

The Catalyst - A Critique of Secular Jewish Contributions to Modern History

Consider the statements; "After the Middle Ages the Jews still contributed largely to civilization as individuals, but not as a race." "For the truth is that the primary, impact - which the Jews as a collective entity had on modern history (prior to the rise of Israel) occurred not through anything they were or did, but rather through what was done to them." Such views are both ubiquitous and prevalent. Their adherents are prone to emphasize the passivity of European Jews during the Holocaust, and tend to believe in the metaphysical guilt of its victims. In an era "of Jewish Nationalism resurgent it is worthwhile considering the historical evidence for such views. Of course, many historians have marginalized us to fit their doctrinaire theories (e.g. Spengler, Toynbee), but others are in danger of making the same mistake for different reasons.

There is little' dispute regarding our significant contributions to ancient history; that is when we are considered to have been ethically innocent. The concept of History as a linear sequential process was essentially Semitic in origin and the Judaic influence through the medium of the Old and New Testaments was crucial to the development of Western Civilization. In medieval Spain the linguistic intermediacy of the Jews was instrumental in the transfer of ideas from the Moorish to the Christian areas, and those helped to bring about the passing of the dark ages in Europe.

Jewish Progressivism-

It is a widely held view that the Jews played a Key role in the economic evolution of the West. They were imported, by the Catholic princes of the Middle Ages to practice usury, and thus greatly influenced the economic changes which occurred during the Reformation. In fact, it may be inferred from Fromm's excellent analysis of this period that the Jews acted as a catalyst in the fundamental economic sphere for this upheaval. While the Protestants who broke the traditional Christian ties did not stand directly for an increase in individual liberty, witness the anti-Semitism of the Calvinists

and the political conservatism of Luther himself, nonetheless this was the single most important result of the Reformation

"The Jews stood on the side of the politically and speculatively oriented adventurous capitalism," and as such exerted an influence far beyond their numbers. As a result of their dispersal they were from the beginning heavily involved in what became international trade. Freed from the chauvinistic enclaves of the Pale of Settlement the migrations of Jews into Europe encountered a society already partially free to the development of many repressed talents. "The great Jewish minds of the first generations that had been liberated from the closed Judaic world, still remembered the medieval captivity, and they were likely to present themselves as champions of other social groups or doctrines which had not been freed or vindicated yet." Many chose to avoid the difficult task of practicing Judaism in less repressive environments. Particularly, that section which cut itself off from its traditional culture, to enter and play such a crucial role in the mainstream of European development, may be considered a distinct minority (a minority within a minority). This group of secular Jews acted as a reservoir of free-thinking talent, entering all aspects of the opening society, and accelerated the liberalization (a process comparable to that known in chemical kinetics as auto-catalysis). The fantastically high proportion of Jews in the radical political movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a clear factual basis for such a thesis. Deutscher estimates that at one time in the Russian Revolutionary Party the figure was as high as 50% while the total Jewish population was 1-2%. Wherever a clash arose between nationalism and Internationalism these Jews always took the latter side.

The Outsiders

Dimont has said; "Because the Jews were spiritually tied to another faith they could not identify themselves with the Christian heritage." While he feels this explains the impact of the Jews on European society, he

does not specifically include those secular Jews who were no longer "spiritually tied to another faith," or indeed tied to any traditional faith. It was due to their very lack of cultural ties that these Jews took so readily to the many infant scientific fields and had such an extraordinary success. It was not chance that led Hitler to refer to "Jewish Science."

It may not have escaped the reader's notice that in the foregoing not one illustrious name appears. If one wishes to consider the influence of individuals in history (man making history as opposed to history making man) it is interesting footnote that many of the most famous names came, from minority groups on the periphery of power and nation. Napoleon the Corsican, Hitler the Austrian and Stalin the Georgian were attracted to power over the French, German and Russian Nations presumably for similar reasons. Equally, many Jews have been attracted to leadership roles and their contributions have been so multifarious, that in this case (at least) the concept of the political outsider must be extended to the "collective entity." Some individual examples will help to illustrate the general thesis.

Jewish Transcendence

"Because I was a Jew I found myself free from many prejudices which limited others in the use of their intellect, and being a Jew I was prepared to enter opposition and renounce agreement with the compact majority." Dimont says "growing up between two cultures, Marx early rejected the values of Judaism and Christianity because he felt both sets of values were the results of iniquitous systems."

"As a rule the progressive or revolutionary Jew, brought up on the border lines of various religious and national cultures, whether Spinoza or Marx, Heine or Freud, Rosa Luxemburg or Trotsky was particularly apt to transcend in his mind religious and national limitations and to identify himself with a universal view of mankind. He was, therefore, also particularly vulnerable whenever religious fanaticism or nationalist emotions ran high."

Archetypal Scapegoat

Of course, one can prove almost anything by quotation (witness McLuhan's tour de force), but, the names are too numerous and well-known to be ignored. The Rothschilds and Disraeli, Lasalle, Engels, Leon Blum. They represent more than a mere collection of individuals, but the scions of a collective Jewish contribution to Modern Western History.

Let us consider the case of Lev Davidovitch Bronstein, alias Trotsky, who occupied a crucial place in the modern historical process. What is not fully realized is that he also acted out the classical Jewish role of scapegoat.

Quoting once again from Deutscher's definitive biography, "Jews were, in fact, conspicuous among the opposition (to Stalin) Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov were all Jews." It was not chance that when the Bolsheviks began to consolidate their position it became impossible for a Jew, even though he appear to be the natural heir to Lenin, to become Bolshevik "Czar of all the Russias." Witness the great success of the anti-Semitic whispering campaign conducted by Stalin against Trotsky, who was said to be the Jewish Napoleon (an unlikely apposition). The clash between the two was heavily weighed against the secular Jew, with his integrity in the belief of a feasible idealistic internationalism. One might say (in retrospect) that under the circumstances the more practical and down-to-earth policies of the peasant Stalin, i.e. "socialism in one country," were bound to win over the more idealistic cosmopolitan Jew. Trotsky, in his passivity and lack of opposition and organization at the critical time seems to have played the prescribed role almost too well. He became the archetypal scapegoat for all early deficiencies of the Stalinist State. The mind boggles at the differences which might have occurred in history should he have won; no pact with Hitler, an early defeat of fascism, and a Holy crusade against Capitalism would seem to be indicated by his "Diaries in Exile." The fall of Trotsky in 1925 marked the fall of true idealistic internationalism, and the rise of the more empirical diplomatic internationalism represented hypocritically by the League of Nations and subsequently by the United Nations.

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National solution

Trotsky was the Jew who has exercised the most actual political power in history. m~ was symbolic of that small but influential group of secular Jews, Communists, Bundists, Socialists and even liberals, who put their faith in internationalism, and his defeat was their defeat. In Jewish history he marks a turning point in that after his downfall no more delusions could in reality be entertained by European Jewry for anything but a National solution to their problem.

Unfortunately, it took the purges of the thirties and the Holocaust to make this clear to the survivors, and even now the Jews in Soviet Russia are suffering critically from the Great Russian chauvinism implicit in Russian Communism. Even Trotsky was forced to admit that under socialism the problem of the Jews would probably require a "territorial solution," a telling quote which was relegated to a footnote in the three volume biography by his apologist Deutscher.

The fact that so relatively few Jews have played crucial roles in the development of

Western philosophy, literature, art and music is consistent with and indicative of this general thesis. We have produced many great performers on the modern political stage as well as the concert platform. But, while our impact on the cultural sphere has been overestimated, that on the political and social sphere is generally under-estimated, The reasons for this may prove something about modern Western "civilization" itself.

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