

Wilson during his professorial days, and by a committee of distinguished political scientists in the early 1950's. Inertia and the ability of the framework of 1787 to muddle through have always weighed against it, but it may be that the current occasion will be less inhospitable than the past. The parties are in terrible shape, to be sure. Yet the work of reform, if it is to serve democratic values, must begin with them. They are our most flexible institutions, and if they can be strengthened and mobilized for con-

stitutional reform, we may accomplish more than seems possible now.

We are now reliving, in a two hundredth anniversary, the cadences of our founding as a nation. The celebration comes at an awkward moment. Yet the rehearsal and restudy of our basic political principles may be opportune. By reviewing our fundamental principles, we may be driven to consider basic constitutional reform, and thus to save a heritage that we are in danger of losing by taking it for granted.

Jews and American Politics by Stephen D. Isaacs

(Doubleday; 302 pp.; \$8.95)

Perry Davis

In the months preceding the publication of *Jews and American Politics* rumors swept the Washington and New York Jewish communities. Politically active Jews were whispering, "Who is Stephen Isaacs, and why is he saying such terrible things about us?" In his second chapter Isaacs writes:

"One man named in the first chapter of this book reacted with alarm when he was shown a draft of the chapter. 'Oh no!' he exclaimed. 'You can't do that. Please don't do that.' He explained that, while he felt flattered to be included, identifying him as being Jewish would cause him problems. 'You just don't understand; it's getting bad out there,' he said, pointing his forefinger back over his right shoulder. 'I pick it up everywhere I go. It's increasing like you wouldn't believe. I really wish you wouldn't do this book at all.'"

The anxiety felt over the appearance of Isaacs's book was an age-old aversion to "washing our dirty linen in public." Nothing verified the theme of the book as much as the writing and publication of it.

By interviewing over two hundred Jewish leaders and leading Jews, Isaacs decides that Jewish political action in America is manifested in vari-

ous contradictory forms, but that the underlying motivation for this activity is fear—fear of the loss of status, fear of spiritual or physical harm, fear of anti-Semitism, a term defined individually and subjectively. According to Isaacs:

"In one way or another, Jews in politics are, at the extreme, striving to avoid becoming lampshades or, at least, striving for a 'just society'—which may ultimately be the same thing."

Jews, for example, fear the General Brown form of anti-Semitism that alleges a conspiracy of Jewish bankers and media moguls. As a result, the Jewish establishment condemns Brown, but refuses to press for his dismissal lest the power he alleged be confirmed. Jews like Ben Wattenberg, who worked for Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, work as behind-the-scenes aides to elected officials hoping to foster pro-Jewish policies. But for the most part they refuse to run for elective office, fearing that such blatant activity is unfitting and may provoke a hostile slumbering giant. In a different setting, the leader of the New York Orthodox German Jewish community told his congregants to avoid political demonstrations or pres-

sure because "they may break our windows"—a clear allusion to *Kristallnacht*.

Some Jews marched with blacks in Selma, fearing that if black subjugation is successful, Jews would be the next scapegoat in line for persecution. On the other hand, a growing Jewish hostility to blacks, indeed overt and covert racism, has come from the fear of street crime and economic competition. The former "liberal coalition" has opposed affirmative action hiring and low-income housing projects in middle-class neighborhoods.

Isaacs notes that in recent years one of the clearest examples of Jewish political contradiction involves the public and private reaction to the position and power of Henry Kissinger. To some he epitomizes the pride and hope of a people; to others he is an Uncle Jake bending over backward to avoid his Jewishness—intermarrying, taking his oath on a King James version of the Bible, exchanging kisses with Anwar Sadat.

Isaacs correctly identifies the State of Israel and the issue of Soviet Jewry as central reminders of the potential pride and danger attached to being a Jew.

Jews and American Politics provides a clear analysis of the insecure Jewish voter and of the suppressed ethnicity of some Jews who have "made it." The author identifies men like Walter Lippmann who chose "to ignore their roots, never mentioning their being Jewish, perhaps never even thinking of it."

However, in setting up Arthur Waskow ("The Freedom Seder") as the radical Jew Isaacs neglects the increasing numbers of Orthodox Jewish young people who manage to fit the political and social liberalism and activism of the commune (*havura*) into the all-encompassing framework of *halacha*—traditional law. Unlike Waskow, their feet are bare but their heads are covered.

Isaacs also skirts over the political importance of access to high officials found to be a common goal of activist Jews. The very apt American description—having a "rabbi"—is multiplied and expanded in Israel, where *protectzia*—having political

pull—is a way of life. While Isaacs does a good job of describing the ideological shift of the ethnic Jew away from liberalism (but not to complete or conventional conservatism), he avoids other urban-related issues like Jewish poverty, treatment of the elderly, and the institutionalized anti-Semitism of bureaucratic agencies like the welfare or health departments of most big cities.

Despite this, *Jews and American Politics* is a clear and concise approach to a largely neglected subject. It is well written and entertaining. Isaacs updates *The Political Behavior of American Jews* by Lawrence Fuchs and avoids its statistical jargon. He extends and applies the perceptiveness of Charles Liebman's *The Ambivalent American Jew*. Above all, Isaacs goes a long way in breaking the barrier of fear he so aptly describes. The Jews, as other groups, can wash their dirty linen in public and come out of the ordeal with fresher linen.

Isaacs concludes that ethnic pride seems to be asserting itself over both shame and fear. Jews are exercising political power as Jews and for Jews. This augurs well for the future. As Jews continue to engage in a wide variety of political activities from anarchic violence to right-wing intransigence, à la Rabbi Korff, they become a less predictable group. They are less apt to be second-guessed, typed, or pigeonholed. And, in the American political arena, unpredictability means power.

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people whose press is filled with the hot clash of debate on not only their own domestic issues but a broad spectrum of world concerns. Doesn't this rate at least a phrase?

Modern Sweden has a world conscience and credibility which, coupled with its inner vitality, stands in stark contrast to the spiritual fatigue and cynicism that stalk the world. Too bad your writer so missed the boat. We would all welcome an honest look at Sweden, because its own citizens are the first to confess they are far from perfect.

Franklin Wallick

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To the Editors: It was surprising to note that R.H. Weber, author of "Sweden Inc." is a lawyer. How can a lawyer be so naive as to expect readers to swallow the repeated insinuation couched in the primitive illogic: Fascists make their trains run on time. Swedes make their trains run on time. Therefore, Swedes are fascists.

Fascism does not live by order alone. Unless we are ready to accept the use of the word *fascism* as a meaningless shibboleth with the sole function of identifying its users as Communists, we should observe that for a system to be fascist it should include at least what Mussolini's slogan urged: *Crederre, combattere, obbedire*. Therefore, it is simply not true to say "the Swedes have perfected the essential elements of the economic strategies employed by the Fascists, etc." An essential element of fascist economy lacking in Sweden is fascism's encouragement of struggle and fighting with concomitant imperialism and militaristic mystique. A society which forbids its children to see cowboy movies out of concern lest they be exposed to violence can hardly be accused of fostering one of the essential elements of

fascism.

Weber's reference to "the duty of silence" (*tystnadsplikt*) sounds like the exposure of a sinister Mafioso institution essential to a totalitarian state. As one who has been bound not merely to the ordinary *tystnadsplikt* but to an *absolute* "duty of silence," I submit that there is more to Sweden and its laws than the one side Weber so ardently cartoons. During my training for the priesthood in the Church of Sweden, I saw what a big deal the Swedes made about the rights of the individual to privacy by their elaborate emphasis on the inviolability of the priests' duty to remain silent and the seriousness of the legal procedures that stem from the Draconian laws that long protected parishioners from the tongue of the priest. Swedes are aghast at American pastoral training procedures which allow bedside hospital conversations to seminarians to become case histories for general scrutiny.

Aside from the agitation within the Church of Sweden to separate from the state with no real assurance of being able to survive financially after separation, the Church of Sweden quite unintentionally provides further evidence that Sweden is not as monolithic as Weber maintains. The recent public snubs and expressions of disagreement with the Bishop of Stockholm by fellow bishops have shown that Swedes have healthy schismatic tendencies.

More evidence of behavior out of keeping with the thesis that "the entire Swedish nation aims to function as one corporation" is provided by none other than the Swedish Premier Olof Palme. Cabinet Minister Palme hardly acted as a cautious aspiring corporation manager when in 1968 he walked beside the North Vietnamese Moscow ambassador in an antiwar rally and delivered a long speech against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Nor did Prime Minister Palme seem to be unduly concerned over Volvo sales when he released a statement comparing the U.S. bombings of Christmas, 1972, to Nazi atrocities.

Weber is as eager as the *Reader's Digest* to spread the assumption that Swedish health programs ignore individual needs. I recall that when I was a student my Finnish wife chose to take