsense, I assured her: most soldiers, as I had, return safe and sound. Not long after, news arrived that Ronald had been killed in Vietnam. Much later I wrote a short piece about him and several years after that I received an unexpected reply from his sister.

"My name is Cathy R. Boston," read her email. "I am the sister of Ronald Boston. Our niece found your piece on the Web so I decided to write you a short email to say thank you for writing and remembering.

"My mom and dad never recovered. In fact, the family never recovered from Ronald's death. The subsequent 'wars' have been protested in this household and will continue to be protested. Please do not give up the fight as I have not."

2. **M. L. ROSENTHAL.** Mack was a poet, critic, NYU professor of English and poetry editor of *Present Tense*, a magazine I once edited. He brought a sharp eye and fiercely independent mind to modern poets such as Yeats, Frost, Pound, Eliot and William Carlos Williams, and to his own work as well. Raised in a Yiddish-speaking Chicago household, he never genuflected before wrongheaded authority.

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Murray Polner is co-editor of *SHALOM*.

Here is a poem by Dan Pagis, an Israeli poet, that Mack brought to the magazine, a poem which in very few words summed up the effort to eradicate the Jews of Europe:

Here in the carload  
I am eve  
With Abel my son  
If you see my other  
son  
Cain son of man  
Tell him i

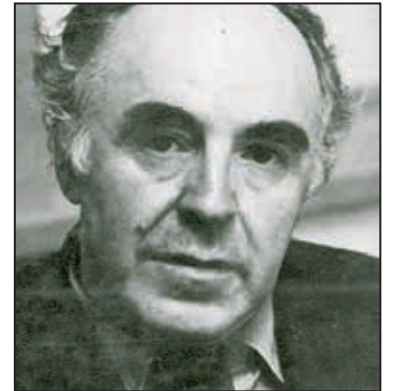
And Mack's even shorter version:

Near the Wailing Wall  
An old woman standing in the sun  
Head hanging

And then this gem by Mack at his angriest, saddest, most frustrating and yet still hopeful:

Dear God, whose existence has yet to be determined, let alone justified. We'll forgive you only if You'll show Yourself and admit that Creation's out of hand. You've tried it all — Christianity, Judaism, Manichaeism, Buddhism, Islam, deism, antidisestablishmentarianism, what not — and nothing has worked. Or, alternatively, could you just cause all the pompous chatter to vanish? Could you, please, let us start all over again with, say, antibiotics and a few cures for cancer, AIDS, religious and nationalist killers and the madness of creeds and ideologies?

And finally this closing of his poem referring to the senseless deaths of soldiers and "the orators extolling the silent, sacrificed dead":



*M. L. Rosenthal.*

A blackout of the heart undercuts all reasons  
The ceaseless death-avalanche paralyzes pity  
O, presidents, "leaders." All fighters for "justice."  
That is the "political problem" behind all others.

3. **HENRY SCHWARZSCHILD.** I knew Henry well. He reminded me that "Jews are defined by neither doctrine nor credo but by task. That task is to redeem the world through justice, here and now, in our own city, our own state, our own country, not because our well-being depends on it, but because Judaism does."

He was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, taken to Berlin by his parents after Kristallnacht because they thought it was safer, and then they reached the US in 1939, when he was fourteen.

He organized the ACLU's program for amnesty for Vietnam War refuseniks. A razor-sharp polemicist, he berated the hypocrisy of a Congress and White House eager to absolve the men who led us into an unnecessary war but would not extend the same generosity to those who refused to serve. Before a Congressional committee he ridiculed the politicians whose sons never wore a military uniform but opposed amnesty for those who refused to fight. Who really broke the law, he would ask anyone and everyone, prominent and obscure. "Amnesty," he said, "would be a noble act. We have not had many noble acts from our government in a long time."

He despised the death penalty. I once asked him how he found the strength to visit and fight for doomed men on death rows. He had heard this question asked many times. Someone had to do it, he said. In New Hampshire during a presidential primary campaign he learned that Bill Clinton, then the Arkansas governor, had left New Hampshire to authorize the execution of an inmate with an IQ of sixty-eight. Henry encountered Clinton at a tree-planting/political ceremony while another execution in Arkansas was pending. Henry approached Clinton and said, "You won't remember the tree, but you'll remember the people you executed." Henry said he didn't oppose the death penalty because he liked alleged murderers but because, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, he was against granting governments the license to execute its citizens.

In 1961 he was arrested for taking part in an early Freedom Ride (his wife was a Southerner), and returned South regularly and formed a group of pro bono lawyers to

defend blacks and whites arrested and imprisoned for daring to demand the right to vote and protest. He never gave up.

4. **HENRY SPIRA.** When I first met this genial, ferociously autonomous animal-rights man, I quickly understood why he had chosen to devote his life to clashing with humans and institutions that were numb and indifferent to the brutalization and exploitation of animals. As the great Yiddish writer and Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer put it, "For animals every day is Treblinka." Henry Spira so loved the quote that he read all the Singer books I sent him. When Singer won the Nobel Prize for Literature I threw a party to celebrate.

With Henry in the audience I asked Singer why he was a vegetarian. "Because I like chickens," he answered.

I first met Henry outside the Museum of Natural History on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Henry was leading a long parade of men and women demonstrating against the museum's twenty-year practice of experimentation on cats — he preferred calling it torturing



*Henry Spira & friend.*

and mutilating— to study their sexual lives. On that day Henry was my picket partner and we spoke about his campaigns against corporate America and how he was dedicated to informing people about the many everyday products — cosmetics, for example — which used animal ingredients. He relied on picket lines and nonviolent pressures on manufacturers. In time, many companies simply gave up, accepting Henry's mantra that their businesses would be best served by not alienating large numbers of customers. Another of his other successful campaigns — he had failures too, such as protecting the billions of animals raised and killed for food — was persuading public opinion that toxic Draize and L-D 50 not be used on helpless animals.

He arrived as a young man from Belgium and joined the merchant marine. A union man, he soon turned rebel union seaman, editing a newspaper battling union corruptors and their thugs. Sturdy and confident, physically and mentally strong enough to fend off threats, the experience taught him how to resist the bosses and their sycophants and how to organize the opposition.

He also began looking at animal rights groups who'd been competing for attention and money for decades and decided that it only doomed them to small, transient victories. For him, some half-way victories could bring faster relief to the sufferers. He allied with Temple Grandin, who had devised less painful, less stressful, means of slaughter. She couldn't stop the mass killing any more than Americans could be persuaded overnight to become vegetarians. People, they argued, wanted to eat meat, but did the slaughter



*1961. Arrest photo for CORE member Henry Schwarzschild as a Freedom Rider in Jackson, Mississippi.*



have to be so appalling, so agonizing? With Henry's full support, Grandin, a true humanitarian, convinced large abattoirs to adopt her less excruciating methods. Some long-established animal people took exception to his half-way approach and thought Henry was on a fool's errand. But not Peter Singer, the Australian ethicist, Princeton teacher of moral philosophy, and author of the seminal book *Animal Liberation*, who wrote an admiring biography of Henry.

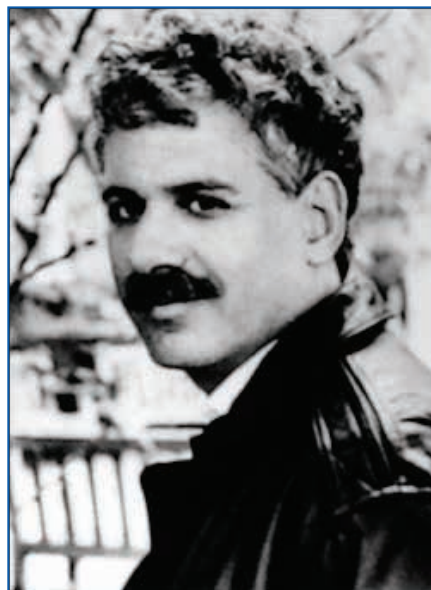
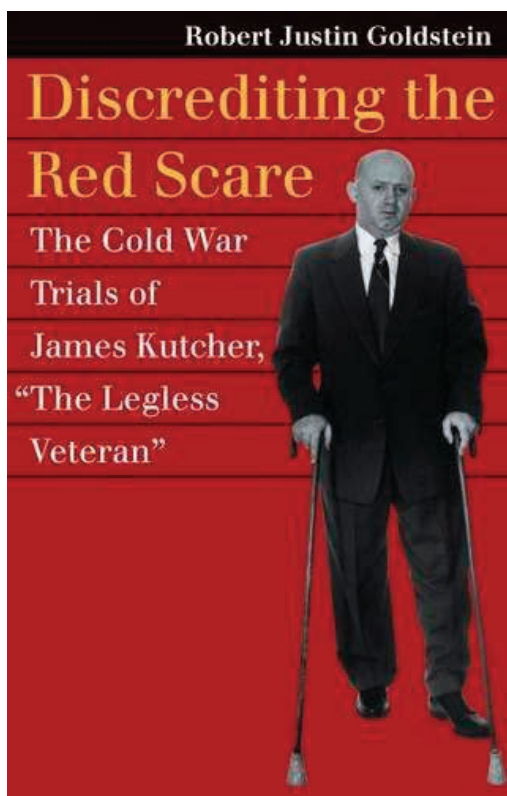
When Henry came to my seventieth birthday party, he was dying of cancer. I told the guests how honored I was by the presence of so brave a voice for the voiceless.

5. **JAMES KUTCHER.** I saw James only once and that was inside a bookshop. We did not talk but I knew who he was. I never saw him again. Even so, he was hard to forget. He'd been a member of the miniscule Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. Drafted during World War II, he lost his legs in the Italian campaign. When he was fitted with prosthetics, he returned home to live with his working-class parents in their federal low-cost housing project in Newark. The Veterans Administration then hired him for \$40 a week.

Then his troubles began. In 1948 the VA fired him because he and his party were "subversives," a word with no legal meaning but a favorite weapon of governments eager to do away with dissent and dissenters.

No easy mark, Kutcher fought back. In his book, *The Case of the Legless Veteran*, originally published by a small British house in 1953 because no mainstream American publisher would dare touch it during the fevered wave of anti-Communism that swept the Republic lest its appearance on their lists bring the Inquisitors down on them. The book opened with Kutcher's modest disclaimer: "In most respects I am an ordinary man. I have no special talents. I never showed any capacity for leadership." Maybe so, but he was no Casper Milquetoast. He was tougher and braver than his craven pursuers.

He chose to go public about his firing. Harold Russell, his onetime hospital buddy, who lost his hands in the war and had played the wounded returning sailor in the popular postwar film *The Best Years of Our Lives*, came to his defense,



**Robert I. Friedman.**

as did a few non-Communist unions and civil libertarians, like Murray Kempton in the pre-Murdoch, once liberal *New York Post*. He would eventually win back his job with the VA.

During his long ordeal he and his family received another gift from their landlord, New Jersey's Public Housing Authority. It ordered them to sign a loyalty oath swearing that no one in the family had belonged to any of the two hundred and three groups on the US Attorney General's list of "subversive" organizations — a list compiled without any of the groups given the right to defend themselves in a court of law to challenge the "evidence."

Once again, Kutcher would not give in. He recruited the ACLU, which then persuaded a court to issue a restraining order that saved the apartments of the Kutcher and eleven other families, all of whom had refused to swear they were loyal Americans.

Kutcher, who was expelled from the SWP in 1983, set his sight on three targets: the US government, opportunistic and scurrilous profiteers of the anti-Red crusade, and the Communist Party. When the US used the Smith Act to indict and imprison eighteen SWP leaders in 1943, the Communist Party cheered, since Trotsky and their beloved Stalin had been implacable enemies. But when their own leaders were sent to prison for violating the same infamous Smith Act they denounced the charges as a profound challenge to civil freedom. In 1969, a West Coast Communist newspaper returned to the old wars and again turned on Kutcher. "What is being touted as the 'case of the legless vet' as a real test case for civil liberties hadn't the remotest connection with the defense of civil rights." No matter their moral corruption. James Kutcher, a genuine Cold War hero, was a better man than all his enemies. Robert Justin Goldstein's biography, *Discrediting the Red Scare: The Cold War Trials of James Kutcher, "The Legless Veteran,"* has just appeared, published by the University Press of Kansas.

6. **ROBERT FRIEDMAN.** I was in my office in the American Jewish Committee when the building's security chief phoned. A young man had left a parcel for me and since the building owners and its insurers were careful about unsolicited packages he asked if I wanted it. I did, and found an

article typed on loose-leaf, lined school notebook paper.

The writer was Robert Friedman, a Jewish kid from Colorado (though many of his subsequent critics said he couldn't be a Jew because he wrote so critically about certain Israeli policies). He had studied and worked in Israel and later wrote a biography of Rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of the Jewish Defense League — once declared a terrorist group by the US and Israel. Robert and the American-born Kahane, both baseball fans, had developed an odd relationship. Visiting and reporting from Israel, Robert predicted early on that with the election in 1977 of the Jabotinsky devotee and Likkudnik Menachem Begin as prime minister, Israel would begin moving to the right, which of course it has under Netanyahu. For his labors, Robert was beaten by Israeli right-wingers.

But the Greater Middle East was his territory too. He wandered about Palestinian areas on the West Bank and East Jerusalem and witnessed and wrote about the corruption and paralysis of its leaders. He traveled widely, often accompanied by his wife, Christine Dugas, a *USA Today* reporter. In Syria he learned about the savagery of Assad Sr., the current Syrian leader's father. Back home, Robert was unwelcomed by the organized Jewish community because he dared to question many aspects of Israel at a time when relatively few American Jews did. At the same time he was welcomed by the once-vibrant *Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *New York* magazine, and *Present Tense*.

I asked him about his sources and he smiled at my naiveté. "I know people, even in the FBI and intelligence groups," he said, mysteriously. It paid off when he broke the story of the 1993 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and then cautioned that the country wasn't paying enough attention to more serious threats ahead. He next turned to the Russian mobsters who had arrived in the US claiming to be political refugees. He said his Italian Mafia sources had initially given him some contacts but warned him that the Russians were too dangerous, too brutal, even for them. Still, he forged ahead, visiting their haunts in Brooklyn and Miami and environs, always tense when dealing with them. The Russian Mafia put out a \$100,000 contract on his life, which he detailed in his subsequent book, *Red Mafiya*.

In 1996, on assignment in India to expose sexual slavery, which he believed had helped produce and spread AIDS, he was infected with a rare blood disease, which eventually killed him. On 9/11, we called off a lunch date at a restaurant in the World Trade Center. A few days before, though terribly weakened by his ailment, he told me he had helped a cop chase down a robber.

**7. RABBI CHARLES MANTINBAND.** In the mid-Seventies I was roaming through Mississippi, doing research

for a book I was writing. Before heading there I read W.J. Cash's *The Mind of the South*. Cash, a non-Jew, had written that Mississippi Jews were considered "aliens even when their fathers had fought in the Confederate armies ... a butt and a scapegoat as old as Christianity." In a region intensely zealous about their religion, many Southerners still believed Jews had killed Jesus.



*Rabbi Charles Mantinband.*

On the way there I visited the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati and found a memo by a student rabbi in a Mississippi synagogue. He had been to Starkville, where Mississippi State University was located, and watched as thousands of students and townspeople cheered the unfurling of a Confederate flag on the campus's main flagpole. Nearby, from the limbs of two massive oak trees he saw JFK and James Meredith hanging in effigy. The student rabbi wanted to write about the chilling scene he had witnessed. "I saw hate, destruction and the will to kill," he wrote. Moreover, his part-time congregation, racial "moderates" in those years, was badly frightened by the possibility of violence.

It was in this strange world that I wandered about until I reached Hattiesburg, where I learned about its onetime rabbi, Charles Mantinband. "Jewish life is pleasant and easy in Mississippi," he wrote. But then came Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Freedom Riders, black and white.

Mantinband had grown up in Virginia and had served small Jewish congregations in Florence, Sheffield and Huntsville, Alabama, and finally, Hattiesburg, until he was fired because he publicly supported the civil rights movement. He died in 1974, blind, almost eighty, forgotten.

Here is vintage Southern-born Mantinband:

"From the very beginning I had to make up my mind what I would do. I vowed that I would never sit in the presence of bigotry and hear it uttered. And when they would say to me, 'God is a segregationist because the Bible is full of it,' I always ripped out a Bible and I'd open it to wherever the opposite is stated and say, 'You mean here? Or do you mean there? Or do you mean some other place?'"

It's easy to dismiss his approach as mere talk. But the lawless ran the state. "Mississippi was 'a closed society,'" wrote the intrepid James Silver, an Ole Miss historian. Hattiesburg in the Fifties and Sixties was Klan and Citizens Council country. One hundred and seventy-five Jews lived there, having risen from peddler-storekeeper to the upper-middle class and even merchant-prince status. Mantinband was quite aware of their dependence on the goodwill of whites and understood their fear of rampaging white mobs. Yet when asked to join the Citizens Council, he said no.

During those dangerous and turbulent years he was a different breed from virtually all the state's Christian and Jewish clergy (save the Jackson and Vicksburg rabbis): out-

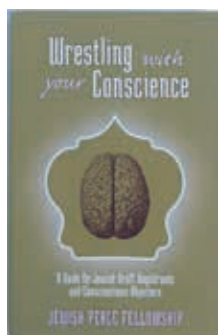
spoken, unafraid, a man of deeply-held ethical standards who refused to be comfortable with the bigotry that came so easily to many of Hattiesburg's respectable white citizens. More than any other southern rabbi Mantinband publicly took the side of the oppressed. He called Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney "innocent martyrs" and praised "my good friend Medgar Evers." When a synagogue board member asked him why African Americans were welcomed in his home, he answered, "We have things in common." And shortly after the 1958 bombing of the Atlanta synagogue, he was threatened. The head of the local Citizens Council, a former Hattiesburg mayor, active Presbyterian, and banker, told the Council that he was the troublemaker. "And I know his habits, where he lives. If you want to get him...." Mantinband's recollections of this incident are in his papers in the American Jewish Archives, in which he says he told the ex-mayor he would write out exactly what was said to him and send it to the FBI "and say you threatened me. If anything happens to me in the next ten years I'm going to call for your arrest for creating the climate [of hate]." He happily noted: "That fellow never looked me in the face again

because I had called his hand."

In February 1963, after his dismissal, Rabbi Leo Bergman of New Orleans' Touro synagogue was sent by the National Conference of Christians and Jews to speak at a dinner in Mantinband's honor, an affair most Hattiesburg Jews skipped. "Later," commented Rabbi Bergman in a sermon at Touro, "I was told they [the town's Jews] feared Rabbi Mantinband's religious honesty endangered their business interests."

And, finally, "Courage," by the poet Margaret R. Saraco:

How does it feel to be a lone wolf walking  
Through a green forest on a dark silhouetted night  
Wolf, do you hear your own footsteps sound  
Or, do you bristle at slight tremors  
Made from other creatures who watch  
Waiting for you to falter  
Fall, lay down and  
Die, will you  
Keep to your  
Path



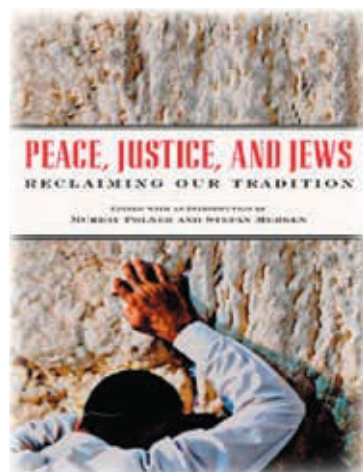
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