Meir Kahane:

The Development Of A Religious Totalitarian

And His Challenge To Israeli Democracy

An Essay presented

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Stuart Alan Levey

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"Kahane is the perfect product of the contemporary Jewish underside. He is a boorish and maddened little man, whose soul is merely the sum of its angers, who succeeds in the street because he belongs in the gutter . . . What dark forces in the Jewish community, in Israel and in the United States, conspired to create the first Jew who may be properly compared to the Nazis?"[1] The evaluation by Leon Wieseltier in a recent issue of The New Republic is not an uncommon one. As leader of the Jewish Defense League (henceforth JDL), and more recently of the radical Israeli party, Kach (meaning "Thus!"), Meir Kahane has consistently evoked such angry denunciations. Kahane's reactionary brand of extremism, inflammatory rhetoric, and willingness to use violence have made him an easy target for the journalists, politicians, and rabbis whom he appalls. But merely offending society's mainstream does not automatically qualify Kahane for scholarly investigation. Kahane is not important because he repulses most American Jews and Israelis, but because his career can help us to better understand the nature of radical groups and the dangers they pose to democracies. In addition, the unique reaction provoked by Kahane in Israel provides a previously inaccessible vantage point from which

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[1] Leon Wieseltier, "The Demons of the Jews", The New Republic, November 11, 1985, p.15.

to view Israeli politics as a whole.

Kahane's career provides a rare and valuable case study of right-wing Jewish extremism. Since Kahane has practiced his philosophy of Jewish chauvinism in two environments, the United States and Israel, his fate provides a test case of the comparative character of democratic polities faced with a right-wing extremist challenge. Moreover, in the case of Israel, the extremist dynamics exposed by Kahane lead us to conclusions about the very essence of Israeli politics. In particular, Kahane's career helps us to explain a paradox in Israel's political history, namely: despite the fact that Israeli political, economic, and social structures should, according to the established positions of political sociology, provide fertile ground for extremism, extremist challenges before Kahane were both rare and comparatively mild. Israel's mild domestic political history can only be understood by looking beneath those structural variables to the underlying political culture. Democracy in Israel owes its stability to an almost unquestioned set of abstract values including the commitment to a Jewish democracy and to the Zionist dream of creating a morally exemplary state. Most importantly, this value consensus set limits of acceptability on political discourse, limits which, before Kahane, were inviolable. Without this political culture, it is unlikely that Israel could have remained free from radical challenges for so long.

As I will demonstrate, Israel's democracy depends so heavily on political culture that Kahane's explicit rejection of the value

consensus is a serious threat. After many years of relative obscurity, historical circumstances have provided Kahane with a sympathetic constituency on the fringe of Israeli society. If his ideas grow more prominent, there is a danger that Israel's value consensus may erode to the point where it could no longer preserve political stability. Thus, an analysis of Kahane is needed, not only to shed light on the politics of extremism, but also to evaluate Israel's history of and future prospects for democratic stability.

In an attempt to cover all of these issues in proper depth and detail, this essay has been divided into distinct chapters organized for analytical rather than chronological reasons.

The second chapter details the current mainstream Israeli response to Kahane. Particularly since the 1984 elections, the Israeli establishment has united in an effort to check Kahane's acceptance. The Jerusalem Post aptly captured the spirit behind this effort when it wrote, "Within this aura of deepening polarization there would seem to be one area of consensus: a widespread sense of revulsion over the emergence of a one-man faction which unabashedly revels in representing Jewish racism: Meir Kahane's Kach"[2] Not only is the establishment repulsed by Kahane, it has mobilized a panoply of counter-Kahane antidotes. The rationale behind these measures is, of course, to render impotent Kahane's threat to Israeli democracy. The irony is that this attack is so severe that it has overstepped the conventional bounds of democratic politics in Israel. Thus, in the name of safeguarding

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[2] Jerusalem Post July 27, 1984, p.1.

democratic freedoms in Israel, the establishment has singled out Kahane in an effort to abridge his enjoyment of those freedoms. As will be demonstrated in the final chapter, the excessive measures employed against Kahane reflect, more accurately than any opinion poll could, the nature of the Israeli political culture. Kahane evokes such a disproportionate response because he offends the core set of values upon which Israeli democracy depends.

Only after we understand Kahane's ideology can it be examined as a direct and unprecedented challenge to the Israeli political culture warranting such an attack. Accordingly, the third chapter traces Kahane's worldview beginning with some of the formative experiences of his childhood and adolescence. A summary of Kahane's formal ideology follows, with special emphasis on how he usurps the symbolism of Revisionist Zionism for the sake of legitimacy in the eyes of the right-wing constituency he wishes to attract. In order to complete this composite picture of Kahane, the second chapter also includes an analysis of his distinguishing personality traits and obsessions. By their very nature, these characteristics are nearly impossible to definitively document, and, as a result, the discussion consists of my own impressions based upon personal interviews, analyses of speeches, and exposure to his written materials. Finally, once this detailed analysis is complete, it will be possible to characterize Kahane's location on the political spectrum. I argue that he, along with such figures as Ayatollah Khomeini, is part of a new political tradition of religious totalitarianism, and that it is misleading to label him simply as a fascist.

No essay about a political movement can omit a discussion of how it translates ideology into practice. Consequently, the fourth chapter chronicles the modest but instructive rise and fall of the JDL in America between 1968 and Kahane's aliyah (immigration to Israel) in late 1971. As part of that analysis, I assess the impact of historical contingencies on the JDL's prominence and later decline. In particular, when Kahane formed the JDL, it filled a vital function for those isolated urban Jews that it attracted. Most importantly, the fourth chapter reveals how Kahane's own program and egocentricity ultimately led to the downfall of the JDL in America. In brief, Kahane was unwilling to relinquish the spotlight or to join forces with mainstream groups on major issues such as Soviet Jewry. As the mainstream picked up his issues, Kahane, like many extremists, became more radical in order to differentiate himself from moderate groups. Eventually this process propelled the JDL to a level of extremism that alienated many followers and destroyed the unity of the remaining members. Kahane, perhaps sensing the impending disaster, moved to Israel just before the JDL committed its most tragic act, a bombing which inadvertently killed an innocent bystander and also permanently damaged the JDL's grassroots support. Finally, the third chapter includes a discussion about how intrinsic structural limitations on extremist groups in America prevent their success. Even if the JDL had targeted a less parochial constituency, structural factors in American society prevent the success of such radical movements. For instance, the Black Panthers, contempora-

neous with the JDL, were stifled by the same limiting factors. In contrast, as we will see in the final chapter, even though extreme movements have been rare in Israel, the structural environment there actually promotes such movements.

The fifth chapter concentrates on Kahane's fate in Israel and provides the answer to the oft-asked question, "How could someone like Meir Kahane be elected to Knesset?" As one would expect, Kahane's recent successes cannot be traced to a single catalyst. Rather, as is so often the case with historical questions, the answer is to be found in a constellation of factors which contributed to his election. Among the factors discussed are: the general shift to the right in Israeli politics, the exacerbation of the ideological conflict between the Left and Right in Israel, the chronically faltering economy, the war in Lebanon, and the retirement of Menachem Begin. Though Kahane's victory was generally unexpected, most observers have been even more surprised by his continuing surge of popularity. A _Ma'ariv_ poll published in January 1985, projected four Knesset seats for Kahane if elections were held immediately; by September 1985, that projection had risen to ten seats. Even though this is probably an exaggerated gauge of Kahane's electoral power, it is important to identify the factors contributing to his growing popularity.

Once the factors which enabled Kahane to become so popular are fully presented, a new and more provocative question is posed in the sixth chapter: "Why hasn't an anti-Arab extremist like Kahane arisen before in Israel?" The preponderance of the relevant

political science literature suggests that Israel should be highly susceptible to demagoguery and extremism, particularly anti-Arab extremism. The structure of the Israeli representational democracy, Israel's stage and rate of political and economic development, her highly ideological political rhetoric, and external political threats all create a fertile atmosphere for political extremism. Add to this the sociological variables of the incomplete integration of Oriental Jews whose share of the population is increasing faster than their share of wealth and influence, and also the presence of a hostile Arab minority, and the stage is set for the rise of radicalism.[3] The paradox is that, prior to Meir Kahane, Israel's record is virtually devoid of organized anti-Arab extremism in the political realm. In fact, Jewish extremist groups of any form have been rare, and they have all focused on integrationist and economic goals rather than the Arabs. The resolution of this paradox requires us to refer back to the second chapter and our explanation for why the Israeli political establishment has reacted so violently to Kahane.

Both the opposition to Kahane and the absence of radical right-wing electoral challenges in Israel can be explained, in great part, by Israeli political culture. Israeli politics, like the politics of any nation, is inextricably steeped in the value orientations shaped by the collective history of the political actors. In Israel, a broad consensus exists among the Jewish

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[3] Throughout the essay, I use the term "Orientals" to refer to those Jewish Israelis who emigrated from Middle Eastern or North African countries, and the term "Europeans" for those Israelis with European or American ancestry.

population, both European and Oriental, embracing the principles of modernization, Zionism, and Jewish democracy. In addition, the political and social elite of Israeli society, the Jews from Europe, share the haunting anti-semitic legacy of pogroms and the Holocaust. Not surprisingly then, Israeli politics reflects their concern with the proper treatment of minorities.

Of course, not all segments of the population are equally committed to each and every pillar of the political culture. Oriental Jews, for instance, emigrated from Arab lands or other authoritarian regimes, and therefore cannot be expected to identify as strongly with democratic values and minority rights. It is no surprise that public opinion polls show that Orientals harbor greater nationalism, stronger anti-Arab sentiments, and a weaker commitment to the sanctity of democracy than Europeans. Until now, those sentiments remained unexpressed since the political culture in Israel includes a heretofore unbroken taboo against the blatant challenge of democratic legitimacy or of the basic rights of minorities. Kahane claims that Israel must choose between being a Jewish state or being a democracy. He opts for a Jewish state and calls for the expulsion of all non-Jews from the country. These ideas are entirely unprecedented in the history of Israeli political rhetoric, at least in public. The fact that it required an outsider to break the taboo against the public exposition of such ideas, testifies to the strength of Israel's democratic values.

The taboo against such anti-democratic discourse, so integral to Israeli political culture, had previously prevented the opening of the floodgates to anti-Arab sentiment in Israel. Kahane broke that taboo, and his rhetoric tapped into a reservoir of extremism which, as predicted by the political development literature, exists in Israel. Kahane's election gave his ideas a modicum of respectability, leading even more Israelis to embrace them. On the other hand, the establishment has been taken aback by Kahane's challenge to the political culture. Kahane represents a confrontation to their value system so provocative that they are willing to violate their own conceptions of democratic liberty to suppress it. The establishment's interaction with Kahane is instructive since it testifies to the sacred nature of the values Kahane contradicts, and because it proves that they know his challenge is a dangerous one.

Finally, in the conclusion, I briefly review the major points made in the thesis and assess the severity of Kahane's threat to Israel. For this it is useful to invoke Weber's political ethics since the danger of Kahane lies not in any lack of commitment to the Jewish state, but in his irresponsible means of pursuing it. In Weber's terms, Kahane obeys an ethic of ultimate ends since, as a religious totalitarian, he is concerned with other-worldly goals without regard for this-worldly consequences. Thus, at the same time that Kahane warns Israel about real or imagined threats to her existence, he does so in a manner that is itself fraught with danger.

Chapter II

THE ESTABLISHMENT STRIKES BACK

On July 23, 1984, Meir Kahane's _Kach_ party received 25,907 votes in Israel's parliamentary elections, earning the radical rabbi one of the Knesset's 120 seats. Kahane called his victory a "revolution", and the uproar surrounding him during the subsequent sixteen months lends credence to his claim. His popularity has grown since the election, and recent polls project as many as ten seats for Kahane if elections were held now.[1] Such a prospect makes it impossible for the Israeli establishment to ignore Kahane, and he has become one of the most worried about men in Israel.

Kahane's extreme platform, oratory style, and tactics are all unique to the Israeli political system. Consequently, he threatens to undermine the broad consensus in Israel about how politics should be conducted and about what positions one may acceptably voice in public. That consensus, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, provides the foundation for political stability in Israel. Therefore, Kahane's challenge is a dangerous one, and the reaction to it is instructive. In fact, Kahane's recent impact suggests that his intrusion into the Israeli body politic can serve as a telling probe into that body, exposing previously inac-

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[1] _Jerusalem Post_, September 27, 1985, p.14.

cessible truths.

In this chapter, we begin searching for those truths by review-
ing the Israeli establishment's reaction to Kahane. The govern-
ment, the educational institutions, and the media, have all
responded to Kahane with unprecedented vigor. In a point blank
summation of the official government attitude concerning Kahane,
Prime Minister Peres said, "Meir Kahane is the gravest danger
facing Israel today. Arab aggression can be repulsed by the army,
the economy can be cured through austerity, but Kahane and extre-
mism can destroy us from within."[2] More importantly, Peres' fears
are apparently shared by Israel's ruling elite, giving rise to an
attack strategy against Kahane that represents a unique level of
opposition to a political party in Israel since the nation's
founding. In fact, Kahane's radical dissent from democracy has
provoked the Israeli establishment to strain the guidelines of
democracy in the campaign to stop him.

Establishment action against Kahane began long before his suc-
cessful election in 1984. Since moving to Israel in 1971, Kahane
has consistently managed to arouse the ire of authorities through
various public acts of protest. He is one of the few Jews to have
been subjected to administrative arrest in Israel, whereby one may
be imprisoned for up to six months without trial and even without
formal charges being filed. In 1980, Kahane spent six months in
jail on charges that were never disclosed. Traditionally, the
government has used this provision only to detain suspected Arab

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[2] Shimon Peres, public address to the World Union of Jewish Stu-
dents in Jerusalem, August 10, 1985.

terrorists.

Similarly, Israeli authorities have targeted the Jerusalem Museum of the Potential Holocaust for abuse, solely as a result of its tie to Kahane. According to Museum Director Barbara Ginzberg, the Jewish Agency refuses to grant financial support to Diaspora youth group trips to Israel if the Museum of the Potential Holocaust is part of the planned itinerary. Furthermore, official government tourist maps do not list the museum nor will tourist offices give out its address. Although Kahane often speaks at the museum, it displays nothing relating to his radical positions concerning the Arabs. The museum's exhibits consist exclusively of anti-semitic propaganda, some of it glorifying the Holocaust and Hitler, which has been compiled from all over the world.

Subtle techniques such as harassing the museum, have escalated into an all-out war against Kahane since the 1984 election campaign. As in 1981, the Central Elections Committee of Israel attempted to outlaw Kahane's candidacy. Citing reasons of racism and disrespect for Israeli political institutions and for the Declaration of Independence which guarantees equal rights for all citizens, Elections Committee Chairman Gavriel Bach reported the committee's decision to prohibit Kahane from running. As in 1981, Kahane was successful in getting this decision reversed by the Israeli Supreme Court, for if the Court were to accept the committee's rationale for outlawing Kahane, several left-wing, rabidly anti-Zionist parties would have to be proscribed as well.

Even though the mainstream parties had gone out of their way to denounce Kahane during the campaign, their tactics were probably at least as attributable to the fear of being associated with Kahane and with reaffirming Israeli opposition to such radical ideas in the eyes of the world as to a fear that such ideas could actually catch on in Israel. Kahane's election came as a surprise to nearly everyone in Israel, especially to pollsters and politicians.[2] Only Kahane pretended to have expected it. As a result of the election, the establishment quickly re-evaluated its policy toward Kahane. It would no longer be enough merely to distance oneself from Kahane for the benefit of domestic and foreign public opinion. Instead, something concrete would have to be done to combat Kahane on the ground.

The first of the more drastic actions taken soon after the elections was a voluntary media "ban" on Kahane observed by all major newspapers, as well as by the radio and television stations. Media officials agreed to boycott Kahane, attempting to check his popularity by denying him these prominent public fora. The media still reports news concerning Kahane, but Kahane's ideas and substantive statements are no longer quoted nor does he appear on Israeli television or radio. Kahane's name is still among the most often mentioned in the press, though always in an obviously unsympathetic context. In fact, it has become the journalistic vogue in Israel to criticize a policy or development by claiming

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[3] See, for example, the post-election analysis of Hanoch Smith (Jerusalem Post July 27, 1984, p.1.) or news stories in Hebrew papers from the week of the election such as one in Hadashot entitled: "Yes, Kahane is in Knesset" (July 25, 1984 p.9).

that it "sows the seed of Kahanism". For example, Israeli radio
(Kol Yisrael) and the Jerusalem Post both defended Prime Minister
Peres' July 4, 1985 emergency economic measures by claiming that
if he had waited any longer the result would have been chaos, an
end to democracy, and the rise of Kahanism. In addition, anything
short of unqualified opposition to Kahane is treated with derision
by the press. For example, in July 1985 the Knesset voted to
freeze funding to the local council of Kiryat Arba since Kach
members were part of the local council ruling coalition. Noting
that, although the freeze passed, the vote was not unanimous, the
Jerusalem Post commented simply "For shame."[4] Furthermore, since
the election the press has been obsessively fixated on Kahane,
regularly running anti-Kahane features and op-ed pieces dealing
with strategies for stopping Kahane's growing popularity. For
example, Ma'ariv featured a story about Kahane entitled, "The
Sickness of the State".[5] A sampling of Jerusalem Post headlines
during July and August 1985 includes: "The Evil of Kahanism", "How
to Combat Kahane", "The Spectre of Kahanism", "Calls Increase For
Action Against Kahane", "Racism in the Knesset", and "How to Deal
With Kahane". Newspapers of many ideological orientations, both
Hebrew and English, carry such opinions including Hadashot, Ma'-
ariv, Yediot Ahsranot, Ha'aretz, and The Jerusalem Post. Thus,
the press, being sympathetic to the mainstream abhorrence of

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[4] Jerusalem Post, July 30, 1985 p.8. It should be noted that the
few Knesset members opposing the freeze were not in any way
expressing support for Kahane. They were simply uncomfortable
with depriving residents, the overwhelming majority of whom
never voted for Kahane, of vital services.

[5] Ma'ariv, June 28, 1985, p.10.

Kahane, has not only acquiesced in the ban on publicizing Kahane's views, but has also become a consistent forum for anti-Kahane viewpoints and strategies.

Israeli governmental institutions, especially the Knesset, have been unremitting in their challenge to Kahane since the election. On the first day of the new Knesset session in 1984, the members circulated an anti-Kahane petition which was indicative of future Knesset actions against Kahane. A majority of members signed the nonbinding statement, registering their protest against the seating of Meir Kahane as a Knesset member.[6] In fact, there was some doubt as to whether Kahane would actually be allowed to take his seat. It is significant that the members of Knesset were willing to single out Meir Kahane for denunciation even before his popularity soared to its present level. It is worth noting that the Knesset has Arab and other left-wing members who question Israel's basic right to exist as a Jewish state, and who refuse to officially repudiate the PLO, yet the anti-Kahane petition was the only one of its type circulated. The anti-Kahane sentiments expressed during the opening of the Knesset session were not idle rhetoric, a fact to which a subsequent series of Knesset laws directed at Kahane attests.

Israel, like most democratic nations, has an immunity law for Knesset members, ensuring them the highest level of freedom of speech and movement. Prior to his election, Meir Kahane had vowed to take advantage of his parliamentary immunity to travel to Arab

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[6] Jerusalem Post, August 2, 1985 p.9. No one from Tehiya and only one Likud member, Meir Shitrit, signed the petition.

villages and urge the inhabitants to leave Israel. Such a prospect horrified Kahane's Knesset colleagues. Their swift and effective response leaves little doubt that they value the mainte- nance of stability in Arab-Jewish relations more than the sanctity of parliamentary immunity. The Israeli police have been empowered by Knesset decree to preclude Kahane's movements whenever they fear that a danger of violence exists. Kahane has been prevented from speaking numerous times since the election, not only in Arab towns, but in Jewish settlements as well.

In the case of Arab towns, such as Umm-al-Fahm where a radical segment of the population promised to riot if Kahane was permitted to speak, the rationale of stopping him is clear. However, in the case of Jewish towns, the motivations are more political. Kahane, not surprisingly, attempts to make public appearances in cities where the population is susceptible to incitement against Arabs. Towns which have recently been victimized by Arab terrorism and areas suffering from unemployment (where Kahane stirs up resent- ment against Arabs with jobs), are particularly favorable sites for Kahane to speak. The police occasionally prevent these speeches, ostensibly out of fear of spontaneous violence, but also in an attempt to prevent Kahane from capitalizing on potentially sympathetic audiences. The case of Afula during the summer of 1985 provides an illustration. Three Jewish townspeople were murdered by Arabs in the space of a week, and Kahane announced his intention to speak there after the funerals. The atmosphere in Afula was tense as anti-Arab sentiment compelled Arab employees in

the town to stay at home out of fear. Still, Likud mayor of Afula, Ovadia Eli, the man most responsible for preventing the speeches, admitted that his decision was predicated on the crowds in the streets chanting "Kahane! Kahane! King of Israel!" Said Eli, "Now I've seen it (support for Kahane -- S.L.) with my own eyes in Afula, and it is frightening. Something has to be done to stop it. . . When you add up the frustrations of the marginal people, Kahane has easy prey."[7] Even two weeks after the murders, Eli kept Kahane from entering Afula, restricting his speeches to the neighboring Moshav Metav, two kilometers away. Clearly then, the limit on Kahane's parliamentary immunity sanctioned by the Knesset has enabled the political mainstream to stop Kahane from addressing the audiences which support his ideas most.

In another official attempt to confront Kahane, the Knesset and government used all of the pressure tactics at their disposal to prevent the formation of a coalition in the Kiryat Arba council with Kach councilmen. Besides cutting off municipal funding (as alluded to above), Israeli Attorney General Zamir unilaterally declared the coalition charter illegal since it promised to fire all Arab workers in the town and to boycott Jewish businesses which employ Arabs. Kach city councilman Wach agreed to strike the clause from the official agreement but promised to enact the policy anyway. Wach said, "I have to fire 17 workers. If I have to choose between a Jew and an Arab, you shouldn't have even the slightest doubt as to whom I will choose."[8] Still, the incident

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[7] Jerusalem Post August 2, 1985 p.2.

[8] Jerusalem Post, August 1, 1985 p.1.

marks a case of the national government uncharacteristically intruding into local affairs in order to combat Kahane.

In addition, the Knesset proposed two laws in August 1985 that were specifically aimed at Meir Kahane. One of these prohibits members of Knesset from holding citizenship in any country outside of Israel. Kahane, an American citizen, reacted to this proposed legislation by resigning his directorship of the JDL in preparation for repudiating his American citizenship. Since Kahane is the only member of Knesset holding dual citizenship, his simple analysis, "that law is aimed at me,"[9] seems to be accurate. Perhaps more significant, however, was the law passed banning Knesset lists which "incite to racism or negate Israel's democratic character."[10] This law is aimed at making a prohibition of _Kach_ stick in the eventuality of new elections, and passed unanimously (Meir Kahane could not cast a vote since he was ejected from the chamber for proposing an amendment to the clause dealing with the democratic nature of the state.).[11] As should be clear from the passage of these laws and from the other actions mentioned above, the Knesset has gone to unusual lengths to combat Meir Kahane.[12]

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[9] _Jerusalem Post_, August 31, 1985 p.6.

[10] Quoted in The _Jerusalem Post_, August 1, 1985 p.1.

[11] Significantly, the vote was only 66-0 since most of the right-of-center members, such as those from Tehiya, Likud, and some religious parties, abstained.

[12] Meir Kahane related to me another measure taken against him by Knesset, but I was not able to verify his claim. According to him, his formally proposed laws are the only ones that are not read on the Knesset floor and opened for discussion. Instead the Speaker tables them without reading them. In addition, he claims that many of his serious speeches in which he tries to justify his positions by citing Jewish sources, are not entered

The official action which best reflects the establishment's obsession with Kahane is the educational program against him currently administered in all Israeli high schools. Enacted soon after the election, this program is worth analyzing in some detail since it exposes the depth of mainstream revulsion to Kahane. According to Nitzan Arad, a college student who teaches the "democratic values seminar"[13] and to the official teaching materials he showed me, two basic strategies are currently used to educate students about the evils of Kahanism. The education ministry, under the direction of Yitzhak Navon, publishes the teaching aids and oversees both programs in an effort to determine which is more effective. The first strategy consists of a close reading of the Nuremburg Laws of 1935 followed by a class discussion about why such laws are inherently evil. When the instructor is satisfied that a consensus has been reached about the illegitimacy of such a program, he distributes copies of Kahane's official platform which, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, undeniably resembles the Nuremburg Laws in structure and content. The ensuing discussion is designed to show that Kahane's program is inherently evil by drawing the increasingly popular analogy between Kahane and Adolf Hitler. The second strategy is similar,

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into the official Knesset transcript. Since Knesset transcripts are available to the public only after a considerable time lag, I was unable to check their text against the actual speeches made on the floor.

[13] College students are used, he says, because they have just finished their army service and, therefore, probably command even more respect among teenagers than professional teachers. (Nitzan Arad, personal interview, Jerusalem, Israel, July 1985.).

and entails the distribution of various of Kahane's pamphlets and his official platform except that the copies have been altered, basically by interchanging the words "Jew" and "Arab" throughout. Thus, the sheets claim the unique place of the Arab instead of Jewish nation, and that positive action must be taken to counter the evil threat of Jews instead of Arabs, and so forth. The instructor leads a discussion reviewing the options for dealing with such an Arab group in Israel. Normally, the class advocates prompt and decisive responses against such a movement. Afterwards, of course, unaltered copies of Kahane's materials are passed out and the point is driven home that Kahane represents a terrible danger within Israeli society.[14] In both seminar strategies, these specific discussions are followed by lectures and discussions about the value of democracy which are repeated periodically throughout the school year. Even though Kahane does provide a good anti-democratic case study, it is clear that these classes are not solely about the moral superiority of democracy in the abstract. The program's timing and somewhat deceptive use of Kahane's platform suggest that it is a response to the threat of one man, Meir Kahane.

Thus, as this overview of the Israeli establishment's reaction to Meir Kahane clearly demonstrates, Kahane strikes a raw nerve within the Israeli body politic. To the upper echelon of the Israeli power structure, and in fact to the overwhelming majority of the Israeli public at large, Kahane represents an odious intru-

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[14] In addition to the descriptions by Mr. Arad, I was allowed access to these teaching materials.

sion against which unprecedented countermeasures are justified. In fact, the establishment's commitment to preserve democratic freedom in Israel has led them to limit Kahane's enjoyment of those same freedoms. This fact is not just a curious political artifact; it is a compelling indication that Meir Kahane does more than just repulse the Israeli powers that be, he challenges the very political culture upon which the state is based. As we will see below, the backlash against Kahane, as severe as it is, does not reflect paranoia on the part of the establishment. The powerful response to Kahane is only proportional to the looming danger to democracy that he represents.

Chapter III

MEIR KAHANE: PORTRAIT OF AN EXTREMIST

Having examined the reaction Meir Kahane has provoked in Israel, it is logical to ask, "Who is this Meir Kahane and how did his philosophy develop?" Kahane's background, ideology, personality, and finally, his political creed will be discussed in detail in this chapter. An investigation of Kahane's formative years suggests that his Jewish fundamentalism is, in large part, the result of his family background and religious training. Moreover, Kahane's lust for power, demagoguery, and opportunism were all apparent during his adolescence and young adulthood, though he had not yet directed them toward particular goals.

By the time Kahane formed the JDL, his personal character had crystallized. He was, and still is, power hungry, egotistical, opportunistic, but nonetheless, uncompromisingly dedicated to certain religious convictions. Kahane's virulent ambitions and extreme religious beliefs are manifested in his ideology; but the ideology alone does not adequately convey what he stands for. Without demystifying Kahane's complex personal character, his nature as a politician cannot be fully comprehended. Accordingly, a discussion follows of his salient personality traits and obsessions. Kahane's political agenda will then be compared with other rightist political forms to see which pattern, if any, Kahane

fits. In conclusion, I suggest that Kahane belongs within a political tradition that I will refer to as religious totalitarianism. Thus, the fates of religious totalitarians in other environments, such as Khomeini, could be examined to shed light on Kahane's behavior and potential and to suggest possible responses to him.

Background

Meir Kahane's extremism emanates from a parochial worldview shaped in his youth. Although Kahane's tactics and the problems on which he focuses have changed, his basic ideological orientation, religious convictions, and definitive personal characteristics have remained constant. There is no evidence to suggest that his ideas have been altered to accommodate prevailing public opinion. Kahane's convictions have not precluded him from pursuing his insatiable desires to acquire power and publicity. Even before forming the JDL, Kahane displayed the egotism and opportunism which currently dominate his personality. Kahane's family background, education, and young adulthood all foreshadow and explain both of these personality traits.

The deepest roots of Kahane's Jewish chauvinism can be found in his family background. Kahane was born in 1932 in Flatbush, New York, the son and grandson of distinguished rabbinical scholars. Kahane's family was Orthodox, like most residents of Flatbush, and ardently Zionist. His grandfather had been an eminent

rabbi in the Jewish holy city of Tzfat and the Kahanes were one of the few families in Flatbush that spoke Hebrew in their home.[1] Kahane's father was a follower of the nationalist ideals of Revisionist Zionism as espoused by Vladimir (Zev) Jabotinsky. Not surprisingly, Kahane joined the youth group of Revisionism, Betar when he was 14, and remains heavily influenced by Jabotinsky to this day.

In brief, Betar was an activist, maximalist, Zionist youth movement whose basic goal was stipulated in its oath: to devote one's "life to the rebirth of the Jewish State, with a Jewish majority, on both sides of the Jordan."[2] Unlike many other Zionist youth movements, Betar's Zionism was monistic, demanding precedence over any other ideology. In particular, they rejected the socialist ideals ascribed to by many other Zionist movements, derisively labeling these movements "hyphenated Zionisms. Though not primarily religious in orientation, Betar also respected traditional Judaism more than most of the socialist Zionist movements. Betar members were expected to adopt a mode of thought called hadar, which Jabotinsky defined as "beauty, respect, self-esteem, politeness, and faithfulness."[3] Hadar is among the Revisionist concepts which reappear intact in Kahane's own philosophy.

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[1] Personal interview with Mordechai Dolinsky, Jerusalem, Israel, August, 1985.

[2] David Niv, "Betar", Encyclopedia Judaica, Jerusalem: MacMillan, 1971, vol.4, p.714.

[3] Ibid.

Betar was organized in a military fashion, and members were expected to obey their superiors without question. Such obedience required significant devotion, as some young men were ordered to forego college in order to make aliyah immediately. Kahane's Betar commander was Mordechai Dolinsky, also a co-founder of the JDL in 1968.[4] According to Dolinsky, Kahane exhibited arrogance and hunger for power even in his youth and was inspired, then as now, primarily by his own egoism. Dolinsky expelled Kahane from Betar when he demanded, at the age of 17, to be named New York City commander.[5] Undoubtedly the experience of being cast out hardened Kahane, arousing an arrogant defiance which he soon manifested.

Expelled from Betar, Kahane turned to Bnai Akiva, a religious Zionist youth movement. Kahane was at odds even with them for, while the movement was not overtly socialist, when Bnai Akiva members made aliyah, they were sent to kibbutzim, socialist agricultural collectives. Both Dolinsky and Pesah Schindler, a peer of Kahane's in Bnai Akiva, claim that Kahane tried to force religious reform upon the movement, particularly in its immigration program. Kahane believed that the movement should also send young men to study in yeshivot (religious schools). Moreover, Kahane advocated stricter adherence to religious law in more mundane matters, such as his opposition to sexually mixed dancing at social events. His puritanical streak proved to be irreconcilable

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[4] Meir Kahane, The Story of the Jewish Defense League Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Co. 1975, p.91.

[5] Personal interview with Mordechai Dolinsky.

with the movement, and Kahane, not being one to compromise his principles or swallow his pride, struck out on his own, at the age of 18, and attempted to head up his own youth movement.[6]

In a ploy that displayed a lust for power that he still possesses, Kahane tried to usurp control of the Betar movement and, in particular, of the summer camp which accounted for the bulk of its income. It was in this venture that Kahane's virulent personal ambition first overwhelmed accepted rules of fair play. He wrote letters to the parents of all Betar members, falsely informing them that the old camp was no longer functioning, but that the summer session would not be cancelled since Meir Kahane had personally assumed control over the camp. Seeking financial backing, Kahane appeared at the Jewish Agency Youth Department posing as the new head of Betar, and he requested the funds that were budgeted for them. Whether or not Kahane's ploy was successful is uncertain. Although Dolinsky cannot prove that Kahane ever received the money, he is certain that the legitimate leadership of Betar did not. In the end, Kahane's slyly engineered coup attempt ended in failure when the legitimate Betar leadership pressured Kahane into renouncing his position.[7]

In addition to his ambition, Kahane's mature personality is characterized by his devout religiosity. Kahane's religious training is the most obvious source of his current Jewish fundamentalism and of his stress on Jewish might and pride. After

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[6] Personal interview with Pesach Schindler, Jerusalem Israel, July 1985.

[7] Personal interview with Mordechai Dolinsky.

graduating from Yeshiva High School in 1953, where he had been captain of the debating team, Kahane attended the Mirrer yeshiva in New York from 1953-1957. Mirrer was distinguished by the inclusion of the Bible in its curriculum instead of the exclusive study of Talmud. Kahane was ordained as a rabbi by Mirrer in 1957, and his present ideology in part reflects the focus of his training there. The Bible, much more so than the Talmud, recounts and glorifies the Jewish conquest of the Land of Israel beginning with the leadership of Joshua. The brutality of the conquest and the subsequent monarchy are presented without apology; in fact, God sanctioned it. Furthermore, as Kahane is quick to point out, the form of Jewish sovereignty in the Bible was a monarchy, a fact which contributes to Kahane's stated disrespect for democracy as the political system in Israel. As Kahane said in a recent interview:

> If I had the power I would create in Israel a Torah
> society. If any Orthodox rabbi would say otherwise
> then he would not be a very good Jew. God did not
> make democracy. God never said you should have a vote
> every four years on whether one should keep the Sab-
> bath. Democracy is for people who don't have the
> truth. Therefore, if there is no absolute truth, who
> are you to say, who am I to say? But Judaism is based
> on the immutable fact that God came at Sinai and gave
> us the truth. . . . In that Torah he said you shall
> create a government which will implement these laws
> and gave punishments for people that don't follow the
> laws.[8]

Still it is impossible to claim that Kahane's ideas about the sanctity of the Land of Israel and democracy are the direct result of his choice of yeshiva, since, presumably, all Orthodox rabbis are well versed in Bible as well as Talmud. Perhaps the ultimate

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[8] Kahane, interview with Ben Lynfield, Cambridge, MA, May 1985.

source of his extremist, literal interpretation of Judaism lies in the combination of Mirrer's focus and his personality. In all that he does, Kahane takes his ideas to their logical extreme, and his conception of how Judaism should be applied in the modern world is a sterling example of that tendency. Thus, though the Mirrer yeshiva's biblical orientation is not the only factor shaping Kahane's religious views, it could only have contributed to them.

Upon receiving his ordination, Kahane pursued his secular education, earning a law degree from New York Law School and a Master's degree in international law from New York University. Unable to practice law because he never passed the bar exam[9], he turned instead to the rabbinate and embarked on an inauspicious series of failures. After he lost his job at a synagogue on Howard Beach in Queens because he exhorted congregants to be more religiously observant, he briefly attempted to make aliyah in 1963, but returned shortly thereafter.[10] In the mid 1960's Kahane endeavored to establish himself as a recognized expert in international affairs and intelligence. While living in New York, he opened Consultants Research Associates with defense expert

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[9] Kahane told me that he never took the exam. Michael Kaufman reported in the New York Times on January 24, 1971, that he failed the exam.

[10] According to Dolinsky, Kahane tried to practice as a rabbi in Israel, but his personal demeanor and speaking style irritated people. He soon became frustrated and had trouble speaking at all (he has always had a stuttering problem). Finally, he returned to America. Kahane's version of the story, as reported in the New York Times on January 24, 1971, is that he returned because he was frustrated with the religious factionalism in Israel.

Joseph Churba, hoping to attract government research contracts. They rented a mailing address at 509 Fifth Avenue, hoping to lend legitimacy and prestige to their organization. As Kahane put it, "This was a cover to give us credentials and make us impressive."[11] During this time Kahane apparently led a double life, posing as a non-Jew, Michael King, during the week, and returning home to his wife and children, who knew him only as Meir Kahane, on the weekends. In fact, rumors persist that Kahane was involved with a non-Jewish mistress named Estelle Evans, who subsequently committed suicide.[12] These allegations are unverified, and Kahane refuses to comment on them.[13] Regardless of the veracity of this allegation, the significant fact is that Kahane, an Orthodox Jew, apparently shed his external manifestations of Judaism at least temporarily. Whether or not this casts aspersions on his sincerity as an Orthodox Jew today is still an open question. He claims that he lived faithfully according to Jewish law during this time, keeping the Sabbath, the dietary laws, and so on, and there is no reason why that could not be so. Moreover, Kahane makes no attempt to deny the incident.

Consultants Research Associates had limited success, but that period in Kahane's life was personally significant. It was during this time that Kahane claims he infiltrated the John Birch Society under contract with the FBI, an experience he cites as pivotal in

[11] New York Times January 24, 1971, p.51.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Meir Kahane, personal interview, Lakewood, N.J. March 1985.

[14] See Playboy October 1972, p.78. Kaufman's New York Times

his development.[14] Kahane's consuming fear of anti-semitism and conviction that Jews must react immediately were both shaped, he says, by his exposure to the Birchers.[15]

Kahane was struck by the fact that the Birchers' brand of extremism drew members from ostensibly respectable segments of society, not just from the lunatic fringe. As a result, Kahane became convinced of the pervasiveness of anti-semitism in America and the imminence of a new Holocaust. As he commented to Playboy Magazine in 1972:

> There is no question that America's differences from
> the Weimar Republic were what kept this country from
> going down the same road to Fascism in the Thirties.
> But that experience strained our democratic structures
> to a dangerous degree; don't come to me and say it
> can't happen here. . . . In the Thirties, millions of
> people were ready to follow anti-Semitic rabble rous-
> ers like Father Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith and
> Huey Long who called themselves populists. . . . And
> that tradition is far from dead. George Wallace has
> the same kind of charisma that Huey Long had.[16]

By the mid 1970's, Kahane's fear had evolved to a point that he published propaganda explicitly warning that a Holocaust was forthcoming in America and urging Jews to move to Israel as the only viable escape from extermination. Kahane says that his experience with the John Birch Society convinced him that:

> Demagogues, haters, and fascists are to be found in
> the United States in abundance. . . . Consider their
> recent growth and their capacity to grow tremendously
> in an era of violence, frustration, anger, bitterness,
> fear, and hate. These are the elements that are pres-
> ent in American society today, and these are the

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article on January 24, 1971 suggests however, that Kahane fabricated all of his ties with the intelligence community.

[15] "An Interview with Meir Kahane", Playboy, October, 1972, p.78.

[16] Playboy, pp.76-78.

things upon which the haters feed. . . . . They speak
openly of gas chambers and of eliminating Jews. . . .
Why should we gamble once again? What happened before
can happen again, and indeed, is beginning to happen
already. The answer -- the urgent answer -- is to
evacuate the American Jew and bring him home.[17]

Ultimately, both Kahane's stint with Consultants Research Associates and his undercover career ended, as he shifted his attention to the then intensifying Vietnam war. Kahane believed that Jews had a special interest in supporting American involvement in the war. Consequently, he formed the "Fourth of July" movement in 1966 to promote the war on college campuses, and he co-authored a book with Churba in 1967 called The Jewish Stake in Vietnam.[18] The book's argument for Jewish support of the war was three-fold: first, that if the United States reneged on her commitment to Vietnam she would do the same if Israel was threatened; second, that Communism is inherently anti-Jewish; and third, that gentiles should not be led to believe that Jews were unpatriotic Americans. This book marked the last time that Kahane would even suggest that Jews alter their thoughts or deeds in reaction to gentile attitudes. Within one year, Kahane had permanently adopted a radical "us versus them" view of Jewish-gentile relations.

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[17] Meir Kahane, Listen World Listen Jew, p.136.

[18] The book lists Churba, Kahane, and Michael King as authors. When asked why his name appeared twice, Kahane replied, "I really don't know. I suppose I wanted those who knew me by either of the names to know I had written it." (New York Times January 24, 1971, p.51.)

Shortly thereafter, Kahane accepted a position as an associate editor of the New York's right-wing weekly, The Jewish Press. It was from this post that Kahane conceived of and launched the Jewish Defense League. The Jewish Press, the most widely circulated Jewish weekly printed in English, provided him with a forum in which to expound his views, and instant publicity for the JDL within Jewish circles.

By the time Kahane founded the JDL in 1968 at the age of 36, his ideology and personal character had been molded by the formative experiences recounted above. In particular, his family background, his religious training, and his interaction with the John Birch Society all contributed to his ideas for Jewish action and faith. Whatever ideological inconsistencies he exhibited as a young man, such as when he lived as Michael King, vanished by 1968. In fact, the ideological orientation implicit in the very act of creating a Jewish Defense League suggests that his present ideal of Jewish exclusivity and strength was already fully developed before 1968. Since then, his ambition has compelled him to constantly shift strategies, move to Israel, and focus on new issues. Still, his convictions, especially religious convictions, have remained the same or even intensified over the past 18 years.

Ideology

Kahane's ideological consistency allows us to examine his doctrines in static form, with only passing reference to its evo-

lution. Although Kahane has formally outlined his ideology in several of his books, because of his dynamic political style, a full-fledged analysis of his worldview requires a personal familiarity with the man. In order to obtain a complete picture of Kahane, I attended JDL meetings and Kach rallies, and conducted many interviews with Kahane, his followers, and students of his movements. It was also instructive to listen to Kahane's speeches before a variety of American and Israeli audiences.

In presenting his own system of beliefs, Kahane rarely mentions any other Jewish leaders, with the exception of Jabotinsky. Kahane is quick to stress his reliance upon Jabotinsky, whom he refers to as "legendary,...the spiritual father of the Jewish revolutionary fighting forces Irgun and Sternists, and a visionary of a Jewish state when others shrank from the concept."[19] Kahane considers himself to be the legitimate heir to the leadership of the Revisionist tradition.[20] His commitment to Jabotinsky's conception of Zionism is not entirely disingenuous, but Kahane also recognizes the practical political value of invoking Jabotinsky's name and symbolism among the nationalist constituency to whom he is trying to appeal. Today, however, he plays down these influences, attempting to portray himself as an original, courageous, and even prophetic thinker.[21]

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[19] Meir Kahane, Never Again, p. 133.

[20] Kahane views his right to this position to be especially valid since the Camp David Accords, which Kahane considers to be a betrayal of Revisionism by Menachem Begin. For Kahane, no real disciple of Jabotinsky, as Begin had been, would ever relinquish land from Jewish sovereignty.

[21] Ehud Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: the Emergence of Jewish

The ideology which Kahane claims as his own is centered around the fundamental axiom that the Jewish people is a superior one, chosen by God.

> The Jewish people is a unique, distinct and separate
> people, divinely chosen at Sinai, a religio-nation,
> transcending the foolishness and danger of shallow
> secular nationalism that merely divides without rais-
> ing up. It is a chosen people . . . whose national-
> ism and religion are identical and indivisible. . . .
> It is a people that was given a sacred law, the Torah,
> and an immutable destiny to live and uphold the Torah
> so as to serve as a light unto the nations. The
> observance of the mitzvot (divine commandments -S.L.)
> is the sole reason for Jewish chosenness and Jewish
> existence. . . . All that happened, happens, and will
> happen goes according to a divine plan at the center
> of which stands the Jewish people.[22]

Kahane takes this highly exclusivist stance one step further. The Jewish people's unique status entitles them to their own sys- tem of normative behavior, unfettered by any universalist code or norms. As Kahane puts it, "We are not like other people, and the norms and realities of the world are not for us."[23] Given what Kahane perceives as a chronic hostility on the part of the gentile world toward Jews, Jews must pursue their collective self-interest and path toward redemption without any regard to the futile task of ameliorating gentile hatred. "Never again can we allow Jews to be killed by the goyim. It is our responsibility. I would rather have a Jewish state that is hated by the whole world than an Aus-

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Quasi-Fascism", Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 1985, p. 15. Sprinzak claims that Kahane admitted to him that he was influ- enced by Israel Eldad, a former member of the Irgun and author of the ultra-nationalist book, The Jewish Revolution (NY: Shengold publishing, 1971.)

[22] Meir Kahane, Listen World, Listen Jew, p. 16.

[23] Meir Kahane, Listen World, Listen Jew, p. 142.

chwitz that is loved by it."[24]. Thus, the Jews' first and only responsibility is to his fellow Jew. Kahane unabashedly displays this chauvinism in the simple suggestion that, "The major question for Jews in assessing any question is: is it good for Jews?"[25]. As one would expect, Kahane also places a higher value on Jewish lives than any others. While discussing the Lebanon War, he said, "The life of one Jewish soldier is worth more than all the Lebanese in Lebanon."[26]

Kahane presents a five-pronged ideology which follows logically from the above premise of Jewish chauvinism. Not surprisingly, the first component is Ahavat Yisroel or love of Jewry. To Kahane, this means that a Jew must make the welfare of his fellow Jews his highest priority. Jews must be willing to sacrifice, to abandon their comforts and security, as long as there is a Jew in need. "We must be prepared to give our efforts; we must be prepared to give our moneys; and, if need be, we must be prepared to give our lives for the Jewish people."[27] In fact, Kahane maintains that Jewish organizations whose financial resources aid the community at large, including non-Jews, lack Ahavat Yisroel. For example, Jewish contributions to United Way which serve gentile communities, are a misuse of funds. "There are Jewish poor; there is Jewish economic and social suffering. These must take prece-

[24] Meir Kahane, public speech, Brookline MA. January 1985.

[25] Meir Kahane, The Story of the JDL, p.74.

[26] Meir Kahane, public speech, Boston MA, March 1985.

[27] Meir Kahane, The Story of the JDL, p.76.

[28] Ibid. p.78

dence."[28]

Kahane carries Jewish ethnocentrism to an extreme, calling for a reactionary insularity by Jews. If a single Jew is threatened by a situation, that situation immediately becomes a specifically Jewish problem. Thus, affirmative action and quotas are significant only because Jewish students and workers stand to be hurt by them. As such, Kahane says they constitute deliberate anti-semitism and require vigorous opposition. Jewish responsibility to maintain such an attitude is justified by the "fact" that non-Jews never help Jews so Jews must help themselves.

Kahane often cites the Holocaust as the prime example of Jews lacking Ahavat Yisroel. Kahane's interpretation of history is that the United States could certainly have done more to save European Jewry. This, by itself, neither surprises nor upsets Kahane; it is precisely what he says Jews should expect from gentiles. What does horrify Kahane is that American Jewry acquiesced in America's indifference to Jewish extermination. Jewish leaders reacted to Roosevelt's refusal to bomb rail lines leading to Auschwitz and his rejection of shiploads of Jewish refugees

> only with the usual honest and sincere protests which
> lacked substance and strength. . . . There was no
> call for five million American Jews to take to the
> streets, no call for sit-ins and civil disobedience,
> no mass march of rabbis to the jails. . . . The
> refusal to abandon the mantle of respectability, even
> when it came to saving Jewish lives, was the hallmark
> of a failure to understand fully the real meaning of
> Ahavat Yisroel[29]

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[29] Kahane, The Story of the JDL, p.77.

Given the broad interpretation Kahane has of Ahavat Yisroel, the other four categories in his ideology are almost redundant. Nevertheless, he includes them for two reasons. First, by giving his ideology five sections, he gives the impression of greater ideological depth. Even if that depth is only illusory, it appeals to potential members.[30] Second, the actual titles of the four other categories are powerful words which have a certain appeal in and of themselves. Hadar, for example, is a word used by Jabotinsky, and Barzel, being the Hebrew word for iron, conjures up feelings of power. Thus, even though Ahavat Yisroel is so comprehensive, Kahane insists on the five separate principles which constitute his ideology.

The second principle he lists is one which he lifts directly from Jabotinsky's Revisionism: Hadar, or Jewish dignity and pride. Hadar was originally a reaction to anti-semitism which was seen by Jabotinsky as an attempt to degrade Jews and instill self-hatred. European Jews had their self-esteem stripped from them by brutal prejudice. Similarly, argues Kahane, American Jews lack pride, though for them this is primarily a result of ignorance and apathy. He believes that the beauty of Judaism, its rich heritage, its abundance of heroes, and its miraculous survival in the face of persecution would instill Jewish pride in youth if only they

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[30] This fact was obvious at the first meeting of the American branch of Kach in Brookline, MA on February 3, 1985. The self-appointed leader of the movement, Ken Sidman, stressed the Kach is a philosophical and ideological movement. The first order of business, in fact, was to set up an "Ideology Committee" which was charged with the duty of formulating positions on issues in accordance with the thought and values represented by Rabbi Kahane.

were exposed to it properly. One of the principal goals of the
JDL was to revitalize the Jewish pride of American youth. Kahane
uses lofty language to glorify the concept and his application of
it:

> Hadar is translated into the relationship between the
> Jewish Defense League member and his leadership and
> philosophy. The Jewish Defense League represents an
> ideal and a philosophy and, therefore, whether it be
> an office or an officer of the organization, respect
> must be accorded to the status and to the ideals which
> these represent. . . . Be proud that you are in the
> vanguard and let the words "Jewish Defense League" be
> part of the comfort and consolation that comes from
> knowing that one's life was put to holy purpose.[31]

Thus, we can see how Kahane attempts to lend legitimacy to his
movement by invoking the power of a Revisionist symbol. The
attempted aggrandizement of the JDL is blatant, but Kahane
believes that he is performing a moral service by providing a
vigorous Jewish organization for Jewish youth.

The third of Kahane's stated principles is more in keeping with
the image his organization ultimately assumed, namely Barzel or
Iron. "Barzel is a principal ingredient of the Jewish Defense
League's ideology, in creating a physically strong, a fearless and
a courageous Jew who fights back. We are changing an image, an
image born of two thousand years in the Galut (exile -- S.L.), an
image that must be buried because it has buried us."[32] Not sur-
prisingly, Kahane legitimates the concept of Barzel by pointing to
the military feats of Israel, a nation of Jews that has proven its

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[31] Kahane, Story of the JDL, pp.84-85.

[32] Ibid. p.86. It is interesting to note that here Kahane is
playing off of negative anti-semitic stereotypes. On some
level, he believes that many Jews fit the derogatory image of
Jews as weak and cowardly.

ability to fight when the need arises. Furthermore, Barzel is justified as an authentic Jewish principle with its roots in the Bible. Moses smiting the Egyptian taskmaster, Joshua conquering the Land of Israel, David killing Goliath, the military victories of the monarchy, the Maccabees revolting against Antiochus: these to Kahane are the heroic acts of Jewish history and manifestations of Barzel. This Jewish tradition lives on in the form of Jewish fighters in the Warsaw ghetto, Begin's Irgun, the Israel Defense Forces, and finally Meir Kahane's JDL and Kach. Recognizing the controversial nature of this conception of Judaism, Kahane writes, "If . . . to teach the Jew to strike back, to be strong, to retaliate -- if to put an end to the concept that Jewish blood is cheap -- if this is un-Jewish, then surely the State of Israel remains the most un-Jewish of all states."[33]

Kahane's fourth principle, Mishmaat Yisroel, or Jewish discipline, was a means to ensure that the chain of command within his movement, and his total control, would not be challenged. His descriptions of Mishmaat Yisroel stress the need for unquestioned obedience to facilitate prompt mobilization against anti-semites. This principle is reminiscent of the desire for power that Kahane has exhibited since his youth.

Finally, there is Bitachon, or faith in the indestructibility of the Jewish people.[34] Kahane is filled with optimism for the Jewish people in general and the JDL in particular, an optimism which grows from the belief that the Jews are chosen by God, and

[33] Ibid. pp.87-88.

[34] Literally, Bitachon means security or defense.

are therefore predestined to survive.

Thus, the philosophy of Meir Kahane finishes basically where it began -- with exaggerated exclusivity for Jews and a paranoid stance toward every non-Jew. Even so, neither these ideas nor Kahane's development of them are surprising in light of his development traced earlier. The seeds of radicalism and parochialism were generously nourished.

Still, there is far more to Meir Kahane than what falls under the rubric of "ideology". One critical trait that is obvious to any casual observer is his aggressive, even violent, nature. His temper is explosive, and he often works himself into fits of rage while repeating stories from his repertoire of anti-semitic atrocities. Occasionally, he becomes so upset during his speeches that he degenerates into violent, bloodthirsty rhetoric. For example, in one speech, while discussing the seige of Beirut, Kahane screamed:

> We had them! We had them! We had them! Arafat, Habash, Fawatmeh, and all those other "Jookeem" (Hebrew for "cockroaches" -- S.L.). That was the moment to crush them -- once and for all![35]

It is not surprising that Kahane has advocated, inspired, and participated in numerous acts of violence over the years. Kahane's history includes beatings of anti-semites, prison terms for possession and use of guns and explosives, seminars training youths how to set bombs, physical assaults on Soviet diplomats, counter-terrorist acts against Arabs in Europe and America, and numerous violent demonstrations. Kahane has proven that he is

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[35] Meir Kahane, public speech, Brookline MA, January 1985.

willing to act on his own violent rhetoric. Not only does he carry out his threats, but he actually values the violence itself. At the very least, "Jewish violence to protect Jewish interests is never bad."[36] While no psychoanalytic material based on in-depth interviews has been published about Kahane, it is possible that his violent characteristics are indicative of neuroses which shape his personality and worldview.

In a similar vein, Kahane gives signs of sexual anxiety. From his youth when he objected to mixed sex socializing, Kahane has focused on sexual issues. His speeches and writings are so laden with graphic sexual description, innuendo, and imagery that they have been characterized as "blunt, brutal, and highly offensive."[37] In one of his pamphlets urging Jewish girls not to date outside the faith, Kahane writes, "The best way of screwing the Jewish nation is to screw a Jewish girl and broadcast the fact as widely as possible."[38] Kahane almost invariably recounts the killing or rape of Jews during speeches, successfully inciting his audience. His descriptions are ordinarily quite explicit. While telling how a young Israeli soldier hitchhiking home from his base was killed by Arabs, Kahane says, "then they, the filthy dogs, cut off his penis and stuck it in his mouth, leaving him to bleed to death."[39] He is even more explicit when describing Arab rapes of

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[36] Meir Kahane, The Story of the JDL, Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Co. 1975, p.142. Emphasis his.

[37] Sprinzak p.33.

[38] Meir Kahane, undated leaflet.

[39] Meir Kahane, public speech, Jerusalem, Israel, July 3, 1985.

Jewish girls.   Suffice it to say that nothing, not even Arab
terrorism, visibly angers Kahane as much as sex between Jewish
women and Arab men, whether in the form of rape or marital interc-
ourse.   He has allegedly gone so far as to abduct Jewish women who
are unhappily married to Arabs and cannot obtain divorces.[40]
Kahane also apparently abducts the children of these intermar-
riages and places them in Orthodox homes or yeshivot.   Paradoxi-
cally, these children are Jewish according to Jewish law since
their mothers are Jewish but Moslems according to Israeli civil
law (a situation which Kahane finds unconscionable).   When con-
fronted by authorities, Kahane reportedly said that he would
"rather die" than return these Jewish children to be brought up as
Arabs.[41]

Kahane's emphasis on sexual issues is more than mere demagog-
uery designed to rile his audiences.   Not only does he act against
intermarriages, he has also proposed legislation to outlaw sexual
relations between Jews and non-Jews in Israel.   Using the imagery
of blood defilement of the Jewish nation, Kahane's proposals are
ominously reminiscent of the Nuremburg Laws, a fact which has been
exploited by the Ministry of Education in the democratic value
seminars described in chapter two.[42]   Specifically, he calls for

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[40] Under Israeli civil law these marriages would have to be per-
formed by Moslem clergy since there are no civil marriages in
Israel and no intermarriages performed by Jewish clergy. Under
the Moslem law which governs these marriages, the granting of
divorces is the husband's right.

[41] Personal interview with Barbara Ginzberg, a full-time member of
Kahane's staff, Jerusalem, July 1985.

[42] It is unlikely that Kahane was unaware of the similarity when
he published his platform, and he may have deliberately mir-

"non-citizen" status for all non-Jews in Israel and prohibitions against sex between Jews and non-Jews with both offending parties serving in jail for five years.[43] Any non-Jew who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Jewish state or who would not accept the non-citizen status would be expelled. Kahane claims that all of these proposals are consistent with halacha (Jewish law). Regardless of its source of legitimacy, Kahane's proposals are racist in content and reflect a sexually obsessive personality.

Aside from Kahane's sexual fixation and xenophobia, he has also exhibited evidence of megalomania. Kahane perceives himself as the paradigmatic Jew, the only one acting according to God's will. When asked if he is playing a significant role in God's plan for the Jews, he answered, "I am. But not because God chose me. God wants every Jew to do what I'm doing."[44] In particular, Kahane believes that he alone has the ability and foresight to save Jewry from all the dire threats it faces: anti-semitism, assimilation, apathy, Soviet oppression, Arab terrorism, and intermarriage. As leader of the JDL and of Kach, Kahane has demanded exclusive control over the movements, a monopoly over their public relations, and sole authorship of any written materials. He claims personal responsibility for any achievements of his groups, and he exaggerates the scope of those achievements. For instance, by virtue of his leadership of the JDL, he takes

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rored the Nuremburg Laws for shock value.

[43] Meir Kahane, interview with Ben Lynfield. Also, Kach Party, Undated pamphlet.

[44] Meir Kahane, interview with Ben Lynfield.

credit for the freedom of 100,000 Soviet Jews released in the early 1970's.[45] Probably in an effort to reinforce his self-image, Kahane surrounds himself with individuals who idolize him.[46] By thriving on such treatment, Kahane repulses potential supporters who agree with him and would be capable of sharing leadership responsibility, but cannot stand the hero worship Kahane demands.[47] The result is the formalized distance between the leader and followers in his movement which continually reinforces Kahane's inflated self-image.

Perhaps as a result either of his treatment by his followers or the media attention he has received over the years, Kahane's self-importance has continued to grow. For instance, he ludicrously exaggerates his own personal influence in Israel:

> It is unbelievable what the Arab thinks when he hears the name "Kahane". Three years ago I was serving in the army in Ramallah. The Arabs there rioted, and they sent me to Ramallah to put down the riot. And let me tell you, as soon as the Arabs heard that Kahane was in Ramallah -- there was no riot.[48]

In the context of religious Judaism, in fact, he has come to see himself as the possessor of the formula for bringing the Messiah. Kahane sees the state of Israel as the final test for Jews before

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[45] Meir Kahane, public speech, Boston, March 1985.

[46] This is perhaps the single most obvious trait shared by his close followers and staff. Direct quotes from Kahane (or "The Rabbi" as he is affectionately called) are used to settle disputes in the same way that biblical verses are often quoted. The same core of 20-30 followers can also be found at all of Kahane's speeches and carry him to the podium and, later, back to his car on their shoulders.

[47] Interview with Mordechai Dolinsky.

[48] Meir Kahane, public speech, Brookline, January 1985.

the coming of the Messiah.

> The Talmud says that the . . . Messiah and the final
> days will come in one of two ways, if we deserve it,
> nicely and swiftly and instantly, and if we don't,
> then first with terrible ways. It would appear to me
> that it is possible that God gave us this State as a
> final grace period, hoping that we would go back to
> him and then he would bring the Messiah, beautifully
> and instantly.[49]

Kahane is not alone in harboring messianic hopes nor is he
alone in his conviction that the redemption is imminent; many
religious Zionists believe that the liberation of Judaea and Sama-
ria in 1967 was a step toward redemption. Kahane is unique, how-
ever, in his formula for bringing the Messiah in this generation.
Israel merely has to annex all territory which it controls
(including southern Lebanon since it, too, was within the biblical
boundaries of Israel), evict all enemies of the Jews from the
state of Israel, and destroy the mosques on the Temple Mount.
"Had we only acted without considering the gentile reaction, with-
out fear of what he may say or do, the Messiah would have come
right through the open door and brought us redemption."[50] Thus, in
such claims, Kahane has gone to the limit of self-aggrandizement
in suggesting that his proposals will lead the Jewish nation to
its ultimate redemption.

With these messianic promises, we have reached the culmination
of the unique and fanatical worldview of Meir Kahane. Even its
most remarkable facets are not entirely unexpected in light of the
background and personality described above. Kahane has been

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[49] Meir Kahane, Interview with Ben Lynfield,

[50] Meir Kahane, _Al Haemunah Vehageula_ p.59. Quoted in Sprinzak,
p.18.

criticized over the years for being a completely self-interested Jewish activist at large, flitting from one issue and country to another. There is, however, every reason to believe that he is sincere at least about his convictions about Judaism and Jewish power. In fact, once his worldview is understood, both in thrust and origin, his actions become not only comprehensible but also predictable. Kahane's adult career is merely the natural application of his aggressive and chauvinistic brand of Judaism, combined with his personal obsessions and phobias, to the environment around him.

The fact that Kahane has has remained committed to his convictions for the past 18 years sets him apart from many other demagogic extremists who, being dependent on publicity to get their movements off the ground, often change their stances on issues in an effort to exploit shifts in public opinion. Benito Mussolini, as described by Denis Mack Smith, epitomized just such fluidity of conviction.[51] Smith portrays Mussolini as a blatant publicity seeker, pursuing hero-worship from the Italians. Mussolini was willing to embrace any doctrine which would carry him to power. In 1920, he recognized the prevailing leftist sentiment in Italy, and referred to himself as a socialist.[52] By 1921, when he first entered parliament, "judging that Italian politics were likely to move further towards the right, he . . . . took his seat on the extreme right of the amphitheatre."[53] As Mussolini admit-

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[51] Denis Mack Smith, Mussolini: A Biography, NY: Random House, 1982.

[52] Ibid. p.40.

ted in private, "fascism was not a system of immutable beliefs but a path to political power."[54] Such unscrupulous behavior is what we have come to expect from demagogues whose primary drive is for their own power.

At first glance, Meir Kahane appears to be just such an unprincipled power-seeker. He aggrandizes himself, exaggerates the impact of his deeds, and surrounds himself with individuals who worship him -- all Mussolini-like characteristics. His lust for publicity is obvious from his flashy and skilled use of the media. Just as obvious is his desire for power, an ambition to which he readily admits. Perhaps it is not surprising then, that he has been called a fascist, not only by his political denigrators, but by scholars as well. Whatever else may be said about Kahane, it is important to bear in mind that he is not entirely unprincipled, but, in fact, committed to the ideals discussed above.

Political Typology

Before examining the fate of Kahane's program in action, it would be instructive to place him on the comparative political spectrum. By determining what type of political phenomenon Kahane represents, similar groups in other geographic or chronological environments can be used to help understand Kahane. Similarly, our understanding of this type of movement is deepened by a systematic examination of characteristics of Kach and JDL such as

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[53] Ibid. p.44.

[54] Ibid. p.46.

their bases of support, relationship with the existing elites, and political tactics. As such, Kahane must be assigned the proper niche on the political spectrum since an incorrect placement would distort both our vision of Kahane's movements and of these related groups.

Kahane's avowed opponents within the political mainstream, including the Israeli and American Jewish press, have not hesitated to assign Kahane a political label, usually "fascist" or even "Nazi". These labels are not chosen for their scholarly accuracy, but rather for their historical reverberations. They are not analytic categories but terms of abuse. As such, they are not germane to our present analysis. What is important is that many scholars who have applied a label to Kahane have also seen him as some form of fascist. Ehud Sprinzak, a political scientist at Hebrew University is one scholar who attempts to formally defend this political label for Kahane. In a recent article, Sprinzak calls Kahane a "quasi-fascist", a designation which he defends at length.[55] Quasi-fascism is a concept which, of course, can only be defined in relation to fascism itself. Sprinzak defines fascism as political behavior involving extreme nationalism and violence and based upon a philosophy that totally rejects democracy as a political regime and as a system of political norms. Fascist movements can also be identified, continues Sprinzak, by their craving of a new order based on vitality, the belief that their leaders are true representatives of the monolithic

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[55] Sprinzak pp. 23-37.

state, and their opposition to the values of liberalism, constitu-
tionalism, and parliamentarism.[56] Furthermore, fascists histori-
cally "cherished their leaders to the point of personality cult; .
. . they applied aggressive propaganda methods in order to
attract certain political supporters; and they dehumanized their
enemies in order to legitimate their later expulsion or elimina-
tion."[57] Sprinzak goes on to characterize the form fascist move-
ments tend to take upon in seizing power, criteria which are
irrelevant to an analysis of Kach at present.

For Sprinzak, quasi-fascist movements closely resemble fascist
ones in simplifying complex issues, dehumanizing enemies, and by
playing on chauvinism, nationalism, and anti-alien sentiment.[58]
Quasi-fascist leaders, like fascist ones, are fully devoted to
their cause.[59] In fact, for Sprinzak, the single feature distin-
guishing fascism from quasi-fascism is that fascist groups reject
democracy. According to Sprinzak, "Kach fits the quasi-fascist
model. It follows the quasi-fascist evolutionary pattern in that
. . . it has not yet reached full fascism, signified by a total
rejection of the democratic order."[60] The problem with Sprinzak's
categorization of Kach is that Kahane would indeed reject the
democratic order if he had the power to do so. In effect, Sprin-
zak is confusing Kahane's capabilities with his intentions. Even

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[56] This definition is closely paraphrased from Sprinzak, p.24.

[57] Sprinzak, p.24.

[58] Sprinzak, p.25.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Sprinzak, p.26.

Hitler, who certainly could not be called a quasi-fascist, was forced to play the game of democracy at first. Thus, by Sprinzak's model, Kahane should rightfully be called a fascist. It seems, then, that the most rigorous attempt at scholarly definition of Kahane arrives at the same fascist label as his most tendentious denigrators.

Paul Wilkinson, in The New Fascists, also refers to Kahane as a fascist in a scholarly context. In documenting the rise of fascist movements worldwide, Wilkinson writes:

> The reemergence of fascist movements and intensification of fascist violence are . . . not confined to a mere handful of European and Latin American countries. One of the most astonishing developments has been the growth of a fascist fringe within Israel (in the form of -- S.L.) a tiny extremist party, Kach . . . Of course, the overwhelming majority of Israelis reject Kach's ideas and regard both Kach and Rabbi Kahane, its founder, as lunatics. But this cannot disguise the truth that . . . no culture or political system is immune from the dangers of the fascist mentality, not even the people who have suffered most from the barbarity of fascism.[61]

Wilkinson, like Sprinzak, has a relatively broad definition of fascism, specifying only that fascists oppose democracy, wish to revive the national spirit, approve of violence, desire a strong leader, and propose racist actions such as repatriation or deportation.[62] In fact, the utility of such definitions of fascism are compromised because they are so inclusive, embracing nearly any right-wing phenomenon regardless of its religious orientation, economic program, conception of social structure, or stance on a

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[61] Paul Wilkinson, The New Fascists, London: Grant McIntyre Ltd. 1981, p.145.

[62] Wilkinson, p.9.

plethora of other crucial policy variables. Kahane may, in fact, be a fascist, but in order to come to this conclusion, we must see how he differs from other rightist political types.

A more precise definition is offered by Stanley Payne in his book Fascism. Payne's more exacting list of criteria of right-wing political forms enable us to see which, if any, apply to Meir Kahane. Payne calls upon an impressive array of historical illustrations to support his differentiation of fascism from two other authoritarian nationalist types: radical rightism and conservative authoritarianism. According to Payne, genuine fascism consists of three major components: fascist negations, its ideology and goals, and its style.[63] He lists anti-liberalism[64], anti-communism, and anti-conservatism as the basic fascist negations. For ideology and goals, Payne specifies the creation of a non-traditional, nationalist, authoritarian state; an integrated, multi-class economic structure; radical imperialism; and espousal of an idealist, voluntarist creed as part of a new secular culture. Stylistically, according to Payne, fascist movements emphasize the role of the charismatic leader, youth, masculinity, virility, violence, and political choreography.

Conservative authoritarians, though they share "some of the public esthetics, choreography, and external trappings of fascism,"[65] are more moderate than fascists. In particular, they are

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[63] The ensuing definition is closely paraphrased from Stanley Payne, Fascism: Comparison and Definition, Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980, pp. 7-14.

[64] By this he means liberal democracy.

[65] Payne, p. 20.

less imperialistic, wish to preserve the status quo among social groups and of the political system, temper their elitism, and base their appeal on more traditional values than the fascists, such as religion.[66]

Radical rightists, on the other hand, want to transform the entire political system, glorify their leaders more than conservative authoritarians (though not so much as fascists), use the military for political purposes, share the fascists' imperialist ambitions, and, unlike fascists, often base their appeal on religious values just as the conservative authoritarians do. Moreover, the radical right, being more dependent than fascists on the existing structure and elites, are "unwilling to accept fully the cross-class mass mobilization and implied social, economic, and cultural change demanded by fascism."[67]

Even by Payne's criteria, Kahane most closely resembles a fascist. He embodies the stylistic characteristics of fascism; he embraces the fascist goals of imperialism, nationalism, and authoritarianism; and he concurs in the fascist negation of liberal democracy. Moreover even a cursory glance at the criteria for the related category of conservative authoritarianism excludes Kahane from it. Although it is less obvious, Kahane also does not qualify as a radical rightist. He is completely estranged from the existing structures and elites and is indifferent to the social, economic, and cultural change so feared by radical righ-

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[66] Payne, pp.16-20

[67] Payne, p.20.

[68] In fact, he would welcome the cultural change of revived relig-

tists.[62]

Even so, it would be improper to brand Kahane a fascist. Kahane's program is simply too parochial to encompass even Payne's minimal prerequisites of fascism. Payne's evidence suggests that fascists seek to radically reorder all areas of society: political, social, economic, and cultural. Kahane, caring only about religion, lacks any proposals in the economic sphere by which to judge him as a fascist or non-fascist.[69] Moreover, Kahane's Jewish parochialism and desire for a society based on a literal interpretation of the Bible explicitly contradict the classic fascist goal, cited by Payne, to create a non-traditional, secular culture.

In fact, Kahane's religious fundamentalism renders his views not only too narrow for fascism but actually irreconcilable with it. Kahane's religious beliefs are the ultimate source of his fascistic ideas in the first place. His opposition to democracy, imperialist ambitions, and desire to expel the Arabs are not based on the powerful secular nationalism which typifies fascism. Rather, they are all grounded in his interpretation of Jewish law, in his religious fundamentalism. Thus, despite Kahane's resemblance to fascists in both style and some goals, his ultimate reliance upon religious convictions would make it analytically misleading to consider him a fascist.

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[69] This is an especially glaring omission in light of Israel's pressing economic problems.

Since Kahane's politics are based entirely on his religious
beliefs, it would seem appropriate to dub him a religious funda-
mentalist. However, it is important to bear in mind that any
political label must be understood in the context of the surround-
ing political environment. For example, as Lipset and Raab point
out in The Politics of Unreason, the preservatism of the right in
America is manifested in the anti-Soviet views of Barry Goldwater
while the right in Czechoslovakia consists of ardent pro-
Soviets.[70] Similarly, Kahane's radical Jewish parochialism
excluded him from the American political spectrum but automati-
cally qualifies him as an ultranationalist in Israel. Moreover,
to refer to Kahane simply as a religious fundamentalist in Israel
is misleading since fundamentalist groups exist there which bear
little resemblance to Kach. Most religious fundamentalists in
Israel eschew political activity except to maintain the status quo
in terms of public adherence to Jewish law and to secure funding
for their communal institutions. Kahane, on the other hand, envi-
sions a complete and total transformation of society from the
secular democracy currently operating in Israel to a Torah state.
He, unlike other religious fundamentalists in Israel, is not con-
tent to leave such radical transformations to God and, by exten-
sion, the Messiah. Instead, if he had the power, Kahane would
enforce Jewish law regardless of pragmatic repercussions.[71] Only

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[70] Lipset and Raab, Politics of Unreason, p.19

[71] For example, no religious fundamentalist has taken such an
ultranationalist, if religiously motivated, stand on such
highly emotional issues as Israel's Arabs. Kahane considers
it blasphemous, especially for religious people, to argue
against his demand for expulsion on secular grounds. Only

in this way can Israel prove to God that she "deserves" the Messiah.

Also, in the context of the Israeli political environment, Kahane has exceeded the usual manifestations of ultranationalism, not only by adopting even more extreme stands, but also by claiming divine justification for his positions. The Israeli politicians whose views are closest to Kahane's do not base their beliefs on religious conviction but rather on some mixture of secular justice, security considerations, and pragmatism.[72] Kahane denounces these motivations, arguing that his proposals must be enacted regardless of potential consequences, since God will ensure the ultimate Jewish victory. Thus, his political nature is fundamentally different from the most nationalist secular movements in Israel. There can never be any compromise in Kahane's views regardless of worldly pressures and consequences.[73]

It seems that existing political vocabulary is insufficient to accurately characterize Kahane's relationship to the Israeli political system. I propose to place him within a new political

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questions of properly interpreting Jewish law are relevant.

[72] I am referring specifically to such people as Rafael Eitan, Geula Cohen, and Yuval Ne'eman, the leaders of the Tehiya (Revival) party. An ex-chief of staff, Begin's former radio operator, and a particle physicist respectively, these ultranationalists are security minded secular Jews, and not at all steeped in religious tradition.

[73] Begin proved by making peace with Egypt that secular nationalists, despite their rhetoric, will compromise if they perceive it to be in Israel's self-interest. Also, Kahane differs fundamentally from Gush Emunim by pressing for a complete Torah society, in which the annexation of Judaea and Samaria would constitute but a small part of his program. In addition, Gush has chosen not to organize a formal political party.

tradition to be called religious totalitarianism. In recent years the phenomenon of religious totalitarianism has plagued the political world, especially in the Middle East. Neither "religious fundamentalist" nor "totalitarian" alone adequately captures these leaders' natures. Kahane and the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran (who is perhaps the most significant of the world's other religious totalitarians), are more than just religious fundamentalists. They desire more than a mere revival within the religious realm, more than a mere increased observance of religious law. They seek to totally transform society, in all of its dimensions, according to other-worldly considerations, namely a literal interpretation of age-old religious traditions. Moreover, they seek to achieve this transformation through political compulsion rather than spiritual revival. Believers and non-believers alike would be forcefully subjected to religious law, not encouraged to convert voluntarily. Thus, while they share the concerns of religious fundamentalists, the scope of their ambitions qualify them as totalitarians (or in Kahane's case as an aspiring totalitarian). So how do they differ from other totalitarians? They, in accordance with what Hannah Arendt argues should be expected from totalitarians, seek to transform all aspects of life by wielding unlimited state power.[74] The fundamental difference between Kahane and Khomeini on one hand and previous totalitarians on the other is that the former seek control over everyday life in order to conform society to the demands of an established religion. They

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[74] Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951.

are totalitarians only to achieve their spiritual, other-worldly goals. Thus, they have broken with the historical pattern of totalitarianism, which usually seeks to transform society for secular, this-worldly, purposes, as with the fascists described by Payne. This religious brand of totalitarianism was not envisioned by the scholars who have analyzed totalitarianism, usually with an eye toward explaining the regimes of Stalin or Hitler. As such, it is analytically valuable to examine these religious totalitarians separately since they cannot accurately be grouped with anti-traditional leaders such as Hitler or Stalin. The next chapters contribute to our understanding of religious totalitarians by tracing the historical fate of Meir Kahane.

Chapter IV

IDEOLOGY IN ACTION: THE JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE

Long before Kahane set his sights on a Knesset seat, he appealed to American Jews to adopt and act upon his views in the United States. Between 1968 and 1971, Kahane headed the Jewish Defense League, a group committed to the realization of Kahane's ideas in America. Kahane's tenure as head of the JDL in America is a pivotal chapter in his development. The JDL's history illuminates Kahane's nature as a man of action. He said what he thought, but, more importantly, he did what he said, no matter how outlandish. He was so convinced of the efficacy of direct action and violence that he eventually went too far and offended many of his own followers. Before Kahane left for Israel in 1971, however, he earned a name for himself as a committed Jewish activist.

The JDL's brief popularity and its subsequent decline, were functions of historical contingencies which, at times, magnified and at others severely limited Kahane's personal impact. In this chapter, the historical factors which made Kahane's message so timely and effective are discussed. Kahane's programs are described, illuminating not only how his ideology translated into action, but also how he reacted to and exploited the conditions upon which the JDL fed. Kahane's extremism and ambition allowed

him to affect certain issues but prevented him from becoming truly
influential. The surrounding conditions which compelled the JDL
to escalate its violence are presented next, including a discus-
sion of why this inevitably debilitated the JDL. Finally, this
chapter concludes with a discussion of how the structure of the
American political environment guarantees the ultimate failure of
extremism in America, a fact which contrasts with the Israeli
political structure to be examined in later chapters.

Rise of the JDL: Historical Factors

According to Kahane, the inspiration for the JDL first came to
him from inner-city Jews who wrote to him at The Jewish Press to
complain about urban violence and the aloofness of Jewish communal
organizations to their plight.[1] After meeting with JDL co-founders
Mordechai Dolinsky and Bertram Zweibom[2], Kahane ran an advertise-
ment in The Jewish Press on May 24, 1968 calling for the formation
of a group to be called the Jewish Defense Corps.[3] Kahane eventu-
ally opened chapters in all major urban areas with significant

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[1] These include such groups as the American Jewish Congress, B'nai
Brith, the Jewish Federation, and so on. Collectively, these
groups were referred to by Kahane and others as the "Jewish
establishment".

[2] Meir Kahane, Story of the JDL p.91. According to Dolinsky, he
remained with the JDL only for a few months before moving to
Israel. Zweibom continued to be a JDL stalwart through the
mid-1970's.

[3] The name was later changed to "League" because Kahane thought
the military sound of "Corps" was too shocking for American
ears. Ironically, one of Dolinsky's objections to the group was
that the name was not shocking enough.

Jewish populations, though New York always remained the most important chapter because of Kahane's personal presence there. The JDL's primary function was to protect all Jews, but especially those urban, for the most part religious, Jews who felt threatened by violence and anti-semitism. Initially, that defense included not only physical defense but also legal battles, ranging from combatting quota systems and scholarships earmarked for Blacks to seeking governmental aid to Jewish parochial schools. On those issues, of course, Kahane contradicted the position of the generally liberal Jewish establishment who always advocated the strict separation of church and state and strongly supported the civil rights movement. In Kahane's view, the brunt of the Jewish establishment's liberalism fell upon poor, religious Jews: affirmative action quotas jeopardized their jobs and college admissions, and they direly needed funds for their parochial schools. These Jews felt not only beleaguered in the inner-cities but also abandoned by their "brothers" in the Jewish establishment.

The plight of these urban Jews gave Kahane an excellent opportunity to translate his deeply held Jewish chauvinism into action. Several historical contingencies can be identified which also worked to Kahane's advantage. When Kahane formed the JDL in 1968, the surrounding atmosphere was one of general turmoil and radicalism. The civil rights and Black power movements were in full swing, and many of America's urban areas had experienced or were about to experience rioting, violence, and general unrest. The anti-war movement had mobilized much of America's youth, and the

general mood of activism expanded to include feminists, gays, and many other groups. This mood laid the groundwork for the JDL's appeal since it too hoped to attract some of these urban activists. Moreover, nothing could have been more advantageous for Kahane's appeal than the Black anti-semitism emerging in American cities coincidental with the founding of the JDL. Convenient though it may have been for Kahane, that anti-semitism was not a figment of his imagination; it did indeed exist, and in a vicious form.

In particular, the New York City teachers' strike of 1968 precipitated an unprecedented outpouring of Black anti-semitism. Irving Howe wrote of the strike that "no event in recent history has so embittered and divided the people of New York."[4] The most obvious manifestation of that division and bitterness was the conflict between Blacks and Jews concerning the public schools. In particular, Blacks resented the Jewish presence in the educational hierarchy, whether in the form of teachers, principals, or Albert Shanker, head of the United Federation of Teachers. Forum, the publication of the Afro-American Teachers Association, expressed their resentment in the following editorial in November 1968:

> How long shall the Black and Puerto Rican communities
> of New York City sit back and allow the Jewish-
> dominated United Federation of Teachers to destroy our
> every effort to rescue our children from those
> incompetent teachers whose only goal is stifling our
> children's intellectual growth? . . . Eighty-five
> percent of the teachers are Jews. Ninety percent of
> the principals are Jews. It is these same persons who

[4] Irving Howe, introduction to Thomas Brooks' article, "Tragedy of Ocean Hill", Dissent, January/February 1969, p.28.

must bear direct responsibility for the systematic exclusion of Blacks and Puerto Ricans as teachers and principals. . . And the Jew, our great friend of yesterday, is now our exploiter![5]

Other pronouncements were not so restrained and understandably frightened many New York Jews. One characteristic incident concerned the December 26, 1968, appearance of Leslie Campbell, an outspoken Black teacher, on a radio show hosted by Julius Lester on WBAI in New York. On that show, Campbell read the following poem, allegedly written by a student of his:

> To Albert Shanker (head of the UFT): Hey, Jew-boy with that yarmulke on your head/ You pale-faced Jew-boy/ I wish you were dead./ I see you Jew-boy/ now you can't hide/ I got a scope on you/ Yeah, Jew-boy you gonna die.[6]

Lester, apparently deeply moved, commented, "Beautiful! Beautiful!"[7] This poem was the subject of a subsequent controversy in which the JDL demanded the dismissal of Paul Anthony, a Black teacher who required his students to copy the poem word for word. Later during the same show, another guest, Tyrone Woods, made the following statement: "What Hitler did to six million Jews is nothing compared to what's done to Black people. As far as I'm concerned, more power to Hitler. He didn't make enough lampshades out of them. He didn't make enough belts out of them."[8]

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[5] Quoted by Meir Kahane, Story of the JDL p.106.

[6] Meir Kahane, Story of the JDL p.108. Also quoted in Leon Wieseltier, "The Demons of the Jews", The New Republic, November 11, 1985, p.24.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

Given the vitriolic nature of these anti-semitic expressions by Blacks, it is not surprising that Jewish teachers and administrators felt uneasy, especially since some Black leaders actually advocated violence. Leslie Campbell, addressing a group of twelve to fifteen year olds at a school assembly said:

> Don't steal toothpaste and combs, steal things we can use, you know what I mean brothers. . . . . When the enemy taps you on the shoulder, send him to the cemetery.[9]

The school board, amidst severe pressure and strife which saw fistfights break out at meetings, caved in to aggressive pressure and actually advised some Jewish teachers to resign.[10] The lives of some Jewish school officials were threatened, and a few, such as Dideon Goldberg, turned to the JDL for protection. Kahane responded eagerly by dispatching JDL members to escort Goldberg to work and to guard him until the danger passed.[11] Kahane's worldview dictated such a direct response to anti-semitic threats, and the JDL reliably reacted against manifestations of anti-semitism which came to its attention. For those Jews who were terrified by anti-semitism, the JDL was a welcome addition to the urban landscape.

Aggressive attitudes of Jews in the late 1960's were shaped by more than just the Black anti-semitism described above. While the connection is perhaps more subtle, the Six Day War profoundly

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[9] Quoted by Brooks, p.33.

[10] Shlomo Russ, The Zionist Hooligans: The Jewish Defense League, Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1981, pp.22-23.

[11] Kahane, Story of the JDL p.113-114

affected Jews in a way that also made them more receptive to Meir Kahane. During the weeks leading up to the war, there was a palpable sense of precariousness felt by Jews who identified with Israel's plight. Israel's victory over the combined Arab armies in June of 1967 was cause for rejoicing among Jews and instilled in them a powerful sense of pride. There was an unprecedented outpouring of financial support for Israel and a leap in American aliyah. Above all, Israel's military feats, contrasting to Jewish defenselessness during World War II, underscored the value of self-reliance and strength, ideas which were at the core of the JDL's ideology. The war had a similar effect on Jews in the Soviet Union who were emboldened to begin pressing for the right to emigrate. Thus, Israeli military success reverberated across the whole of world Jewry, and in a way that aided Meir Kahane.

A final element in the array of factors contributing to JDL acceptance was the general mood of unrest in American cities of which the New York teachers' strike was symptomatic. Numerous cities experienced racial rioting in the late 1960's, and the Jewish mood in mixed racial neighborhoods was understandably one of constant apprehension. In 1968, New York City witnessed a consumer run on firearms, guard dogs, burglar alarms, and supplemental doorlocks.[12] Such a terrified atmosphere was self-reinforcing since businesses faltered partly because shopkeepers were afraid to remain open after dark. Property values declined, exacerbating the already acute economic strain. Clawar claims

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[12] Stanley Clawar, Neo-Vigilantism in America: An Analysis of the Jewish Defense League, Ph.D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr University, 1976, p.68.

that approximately 800,000 American Jews were forced to live below the official poverty line, the overwhelming majority of them in large cities.[13] These Jews felt victimized from all sides, including by their fellow Jews in the suburbs. By offering these disadvantaged Jews a solution to their problem and by pointing an accusing finger at the Jewish establishment, Kahane was able to capitalize on this sympathetic constituency.

JDL Response

Kahane tailored the JDL to succeed in just such an atmosphere. The JDL offered an opportunity to strike back, to overcome insecurity and helplessness. For Kahane, the backbone of any activist movement is its core of devoted youth. Accordingly, he inaugurated a youth training program which proved, ultimately, to be successful in attracting that small idealistic core. The program centered around a camp operated by the JDL in Monticello, New York, which Kahane opened the spring after the JDL was founded. Both religious and secular Jewish teenagers were instructed there in the use of firearms, the martial arts, and especially in the JDL version of Jewish history emphasizing Jewish military heroes from biblical times to the present.[14] The militaristic focus parallels Kahane's own experience in Betar. Kahane proudly quotes the following description of the camp's physical rigors from an article in National Observer:

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[13] Clawar, pp.71-77.

[14] Clawar, p.137.

> Each doubled over momentarily and looked as though he
> might vomit; then he straightened up proudly. Three
> weeks of five-hour daily karate lessons had toughened
> the young men. Most of the teenagers at camp here
> fire weapons and learn the refinements of hand to hand
> combat for the first time and not for the sport of it.
> They come from some of the meanest sections of New
> York City. They are Jews. They are going through the
> gruelling punishment at camp because they believe Jews
> in the United States are fighting for survival. Their
> organization, the Jewish Defense League, promises that
> the Jew will no longer play the patsy.[15]

For the young men who could not make it to the camp, Kahane opened

a karate school in New York City which proved to be very popular.

Kahane's goal was to mold a group of highly motivated young acti-

vists who could be counted upon to undertake the dangerous and

illegal acts which would follow. Given the situation these teen-

agers faced, karate and guns were among the most effective ways of

attracting them.

Kahane's obsession with Jewish strength meant more than just

summer camps and karate schools. He also advocated that every

Jewish family arm itself claiming that guns are the best defense

against anti-semitism. He even argued that they could have pre-

vented the Holocaust. Kahane writes:

> "Every Jew a .22!" Let it be shouted and let the
> educational campaign go forth. Young Jewish men and
> women, learn to shoot. Drink thirstily at the feet of
> the non-Jew this one art in which he excels. For we
> dare not be ignorant as our fathers were before us,
> and we cannot repeat the errors of the past.[16]

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[15] Kahane, Story of the JDL, p.130. Quoted from National Observer July 28, 1969.

[16] Kahane, Story of the JDL, p.133. Such stances reflect Kahane's exploitation and even tacit acceptance of the anti-semitic stereotypes of Jews as weak, as was discussed in chapter three.

Consistent with this conviction and with Kahane's predilection for direct action, Kahane took the JDL to the streets to combat anti-semitism. In fact, one of the JDL's most controversial programs was the "anti-crime" patrol Kahane sent into dangerous Jewish neighborhoods. JDL sentries patrolled the streets every evening until 2 A.M. armed with bats, pipes, and, when possible, guns. High-rise housing projects were assigned JDL squads as well, to patrol lobbies, elevators, and hallways. Kahane claims that these programs helped reduce crime, both directly and by goading police into providing better protection. Kahane flaunted his iron fist tactics in a sarcastic advertisement in the New York Times entitled, "Is This Any Way For a Nice Jewish Boy to Behave?", which pictured JDLers, armed with clubs and chains in front of Temple Emanu El in New York. Kahane had sent them there to prevent the entry of Black militant James Forman who had promised to appear at Shabbat services to demand reparations from the Jewish community for the plight of American Blacks. In the Times ad, Kahane defended this and other JDL vigilante acts.

Objections to JDL vigilantism, primarily from Jewish groups, did not question its effectiveness, but rather the morality of taking the law into one's own hands. Denigrators accused Kahane of violating Jewish values and likened him to the Ku Klux Klan. The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, representing 82 Jewish community agencies including the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Jewish Congress (AJC), and the Jewish War Veterans, publicly condemned "extremism and vigilantism by any

group" and the JDL specifically.[17] The ADL bulletin contained an article entitled, "A Vigilante Group Falls Victim to the Tactics it Claims to Oppose", wherein it argued that the JDL's appeal was based on a fallacy of supposedly dangerous American anti-semitism. Jewish self-defense, argued the ADL, relies on the "faulty premise that any breakdown in law and order is specifically a Jewish problem, as if Jews are the only victims of crime and violence."[18]

By increasing JDL visibility, such condemnations may actually have helped Kahane expand his operations to include electoral politics. Using tactics which further alienated him from the Jewish mainstream, Kahane opposed John Lindsay's bid for re-election as mayor of New York City. The Jewish vote, always crucial in New York City politics, took on an added prominence in light of the Black-Jewish tensions described above. In a provocative advertisement in the New York Times, Kahane boldly stated that "The Jews of New York City cannot afford another 4 years of John Lindsay." This headline was followed by a litany of alleged cases of Lindsay's insensitivity to Jewish concerns, concluding with the warning that Jews who ignore this exhortation "deserve whatever they get."[19] In particular, Kahane decried Lindsay's handling of the teachers' strike, his refusal to fire "anti-semites" on the city payroll, and his inability to halt Black anti-semitism. Kahane followed up his opinion by organizing

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[17] Elkanah Schwartz, "Notes on the JDL Experience", Jewish Life, April 1972, p.13.

[18] ADL Bulletin, October/November 1969, p.4.

[19] New York Times, October 6, 1969, p.35.

"truth squads" who shouted down the mayor at public appearances and asked him pointed questions whenever possible. Mainstream Jewish leaders were horrified by JDL behavior and denounced Kahane with renewed vigor.[20]

The JDL's strategy of confrontation also included responding to the Arab terrorism against Jews and Israelis that intensified in 1970. In conjunction with the War of Attrition launched by Egypt along the Suez Canal, the PLO committed several terrorist acts in Israel, as well as a rash of hijackings. Kahane authorized the beatings of known PLO members in New York and warned that if any Jewish hostages were killed in the hijackings that "Arab blood will be shed in all parts of the world."[21] He placed an advertisement in the New York Times on September 11, 1970 urging adherence to the Jewish principle of "an eye for an eye" in response to the hijackings. Apparently, he intended his words to be taken literally, since on September 28, JDL member Avraham Herschkowitz was arrested in a poorly planned attempt to hijack a plane to Israel. Undaunted by this debacle, Kahane followed up one week later by ordering the bombing of the PLO office in New York.[22]

Perhaps spurred by the publicity he received from the mayoral campaign and other JDL actions, Kahane expanded his operations to include the struggle to free Soviet Jews. Kahane's actions on behalf of Soviet Jews were probably the most controversial under-

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[20] See, for example, the letter by Arthur Goldberg, a respected Jewish establishment figure, to the editor of the New York Times October 10, 1969, p.52.

[21] Quoted in the New York Times, September 9, 1970, p.19.

[22] New York Times, October 7, 1970, p.1.

taken by the JDL. Moreover, JDL activism for Soviet Jews predated widespread American Jewish activism by a full year. Before the Leningrad Hijacking Trials of December 1970, American Jewish response was limited exclusively to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, a group which boasted no full time staff and lacked the resources to do anything more than criticize the USSR in press releases.[23] As Paula Stern, student of the movement to free Soviet Jewry, writes:

> In contrast (to the Jewish establishment -- S.L.),
> individual Jewish activists, outside the mainstream of
> Jewish community leadership . . . dominated the early
> Soviet emigration movement in the United States. . . .
> The JDL staged a number of violent, headline-grabbing,
> anti-Soviet incidents.[24]

A full year before the Leningrad Trials, the JDL undertook actions on behalf of Soviet Jewry that were characterized by violence unprecedented in American Jewish politics. Kahane had a knack for contriving theatrical protests and demonstrations which

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[23] In fact, the very existence of the Leningrad hijacking plot, in which Russian Zionists conspired to fly a plane to Israel, was an indictment of Western Jewry's tepid activity for Soviet Jews. Fearing capture, those who attempted the hijacking left a Testament for posterity formally describing their motives and grievances. The Testament was hushed up by the Soviets for obvious reasons and also hushed up by Jews until 1973 (when it was first published) because it accuses Israel and western Jews of failing to vigorously commit themselves to Soviet Jewry. The testament reads in part: "Jews of the world! It is your holy duty to struggle for the freedom of your brothers in the USSR. Know that, to a great extent, the fate of the Jews of Russia -- to be or not to be -- depends on you. We experience a keen envy of freedom -- of its blessings which have become commonplace for you. We appeal to you to use them to the hilt, including in the defense of our rights." (Quoted in Leonard Schroeter, The Last Exodus, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974, p.183.)

[24] Paula Stern, Water's Edge, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979, p.9.

attracted publicity for the JDL as well as for the plight of Soviet Jews. On December 29, 1969, JDL members simultaneously vandalized the New York offices of Aeroflot, Intourist, and Tass while others chained themselves to an Aeroflot plane after painting Zionist slogans on its fuselage.[25] Such innovative techniques marked the first step in the escalation of JDL violence which would eventually lead to the JDL's greatest successes as well as to its decline.

Beginning with this vandalism, the JDL was incessant in its anti-Soviet provocations. In an attempt to destroy detente, which Kahane felt was being forged at the expense of the rights of Soviet Jews, he disrupted events of Soviet-American cultural exchange. The JDL interrupted concerts of the Moscow Philharmonic and other Soviet artistic groups throughout 1970, by storming the stage, threatening to bomb the auditoriums, releasing ammonia gas, and even by letting loose hundreds of mice in the audience. These outlandish acts achieved their desired effect when the Soviets cancelled the planned 1971 tour of the Bolshoi Ballet and accused U.S. officials of colluding with the "Zionist thugs."[26]

Also in late 1970, the JDL became more brazen as its militant cadres began to harass Soviet officials and bomb Soviet installations. For example, on November 25, 1970 the JDL bombed the New York office of Aeroflot and Intourist. Officially, Kahane denied the act though he "heartily applauded it"[27] and ominously pre-

[25] Russ, p.252

[26] New York Times, December 12, 1970, p.12.

[27] Kahane, Story of the JDL, p.18.

dicted more acts of violence by American Jews who were upset about
the plight of their brethren in the Soviet Union. Few, if any,
believed Kahane's disclaimers, and he was strongly criticized.
President Nixon condemned the bombing and authorized U.N. Ambassa-
dor Yost to officially apologize to the USSR's Ambassador Malik.
The New York Times, in an editorial, called for stern punishment
for the perpetrators of this "mindless and intolerable" act.[28]
American Jewish leaders denounced both the act and the JDL in
general, claiming that such deeds only hinder efforts to free
Soviet Jews. Even Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, spoke out
against the bombing, using the opportunity to deplore the Soviet
behavior which inspired it.

Meir's statement exemplified a trend in which condemnation of
the JDL facilitated criticism of the Soviet Union's treatment of
Jews. Recognizing this trend, Kahane claims that he contacted
establishment leaders on days when he planned bombings so that
they could organize press conferences. Thus, they would have
media coverage for their condemnations as well as for their state-
ments against Soviet policy.[29]

What Kahane apparently did not recognize was that this trend
was part of a larger movement by which mainstream groups began
preempting him by acting on the Soviet Jewry issue, especially
after the December 1970 Leningrad Trials. In March of 1971, ris-
ing concern for Soviet Jewry culminated in the first international
conference on Soviet Jewry in Brussels. Despite attracting such

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[28] New York Times November 26, 1970, p.26.

[29] Kahane, Personal interview, March 1985.

important Jewish figures as David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, and Menachem Begin, then long-time leader of the opposition, the conference achieved nothing more original than a standard condemnation of Soviet emigration policies. As Rabbi Andre Ungar put it in Jewish Digest: "Over the past few years, American Jewish organizations' and leaders' outcries on behalf of Soviet Jewry were ill coordinated, vague, haphazard, and certainly ineffectual. . . . The Brussels assembly only bore out this melancholy truth."[30] No tactical plan of action was laid out, and, in fact, the media's attention focused not on the planned speeches but on the debate surrounding Kahane's exclusion from the conference. Still, the Brussels conference was positive in marking the beginning of concerted mainstream Jewish activism on the issue. Soon this enthusiasm was channelled into the more effective and ultimately successful activity of political lobbying, in particular, for the Jackson-Vanick Amendment which predicated trade agreements with the USSR on satisfactory emigration policies.

For the JDL, the Brussels conference meant that its most ambitious and consuming goal of the previous two years, to make Soviet Jewry an important issue in America, had been accomplished. A combination of JDL effectiveness and historical forces beyond their control, especially the Leningrad trials, had succeeded in focusing attention on Soviet Jews. However, between the Leningrad trials and the Brussels Conference there was a period of three months in which many Jews felt outraged about Soviet Jewry but had

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[30] Andre Ungar, "A Phenomenon Called Kahane", Jewish Digest, September 1971, p.53.

few organized alternatives to the JDL for expressing their sentiments. It is not surprising, then, that this was the period in which the JDL peaked in terms of public visibility and effectiveness. Similarly, after the Brussels Conference in March 1971, the beginning of mainstream Soviet Jewry activism compelled the JDL to radicalize its tactics and eventually destroy itself. Still, the period between December 1970 and March 1971 shows just how influential the JDL could become.

By June of 1970, six months before the Leningrad trials, the JDL had already established its practice of attacking and vandalizing Soviet installations in America. In fact, on June 27, 1970, Pravda condemned the JDL and accused U.S. officials of connivance:

> The name of the band that committed the pogrom
> (against Amtorg - S.L.) is known: the Jewish Defense
> League, a terrorist organization. The name of the
> League's ringleader is known: Meir Kahane. But
> although this criminal band acts right before every-
> one's eyes and shamelessly publicizes it plans for
> criminal deeds, the Americans . . . display unfathoma-
> ble connivance at the gangsters of Zionism. . . . Not
> a single one of the terrorists who have been caught
> red-handed at the scene of the crime has been con-
> victed in an American court. All this readily resem-
> bles not only connivance but also direct encouragement
> of the fascist anti-Sovieteers.[31]

After December 1970, the Soviet Union was even more sensitive to provocations against its American installations. In the aftermath of the Leningrad trials, it seems that the Soviets seized upon the JDL as a means to deflect criticism back at the U.S. Increasingly, their anger was expressed through official diplomatic channels rather than in the Soviet press. The tension became severe enough in January 1971 to warrant high-level govern-

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[31] Pravda, June 27, 1970. Quoted in Russ, p.345.

ment discussions of the JDL in Washington. Among those meeting about the JDL were Attorney General John Mitchell, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, and Director of the FBI J. Edgar Hoover. According to a deposition of John Mitchell in a 1973 court case, the FBI instructed him to commence wire-tapping of JDL officials in an attempt to combat their activities.[32] Also in January 1971, Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Dobrynin, told the State Department that in light of recent American failure to provide security they "could not rely on the provision of such conditions for American institutions in the USSR."[33] This thinly veiled threat was followed by incidents of what apparently were officially choreographed actions against Americans in the Soviet Union.[34] Of course, such retaliatory measures were summarily condemned by the State Department, exacerbating the tense diplomatic climate.

Later that same week, the JDL serendipitously timed an anti-Soviet attack so as to put the desired strain on superpower relations. On January 7, the JDL situation had become so serious that Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin met with Assistant Secretary of State Hillenbrand to discuss it. Their meeting was tense, with angry words on both sides, and ended with Hillenbrand's assurance that everything possible would be done to prevent further recurrences of JDL attacks.[35] Less than twenty four hours after that tense

[32] Zweibom vs. Mitchell, February 7, 1973. Quoted in Russ, pp.348-349.

[33] Washington Post, January 6, 1971. Quoted in Russ, p.350.

[34] Russ, pp.351, 360.

meeting, the JDL bombed the Soviet Cultural building in Washington D.C. to celebrate Meir Kahane's return later that day from a trip to Israel. They hoped to increase press coverage of Kahane's homecoming, perhaps to have him interviewed on television. The attack incensed the Soviets, and Dobrynin was abruptly recalled to Moscow.[36] Dobrynin's summons to Moscow marked the height of JDL "success" in impacting superpower relations.

JDL Membership

During January 1971, the JDL boasted its greatest number of members, between 12,000 and 15,000 nationwide. Unfortunately, no comprehensive study was done nationwide and over time of JDL membership. As part of his doctoral research, however, Stanley Clawar interviewed hundreds of JDL members in New York and Philadelphia in 1971, and compiled a demographic profile of them. For a group like the JDL, it is often hard to distinguish between active members and mere part-time supporters. Still, Clawar concluded that JDL members were likely to be males under 35, religious Jews, recent victims of a crime, politically conservative, college-educated, and living in a neighborhood of racial transition. The average member's income was less than $15,000 per year. Clawar also found that the most active members were almost exclusively from lower middle class or lower class backgrounds and

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[35] Russ, pp.355-257.

[36] Russ, p.357.

more religious than the average member.[37] From this description, it is obvious why the JDL's initial program of protecting urban Jews from anti-semitism and violence attracted this group of people since they could expect to be its direct beneficiaries.

Membership attitudes, also reported by Clawar, showed that JDLers did not just join out of selfish interests, they also shared many of Kahane's guiding ideas and concerns.[38] Most JDLers believed that anti-semitism, especially by Blacks, was so pervasive in America that genocide of Jews was a realistic possibility. Also, they accused affluent Jews of shirking their obligations to poor, urban Jews.[39] They argued for drastic, confrontational tactics to solve contemporary Jewish problems, particularly crime in neighborhoods where the police offered inadequate protection.

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[37] Clawar, p.209-215.

[38] As part of his doctoral research Stanley Clawar conducted a poll of Jews' attitudes toward the JDL. His method was questionable since it was a mail poll and, as such, subject to selective response. Also, his mailing lists included only those Jews who belonged to congregations. Even given those limitations, however, Clawar's poll indicates that the Jewish population at large viewed the JDL more sympathetically than one would guess given the strenuous denunciations of almost every Jewish organization. According to Clawar's statistics, 10.5% of the 900 respondents said they agreed with both the ideology and tactics of the JDL. Moreover, 66.5% agreed with Kahane's ideology but disagreed with his tactics. This leaves, of course, only 23% who disagreed completely with Kahane, both in ideology and tactics. Even so, only 8% had ever been members of the JDL. Even if these percentages are inexact, at the very least they suggest that Kahane enjoyed more grassroots support than the size of his membership rolls indicate.

[39] JDL members expressed this sentiment in an almost constant series of protest and imaginative demonstrations intended to embarrass Jewish establishment leaders. Of course, the very existence of the JDL was an expression of protest against the Jewish establishment.

Most importantly, they worried that Jews had lost pride in their heritage.[40] In short then, rank and file JDL members stood to benefit tangibly from the organization's aggressive actions, but they also agreed with Meir Kahane's ideology and broader objectives. The strength of their commitment was tested and confirmed when the JDL turned to political activism from which most members could expect no identifiable personal gain.

JDL Decline

After the Brussels Conference, Kahane found himself in a quandary. His denial of a forum there reiterated to him that his extremism was a permanent obstacle to acceptance or power within the international and American Jewish mainstream.[41] Moreover, after Brussels, mainstream groups began preempting Kahane on the Soviet Jewry issue, making it difficult for him to remain in the media spotlight. In order to remain a viable force, he would somehow have to intensify anti-Soviet provocations, and for six months he attempted to do just that. Throughout 1971, the JDL accelerated its program of bombings and other violent acts.

A concomitant radicalization of JDL membership reinforced this trend toward violence. Once one could be an ardent Soviet Jewry activist within the Jewish mainstream, the JDL lost much of its

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[40] Clawar, pp.260-280.

[41] In fact, Rabbi Andre Ungar reported in Jewish Digest, that since 1968 mainstream Jewish groups had been circulating "confidential" memoranda to synagogues and community centers urging them to reject Kahane's requests to speak.

comparatively moderate membership. Many Orthodox rabbis who had previously praised JDL vigilantism in their neighborhoods felt that the violence associated with its Soviet Jewry movement was too risky and withdrew their support. Remaining membership fell into two groups: the youth who were enamored with the glamor of the JDL's style of Soviet Jewry activism, and the most radical hard-line adults, many of whom shared Kahane's obsession with explosives.[42]

The result was that the JDL, lacking any semblance of restraint, quickly found itself in deep legal trouble. During April 1971, in the aftermath of a JDL bombing of Amtorg, Avraham Herschkowitz was sentenced to five years in prison for his 1970 hijacking attempt. Kahane further isolated himself by lambasting the New York Board of Rabbis for not supporting the defendant and for not expediting his receipt of kosher food in prison. While the Herschkowitz conviction was bad for JDL public relations, its effect paled in comparison to the May 1971 indictment of 13 JDL members for weapons violations. Aside from the adverse publicity it brought, the indictment also sent waves of fear through the JDL since members suspected the presence of an informer in their midst. Some previous JDL stalwarts cut back their involvement while others actually moved to Israel to escape potential legal problems.

After such success in the early part of 1971, the JDL faced a serious crisis by mid-year. The late summer marked a crucial turning point when Kahane announced his decision to move to

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[42] Russ, pp.40-41.

Israel. Kahane claimed that he had always planned to make aliyah, but circumstances probably influenced the timing of his departure.[43] Many supporters felt that Kahane had betrayed them since they saw the JDL as a forceful expression of Jews' right to live fearlessly in the Diaspora. Kahane's aliyah was interpreted as a surrender of that quest, especially when he began to exhort others to follow by warning of an imminent Holocaust in America. One eminent supporter, Hillel Seidman, author and regular contributor to the Yiddish newspaper The Jewish Forward, expressed a common opinion when he said, "In general, Zionist leaders belong in Israel, but Meir Kahane is different. He has a mission here, one which his charisma uniquely suits him for."[44]

After Kahane's departure, the JDL's intensified radicalism soon led to the inevitable disaster. In January 1972, the JDL bombed the offices of Sol Hurok, a major New York impressario who imported Soviet music, ballets, and other cultural attractions. Not only was the bombing a manifestation of increased radicalism, it also caused the accidental death of Iris Kones, a Jewish secretary. Three JDL members were subsequently indicted for murder. As Alan Dershowitz, the attorney who secured the defendants' acquittal on a technicality, writes:

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[43] Some suggest, without verification, that Kahane left in response to FBI threats to put him in jail. Just prior to his departure, Kahane was given a five year suspended sentence for weapons violations by a New York court. There is no doubt that JDL acts against Soviet angered the FBI, and that the FBI followed the JDL closely, but there is no proof that they explicitly threatened Kahane.

[44] Hillel Seidman, personal interview, March 22, 1985.

> That senseless tragedy weakened to the breaking point
> whatever remaining pillars of support the league
> enjoyed within the Jewish community. It demonstrated
> that the JDL had so cheapened the currency of civil
> disobedience and violence that it had lost whatever
> meaning and purpose it might have had if selectively
> and intelligently employed. Even those militants who
> could justify the use of violence against Soviet or
> PLO officials were appalled by bombings directed at
> Hurok . . . and especially by the death -- even if
> accidental -- of a young Jewish woman.[45]

Though the JDL has never completely disappeared, after 1972 it declined into a shadow of what it had been. The mainstream preemption of the Soviet Jewry issue which led to the Hurok bombing was the single most influential factor in that decline, with the possible exception of Kahane's emigration.

Thus, Kahane's ideology and personality contributed to the JDL's downfall just as surely as to its rise. His unwillingness to compromise or moderate led to the JDL's fatal radicalization and, as a result, to the alienation of previously committed members. Moreover, Kahane's egoism repelled potentially competent leaders who conceivably could have assumed responsibility over the JDL after Kahane's emigration. As Mordechai Dolinsky, a JDL co-founder, states about his own alienation from the movement, "Kahane built the JDL around one person, around his charisma. He just does not motivate people in an organizational framework, a fact attested to by the high turnover rate of members in the JDL."[46] Still, given all of the forces working against the JDL in late 1971 and early 1972: the Hurok bombing, preemption of the

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[45] Alan Dershowitz, The Best Defense, New York: Random House, 1982, p.81.

[46] Mordechai Dolinsky, personal interview.

Soviet Jewry issue, Kahane's aliyah, and the amelioration of urban racial stress and anti-semitism, it is unlikely that even the best leadership could have reversed the trend.

Whatever historical contingencies affected the JDL's fate in the short term, the American environment made long term success of the JDL impossible. Even though William Gamson in The Strategy of Social Protest argues that violence is the most successful of all protest strategies in any environment[47], his definition of success makes that claim somewhat misleading. For Gamson, violent groups whose issues are preempted by the mainstream or whose leaders are coopted into mainstream groups qualify as successful.[48] Thus, though the JDL was largely eliminated, the fact that mainstream groups began acting for Soviet Jewry (even if they did it for reasons besides JDL pressure) presumably makes the JDL a successful group by Gamson's formula. Still, the fact remains that the American pluralistic democracy is structured in such a way that lasting success of extremist groups, especially parochial ones, is nearly impossible.

Lipset and Raab, in The Politics of Unreason, argue that American extremist groups tend to be value-oriented, at least when they are first formed. This means that they are preoccupied by the deteriorating moral bases of social life and seek political power in order to enact regenerative, even revolutionary, change.[49]

[47] William Gamson, The Strategy of Social Protest p.81.

[48] Gamson, p.29.

[49] Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab, The Politics of Extremism, New York: Harper and Row, 1970, pp.498-499.

Because of the structure of the American political system, however, their impact has been minimal. As radicals, they are denied influence along the conventional avenues of effecting change. At best, they can pressure mainstream parties which, if the pressure is strong enough, preempt their program. Eventually, some change may result in rules or regulations, but not in the system itself. Lipset refers to these as normative changes and cites the example of restrictive immigration policies as a response to right-wing jingoism.[50] Immigration quotas, for example, "have been embraced and enacted by main-stream parties, undercutting the support of right-wing extremist movements. Of course, the same phenomenon has taken place on the left in America."[51]

Lipset and Raab also analyze the structural resilience of America's democracy. "The chief practical bulwark against the development of effective value-oriented right-wing extremist movements in America has probably been the existence of the two party system."[52] The plurality system of election in America, whereby geographic constituencies elect only one representative, discourages the formation of electoral movements by radical or minority

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[50] Even such normative changes constitute success for Gamson. Thus, Gamson's claim that a group's environment does not affect its fate nearly as much as its individual strategy, does not lead to as broad of a disagreement with Lipset as one might expect. That is, some of the mechanisms by which Lipset argues a stable, pluralistic democracy prevents the rise of radical groups, namely through preemption and cooptation, are merely referred to as forms of success by Gamson.

[51] Lipset and Raab, p.499.

[52] Ibid. p.503.

groups since they have little chance of victory. Plurality systems encourage extremists to compromise and form coalitions with others in order to create a viable party. Thus, American political parties are not "ideological agents, but coalition parties, compromise parties, designed pragmatically for electoral victories."[53]

America's huge and varied population serves as a final and ultimate brake on extremism. It is almost impossible for ideological or even unconventional groups to appeal to a broad enough range of voters to succeed politically. America also benefits from cross-cutting pluralism which mitigates the potential of any exclusivist minority groups or single-issue groups.

Thus, even groups which do not aim for such a narrow constituency as the JDL are constrained by the American political system from all but the most limited successes. Kahane's fate in Israel highlights structural contrasts between the American and Israeli systems that explain Kahane's greater success and future potential in Israel.

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[53] Ibid. p.503.

Chapter V

FROM OBSCURITY TO THE KNESSET

In the preceding chapter, we examined the fate of the JDL in America under Kahane's leadership between 1968 and 1971. In America, historical factors conspired to create a niche for the JDL's activism and even allowed it some influence on issues of Jewish concern. In the end, however, Kahane's brand of extremism and his preemption by mainstream groups compelled the JDL to radicalize and eventually to self-destruct. In addition, we saw how the structure of the American political system limited the JDL's potential, as it limits the potential of any extremist group. Now, we turn our attention to Israel, where Kahane has lived since 1971. In Israel, as in America, the structure of the political environment as well as historical contingencies have shaped Kahane's fate. In this chapter I will discuss only the historical factors which hindered Kahane's efforts until recently and which now work to his advantage. A structural analysis of Israeli politics follows in the next chapter. That analysis, in addition to explaining Kahane's recent popularity, fixes on a paradox in Israeli political history: that its political structure promotes extremist movements, but that historically none arose. Instead, Israel was immune to such extremism until Kahane came to Israel in 1971 and resilient to it for 13 years thereafter, before Kahane was finally elected.

Immediately upon his arrival in Israel, Kahane announced his intention of establishing a Torah study school and an educational center in Jerusalem to serve as the international headquarters for the JDL. Kahane presented the JDL as an educational organization designed to unite Israelis in the goal of reviving Jewish pride, and he publicly insisted that he had no personal political ambitions. Kahane maintains, probably untruthfully, that both Menachem Begin (head of the Likud Bloc) and Yosef Burg (Head of the National Religious Party or NRP) offered him a safe Knesset seat had he agreed to join either party. He refused, he says, because "once you start compromising, you are finished."[1] Kahane knew that joining a political party would mean tacitly accepting political leadership and views with which he disagreed.

Whatever Kahane's intentions to become an educator, his proclivity for action soon got the best of him again. Kahane began organizing the same type of street demonstrations and violence as he had in America. Lacking the rank and file support he had built up in America, Kahane was forced to operate with the few young Americans who had followed him to Israel and a small group of Soviet emigres who supported him.[2] Since there were no Soviet installations in Israel, Kahane focused instead on two new issues: the Christian Mission in Israel and a small American Black sect in the town of Dimona called the Black Hebrews. Consistent with his religious convictions, Kahane objected to the presence of Christian missionaries in Israel, and most Israelis agreed with him in

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[1] Meir Kahane, Personal Interview, Lakewood, N.J. March 1985.

[2] Sprinzak, p.6.

principle. Still, missionaries had long been grudgingly tolerated
in Israel in the spirit of religious freedom in the Holy Land.
Kahane staged loud demonstrations against the Mission, and his
group set fires in missionary centers and bookshops. These activ-
ities brought Kahane Israeli police and media attention for the
first time.[3]

Similarly, the Black Hebrews were only reluctantly tolerated by
Israelis. These inner-city Blacks from Chicago entered Israel
with tourist visas and never left, secluding themselves in the
Negev town of Dimona. Claiming to be the only authentic Jews,
they live according to their own unique version of ritual law, and
support themselves at least partially by begging in the streets of
Israeli cities. For fear of being accused of racism, the govern-
ment has not forced them to leave. Kahane, never one to be con-
strained by others' opinions, wanted this sect expelled and
clamored for it loudly.[4] While these demonstrations and those
against the Christian Mission brought Kahane some publicity, nei-
ther issue was weighty enough to hold the media's attention for
very long. Kahane's political life depended on finding a more
significant issue with broader implications. By August 1972, less
than a year after his arrival, Kahane focused his attention on
what has been his target ever since -- the Israeli Arabs.[5]

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[3] Many years later, Kahane still considers missionaries a vital
issue. Kach members invited me this summer to a Sunday morning
Torah study meeting followed by a forced takeover of the Mormon
Mission in Jerusalem in the afternoon.

[4] Sprinzak, p.7.

[5] It should be mentioned that Kahane makes no distinction between
Israeli Arabs and Arabs living on the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

For Kahane, the Arabs constituted an issue of terrific potential for his brand of incitement. Ironically, the issue's broad currency actually mitigated Kahane's impact on it. When Kahane began focusing on the Arabs, they were already an issue of utmost national importance in Israel. Unlike the Soviet Jewry problem in America, the Arab problem in Israel was not ignored. In fact, the Arab question was universally considered a state matter, to be dealt with only by government bodies. The enormous prestige enjoyed by Golda Meir's cabinet in 1972, which included Moshe Dayan as Defense Minister, made any extra-governmental protests especially futile. Only after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, when the cabinet's actions drew severe criticism, was the government's competence in dealing with security matters called into question. Furthermore, Kahane's status as an American obstructed his efforts particularly because of the highly "Israeli" nature of the issue. Ehud Sprinzak summed up the typical Israeli attitude: "Who was Meir Kahane, a diaspora Jew, an unknown rabbi who had never even served in the army, to deal with the Arabs -- Israel's number one security problem?"[6]

Kahane, however, drew upon his experiences in America and, through imaginative tactics, developed a modest following. In August 1972, he distributed leaflets in Hebron calling upon Arab

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The Israeli government does differentiate, assigning primary responsibility for West Bank and Gaza Arabs to the Ministry of Defense and for Israeli Arabs to the Ministry of Interior. Since Kahane considers the territories an integral part of Israel, all Arabs under Israel's control are the same to him.

[6] Sprinzak, p.7.

Mayor Muhammed Jaabari to submit to a public show trial for his role in the 1929 massacres of Jews in Hebron.[7] Capitalizing on the short burst of publicity he enjoyed from the event, Kahane launched his still ongoing program of actively encouraging Arabs to emigrate by offering them financial compensation.[8]

In September 1972, the Israeli Olympic team was slaughtered in Munich by Arab terrorists. When the Libyan government claimed responsibility for training the killers, Kahane revived his American tactics of direct action. After enlisting the aid of Amichai Paglin, former chief of operations for the Irgun, Kahane began planning to bomb the Libyan consulate in Rome. Explosives and arms were to be smuggled out of Israel to America and JDL members were to transport them to Italy. Israeli security officials foiled the entire operation after discovering the arms cache at the Tel Aviv airport. In a press interview Kahane said, "We expect to face a shower of denunciations. I do not care. What is important is that something comes out of this. . . . I am ready to go to jail having known that I pushed the government to do something."[9] The failed operation, though deplored by most Israelis, contributed to Kahane's credentials as a committed activist and probably bolstered his popularity.

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[7] Singling out Jaabari emphasizes Kahane's unwillingness to differentiate among Arabs. Jaabari is a traditionalist leader with strong ties to Jordan and not the PLO.

[8] Meir Kahane, The Jewish Idea, Jerusalem: Jewish Identity Center, 1974, pp. 13-15.

[9] Yediot Aharanot, September 27, 1972, p.5.

Kahane was the most publicly known right-wing extremist in Israel in 1973, and he decided to try to parlay his status into a Knesset seat, despite his previous disavowals of political ambition. His uniqueness in Israel gave him confidence in his electoral viability, as did his financial support from America. Kahane received 12,811 votes in 1973, just a few hundred short of a safe seat. Israel uses a strictly proportional electoral system whereby any candidate receiving 1% of the total vote is guaranteed a seat. It would be eleven years before Kahane even approached his 1973 total.

After 1973, Kahane spent a decade in relative obscurity. During the mid 1970's, he shuttled back and forth between America and Israel, trying desperately to salvage the JDL while building a political movement in Israel. Even though Kahane continued to espouse the same creed and use the same tactics that contributed to his modest popularity before 1973, a number of factors conspired against further success.

The most damaging development to Kahane after 1973 was the growth of the Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful) movement. Formally created in 1974, Gush originated within the National Religious Party but eventually severed its ties with it. Consistent with the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, and his son Zvi, Gush sought to settle the biblical lands of Judaea and Samaria. Though Gush, as a group, was not involved in anti-Arab extremism as was Kahane, its action-oriented program of settling the land, with or without permission, attracted those

same young people who might otherwise have fallen in with Kahane.
Moreover, Kahane could not match Gush's prestige. Gush enjoyed
the support of the rabbinical authorities and offered a complete
social and cultural program to meet the needs of its young mem-
bers.[10] Most importantly, Gush was a decidedly Israeli movement,
with eminent Israeli leaders and members. As such, Gush was bet-
ter able to attract those Israelis who were left demoralized,
doubting, and seeking salvation by the 1973 war.

Kahane remained separate from Gush Emunim even though he essen-
tially agreed with its program and ideology which called for set-
tling of the biblical Land of Israel as a prerequisite to the
Redemption. Eager to preserve his distinctive political niche,
Kahane reacted to Gush Emunim by forming his present party, Kach,
in 1974.[11] With Kach, Kahane signalled his determination to remain
to the right of Gush Emunim. While Gush concentrated on settling
the land, Kahane exacerbated the tension in Jewish-Arab relations
as much as possible in the hope of promoting Arab emigration.
Even today, Kahane's major substantive disagreement with Gush is
that he considers a mass Arab evacuation the logical consequence
of a settlement movement while Gush believes, at least officially,
that coexistence is possible.[12] As Daniella Weiss, secretary of
Gush Emunim, told the Jerusalem Post: "Meir Kahane wants to be

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[10] In this sense it was also better organized than the Land of
Israel or Greater Israel Movement founded just after the Six
Day War. That group never achieved Gush's level of centraliza-
tion, as its poor showing in the 1969 elections proves.

[11] Kach is normally translated as "Thus!"

[12] Sprinzak, p.12.

allowed to tackle the problem of the Arabs, but we in Gush Emunim concentrate solely on building up the interests of the Jews. That is an entirely different approach."[13]

Kahane was unable to successfully battle the tide against him. His attempts to maintain the JDL in America severely compromised his position in Israel, especially when he encountered legal problems in American courts. In 1975, Kahane was convicted in New York for violating the no-weapons provision of his parole on a 1971 weapons conviction. The court ruled that the restrictions on his behavior applied in Israel as well and sentenced him to one year in prison. Kahane's year in prison brought him some respect in America as a man of principle. While in prison, Kahane protested and won rights for all Jewish prisoners, including the right to receive kosher food and study Torah. However, the time Kahane spent in prison was disastrous for his movement in Israel which stagnated in his absence. During 1975 Kach was dormant, and, upon his return in 1976, Kahane faced a desperate struggle to revive it.

Between 1973 and 1977, Israeli politics shifted drastically to the right, culminating in the 1977 Likud victory that brought Menachem Begin to power. The rightward shift, while it did not benefit Kahane immediately, laid the groundwork for his future popularity. Since 1973, the left of center Labor Party had been discredited in the eyes of many Israelis. Its conduct of the war was investigated by the Agranat Commission and judged to be

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[13] Jerusalem Post, July 26, 1985, p.1.

incompetent; the ensuing imbroglio ended in Golda Meir's resigna-
tion.[14] Controversy plagued the subsequent regime of Yitzhak
Rabin as well. Before the 1977 elections Housing Minister Avraham
Ofer committed suicide after his implication in a scandal, and
Rabin's wife was discovered to have violated Israeli currency
restrictions by retaining an illicit bank account in the United
States. Furthermore, Likud's harder line on territorial compro-
mise appealed to a great number of Israelis who were haunted by
the 1973 war. The subsequent interim agreements, negotiated by
Labor with Egypt and Syria in which Israel returned land without
receiving a peace treaty and even without face-to-face negotia-
tions left many Israelis uneasy as well.

Social changes in Israel also contributed to Likud's success in
1977. Many observers ascribe Begin's election to his ability to
reach out to Oriental Jews, a growing proportion of the elector-
ate. The Oriental Jews were less educated and poorer than their
European counterparts, and had long occupied the lower rungs of
Israel's socioeconomic ladder. Their resentment grew as unful-
filled expectations for social and economic equality persisted.[15]
For instance, in 1979, 34.2% of Israeli Jewish households were
Oriental, but they accounted for 52.1% of Jewish households in
the poorest ten percent of the population.[16] Perhaps more impor-

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[14] See Nadav Safran, Israel: The Embattled Ally, Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Press, 1981, pp.185-187.

[15] Avraham Shama, Immigration Without Integration: Third World
Jews in Israel, Cambridge, MA: Schenkman CO. 1977.

[16] Yael Yishai, "Israel's Right-Wing Jewish Proletariat", in Jour-
nal of Jewish Sociology, vol. 24. no.2. December 1982, p.89.

tantly, even two years after Likud came to power, according to a poll in the Israeli monthly, Monitin, 59% of the Orientals believed that they were disadvantaged.[17] As the Israeli economy continued to falter in 1976, some Oriental slum dwellers began to riot in the streets.[18] Begin employed provocative rhetoric, repeating to Oriental voters that the Labor Party was the source of their woes, and that the Labor Party had discriminated against them. Begin presented himself to Orientals as the politician who had their interests at heart and understood them. By 1977, he won over many of them. As one observer put it:

> No contemporary Israeli party leader, and certainly
> not Peres, can even begin to approach Prime Minister
> Begin's mastery of rhetorical style, which is rich in
> religious and traditional symbolism. . . . Begin was
> far more effective in appealing to the Oriental voters
> in their own 'code' and in organizing their experi-
> ences through his symbolic appeals than was Peres.
> Begin, who is personally religiously observant, suc-
> ceeded in projecting his image as a 'proud Jew'. . . .
> In addition to respect for Jewish tradition and Orien-
> tal culture, another important aspect of Begin's pub-
> lic persona is that he appears to be a humble man
> without pretensions, i.e. a man of the common peo-
> ple.[19]

Likud's position was also strengthened by unrest among Israel's Arab population. Incidents such as the Land Day riots of March 1976 saw Israeli Arabs expressing hatred for the state and affinity for the PLO. Most Israelis were shocked by the intensity of the Arab protests. Widely perceived as the party that was tougher on Arab issues, the Likud was the natural choice of Israelis

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Safran, p. 195.

[19] Myron Aronoff, in Freedman 96-97.

frightened by Arab radicalization.

Whatever the relative weight of these and other factors in pushing Israeli opinion to the right, their combined effect in the 1977 elections was to strip Labor of 19 of the 51 seats they had in 1973 while increasing Likud's total from 39 to 43 and bringing Begin to power. Kahane, unable to capitalize immediately on the trend to the right, only received 4,396 votes or .2% of the total. Kahane attributes his poor showing to his attempt, one week before the election, to drive Nablus mayor Basa'am Shaka from the West Bank by dispatching armed men to his office. Kahane says that as a result of the raid, "I lost 5000 votes in a single day. . . . There was a backlash. I got thousands of angry letters and phone calls. It cost me the election."[20] In reality, Kahane's failure was probably more a result of his absence from Israel during 1975, which severely compromised his identity as an Israeli and removed him from public view.

Theoretically, Kach should have been strengthened greatly by Likud's rise to power since the elections left Kach as the sole right-wing opposition party. Moderated by the responsibility of power, Begin toned down his rhetoric about annexing the territories and dealing with the Arabs. Begin manifested his newly acquired moderation by signing the Camp David Accords with Egypt. Sadat's actions and powerful American pressure compelled Begin to reach an agreement with Egypt although it meant compromising positions on which he had historically taken a hard line. While he

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[20] Quoted in Robert Friedman, "Kahane in Israel", Present Tense, Summer 1980, pp.21-22.

had always indicated his willingness to return the Sinai, the autonomy clauses for the West Bank and Gaza marked a radical divergence from his traditional rhetoric. Many of Begin's previous supporters opposed the treaty, including a full 1/3 of Likud Knesset Members who abstained or voted against the treaty. To them, the treaty represented an exchange of territory, oil revenues, and the right to control the destiny of the occupied territories, all for a mere piece of paper. Religious groups including Gush Emunim and Kach opposed any land concessions on the grounds that they violated religious law. Camp David prompted outspoken Likud deputies, Geula Cohen and Moshe Shamir, to defect to form the right-wing Tehiya (or "Revival") Party and stand in opposition to the government on the right.[21] As such, the Camp David Accords provided a new issue which right-wing groups could exploit to attract the support of strongly nationalist Israelis.

Despite the general shift to the right in Israel and the rallying point offered the right by Camp David, Kahane was still unable to succeed electorally. In the 1981 election, he mustered only 5,128 or .3% of the votes. Several factors account for Kahane's inability to profit from the seemingly favorable political atmosphere. The existence of the Tehiya list in 1981, which captured three seats, severely limited Kahane's vote-getting potential. Tehiya's territorial views mirrored Kahane's, their primary differences lying in Kahane's emphasis on religion while Tehiya focused solely on secular security issues. Somewhat surprisingly,

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[21] David Pollock, "Likud in Power", in *Israel in the Begin Era*, Robert Freedman (ed.), Baltimore: Praeger, 1982, pp. 28-53.

voter analysis indicates that Tehiya's votes came not at the expense of the Likud, but from precincts that were previously National Religious Party strongholds.[22] The NRP lost six of its twelve seats in 1981, the bulk of them apparently to TAMI, an Oriental and especially Moroccan splinter group without any discernible ideology. Some of those religious voters who wished to express discontent with the traditional parties, voters who were potential Kahane supporters, turned instead to the new Tehiya and TAMI lists.

Kahane's failure can also be explained by decisive Likud action taken against him. Knowing that any support of Kahane would be at its expense, Likud tried to subdue him. Unlike the Labor regimes before it, Begin's government vigorously prosecuted Kahane for any and all wrongdoings, particularly as the election approached. Prosecutors requested the maximum three year sentence for Kahane in connection with a riot that he allegedly incited in February 1979. When the court let Kahane off lightly, Likud Defense Minister Ezer Weizman unilaterally exercised his powers to control the Kach leader. In 1980, he arrested Kahane under Israel's Emergency Powers Law whereby individuals may be detained by order of the Defense Minister for up to six months without trial or formal charges. Kahane was the first Jew ever subjected to this so-called administrative arrest, which is normally reserved for suspected Arab terrorists, and he spent six months in jail in 1980. No official explanation for the arrest was ever offered.[23]

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[22] Pollock, p.34.

[23] Sprinzak, p.10.

This jail term, of course, hampered Kahane's efforts to attract support, and the government continued to hinder him after he was freed. During the election campaign, Begin's government filed a formal complaint with the Central Election Committee to outlaw Kahane from running, something the Labor government had never attempted. Although the Central Election Committee ruled Kahane ineligible, the Israeli Supreme Court reversed the decision. The court held that such a prohibition compromises Kahane's democratic freedoms and would also endanger the status of other radical parties, particularly the left-wing anti-Zionist lists. Precisely the same process would take place in 1984.[24]

The Likud's Arab policy, both for Israel proper and on the West Bank, was tougher than Labor's had been, thus appeasing some who favored policies resembling Kahane's. Begin's first advisor on Arab affairs resigned in 1979 when his recommendations to meet Arab social and economic demands were ignored.[25] Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Agriculture, first reflected the drift of Likud's Arab policy in August 1977 when he referred to Arabs as "foreigners whose theft of national land by means of squatting and building on disputed plots would soon be stopped."[26] In 1978, as part of this plan, Likud officials began openly speaking of the campaign to "Judaize the Galilee", an area of terrific symbolic import for Zionists, where the high Arab birth rate had resulted

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[24] Sprinzak, p.14.

[25] Ian Lustick, "Israel's Arab Minority Under Begin", in Israel in the Begin Era, Robert Freedman (ed.) Baltimore: Praeger Press, 1982, p.125.

[26] Lustick, p.126.

in an Arab majority by 1978. Furthermore, Begin authorized tougher policies to curb Palestinian nationalism which was becoming more widespread among Israeli Arabs. Under Begin, Israel imposed punishment curfews in Arab towns and periodically shut down Arab universities on the West Bank in response to anti-Israel unrest there. The spiralling cycle of violence climaxed in the deportation of the pro-PLO Arab mayors of Hebron and Halhul in May 1980 as part of Begin's "iron fist" policy on the West Bank.[27] By combining strong rhetoric with vigorous action, Begin, unlike Labor, satisfied Israelis who favored a hard line Arab policy and might have otherwise turned to Kahane.

A final factor which may have accounted for Kahane's poor showing in 1981 is worthy of mention. Begin's policies just prior to the election were targeted to attract the votes of the same lower-class Oriental Jews who comprise the majority of Kahane's supporters. Begin's Minister of Finance, Yoram Aridor, drastically cut import tariffs and taxes immediately before the election, making previously unaffordable items, such as color televisions and video cassette recorders, available to lower income Israelis. Poor Orientals, who had rioted in protest against the Labor government, now found themselves enjoying a higher standard of living. Aridor's policies were criticized as inflationary and as an example of economic electioneering, but they succeeded in gaining the support of the lower socioeconomic classes for Begin. As one observer wrote:

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[27] Lustick, p. 139.

> It is difficult (for Labor -- S.L.) to persuade an
> electorate, and particularly the less sophisticated
> sectors of it, that the economic situation is as bad
> as it really is when salaries are linked to a cost of
> living index and when a propitious cut in luxury taxes
> allowed the voters to buy such eagerly sought items as
> color television sets and automobiles at 'bargain'
> prices shortly before the election.[28]

In addition, Begin's decision to bomb the nuclear reactor in Iraq bolstered his image among the right-wing who were potential Kahane supporters. The raid occurred on June 9, 1981 with elections slated for June 30. In ordering the raid, Begin was probably inspired by a genuine fear of Iraqi nuclear capabilities. Nevertheless, the timing was not accidental. Consequently it is not surprising that, even with their new opposition on the right, the Likud continued to attract an increasing proportion of the Oriental vote, a trend that had begun before 1973. In 1981 60% of Oriental voters cast their ballots for Begin.[29]

The combined result of all these factors was that Kahane did not share in the political prosperity enjoyed by Israel's right in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Public opinion polls show that since 1973, an increasing proportion of Israelis identify themselves as "rightists" politically. In 1973, 23% called themselves rightists; in 1977, 28%; in 1981, 32%; and by 1984, for reasons we will see below, 39% of all Israelis considered themselves rightists.[30] Even so, during those years of obscurity the groundwork was laid for Kahane's success, and he merely had to await a more

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[28] Aronoff, p.96.

[29] Yishai, p.89.

[30] Asher Arian, Politics in Israel, Chaltham, N.J.: Chaltham House, 1985, p.251.

favorable constellation of historical contingencies. Soon after
Likud's re-election in 1981, the tide began to turn in Kahane's
favor.

The Lebanon War, commencing in September 1982, triggered
Kahane's surge of popularity. Unlike all previous wars which
unified Israelis of all political orientations, the war in Lebanon
tore the nation apart. The war in Lebanon polarized and radical-
ized Israeli politics, creating an atmosphere in which Kahane
could thrive. More explicitly than at any other time since the
founding of the state, both the left and right in Israel accused
the other of betraying society's best interests for political
gain. Political groups on the left claimed that Likud had squan-
dered Israel's human and economic resources in pursuit of overly
ambitious goals in Lebanon. Likud countered by charging that the
war, though costly, was necessary to protect vital national inter-
ests, and that those who sought to discredit the war effort were
guilty of betraying the nation in favor of narrow political goals.
The controversy over the war exacerbated Oriental-European ten-
sions as well. Orientals saw the Lebanon War as "their war":
attacks on predominantly Oriental towns in the North triggered the
war, many of the military heroes and casualties were Oriental, and
a higher percentage of army officers were Oriental than ever
before. The protests against the war were led and participated in
almost exclusively by Europeans, a fact which enraged Orientals.

The debate about the war was highly emotional, and spread to
more general issues such as the disposition of the territories,

sometimes even leading to violence as when Peace Now activist
Emile Grunsweig was killed during a demonstration. Israelis began
to distrust their traditional leaders, and became more extreme in
their political views. The 1984 election demonstrated the power
of this polarization when Likud and Labor lost ten seats between
them, largely to parties with less moderate views -- including
Kach.

Besides the polarization of opinion, the war in Lebanon had
other consequences which strengthened Kahane. Perhaps most obvi-
ous was the retirement of Menachem Begin. Begin abruptly stepped
down from office in September 1983 and has remained secluded from
the public eye ever since. According to Kahane, this was the
single most influential factor contributing to his election ten
months later. As he told me in March 1985, "Once Begin retired, I
knew I would win. Before that I had no chance."[31] Though Kahane
lacks Begin's breadth of appeal, and Begin's views are far more
moderate, there is a certain validity to Kahane's assessment.
Begin, for all his demagoguery, actually acted as a constraint
against anti-democratic extremism. Begin was well-known for his
staunch commitment to democratic protocol. He was wont to lecture
laboriously about the importance of European parliamentary tradi-
tion. Moreover, Begin had an unsurpassed talent among Israeli
politicians for inspiring crowds, and he was greatly admired by
young and poor Oriental Jews. Begin exuded confidence that he had
the solutions to Israel's toughest problems. To a certain extent,

[31] Meir Kahane, personal interview, March 1985.

[32] When I asked why Kahane has become popular, the most common

Kahane conveys the same image.[32] For those frustrated voters seeking a strong man to identify with in place of Begin, Kahane offered an attractive option. Election statistics bear out this claim. Hanoch Smith reported in a Jerusalem Post article entitled, "Disgruntled Sephardim Put Kahane in Knesset", that Kahane's strongest support came from predominantly Oriental areas such as development towns, Oriental moshavim (agricultural collectives), and the poor precincts of large cities, all traditional Likud strongholds.[33] While Kahane received 1.3% of the total vote in 1984, in the areas mentioned above he received approximately 3%. Thus, it seems that when Begin retired, Kahane inherited a small portion of his voters.

As the Lebanese campaign continued, and largely because it did, Israel faced a drastic economic crisis. By late 1983, the inflationary policies pursued by the Likud caught up with them. Aridor's pre-election policies created a cash-rich Israeli populace which, in turn, triggered a madly exaggerated stock market boom. During 1982, stock prices multiplied several times, and in 1983, the market collapsed. Industrial stocks were the first to fall, followed by the widely popular bank shares. In order to stave off disaster, the banks imported nearly one billion dollars from their foreign subsidiaries which they used to buy up their own stock and

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answer Israelis gave me (in my limited and not at all random sample) was "he has Begin's charisma" or "he excites the crowd like Begin did". Dissatisfied or angry Israelis at times use Kahane's and Begin's names similarly to symbolize aggressive solutions. For example, striking civil servants could be heard in Jerusalem in July 1985 chanting "Begin! Begin!" and moments later "Kahane! Kahane!".

[33] Jerusalem Post, July 24, 1984, p.1.

check its declining value. Finally, the government intervened to prevent a panic, and Aridor resigned amidst severe criticism.[34] In 1984, as the election approached, Israel suffered from a 400 percent inflation rate, an enormous foreign debt, and a climbing unemployment rate. Both Labor and Likud recognized and admitted that drastic austerity measures would be required to rectify the situation, and that prospect only added to the frustration that bolstered Kahane.

Israel's problems with the Arabs under her control provided Kahane both with a scapegoat for the faltering economy and an independent source of Israeli frustration. During 1983 and 1984 Arab terrorism against civilians continued, including one particularly brutal rape/murder of 15 year old Danny Katz, which infuriated Israelis and fueled Kahane's popularity. Some Israelis felt scared and accused the government of providing inadequate protection, especially on the West Bank. As one Hebrew University professor, a resident of the West Bank, told me:

> In terms of daily life, it is much worse than before.
> The Arabs have become even more violent, and the citizens in the territories are scared. And though I
> abhor Kahane's stance, I understand why it is attractive to someone who is angry and scared. Kahane suggests a virulent and abrasive answer. He points in a
> direction that has not yet been tried. He says what
> many Israelis think but won't say. The average guy in
> the street, especially in the West Bank, probably
> thinks we should have gotten rid of the Arabs in
> 1967.[35]

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[34] Gershom Schocken, "Israel in Election Year 1984", in Foreign Affairs vol.63 no.1, Autumn 1984, p.79.

[35] Mordechai Nisan, personal interview, July 1985.

The existence of a Jewish terrorist group operating in the West Bank indicates the extent to which the Arab-Jewish tensions there frustrated Jewish settlers. When the so-called "Jewish Underground" was discovered in 1984 many Israelis were shocked, but there was also an enormous outpouring of support, largely by right-leaning Israelis who saw the underground's actions as a legitimate expression of self-defense. Even the Prime Minister at the time of the arrest, Yitzhak Shamir, has consistently referred to the underground as good boys who made a mistake, and actively supports their release.[36]

Thus, as the elections approached in 1984, Kahane found himself in a more advantageous position than ever before. Political rhetoric was less restrained as a result of the Lebanon War, and public confidence in mainstream parties was at a new low. Begin's retirement left Kahane's demagoguery unrivalled in the Israeli environment. Terrible economic conditions, with bleak future prospects, encouraged some Israelis to look for a radical, simple solution to replace the austerity everyone predicted. Arab politicization and radicalization was frightening, and Kahane's hard rhetorical line at least offered a way to overcome that fear. Moreover, by 1984 Kahane had lived in Israel for 13 years and was finally starting to be accepted as a legitimate Israeli, an image he had long tried to foster.[37] As the right became radicalized

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[36] Jerusalem Post July 26, 1985, p.2.

[37] Kahane admits that he avoids being seen with Americans in Israel as much as possible. He also prefers native Israelis to American-born Israelis for his Knesset list, even if they are not well known.

during Likud's regime, and groups such as Tehiya began taking an even harder line, Kahane could be perceived as an honest politician who had stuck to his right-wing positions for more than a decade.[38]

Kahane's statements are designed to exploit such an atmosphere. He was totally unequivocal about the Arab problem, arguing that expulsion was the simple answer to Israel's complex economic and security problems. Of course, a simple answer was more attractive to the voter he targeted. In a speech in Jerusalem, after opening with a lurid story of Arabs killing a 19 year old soldier, Kahane continues:

> Is this what we struggled for? Is this what we prayed for? Is this what we waited 2000 years for? This spells the end of Zionism. We must deal with the Arabs! They are a cancer among us which must be cut out and thrown away. I speak with boys just out of the army who have no job. No job!!? There are jobs!! Arabs have jobs!! Let the Arabs work -- in Kuwait!! Arabs come to work in Israel every day because you can hire two Arabs for the price of one Jew. And with the money they earn they can afford eight children, ten children. What will happen when these children grow up? We don't need democracy, we need strength! There is only one solution: the Arabs must go!![39]

Kahane may vary his wording according to the religiosity of the audience, but his message is consistent and clear: Israel has no choice but to expel the Arabs.

Kahane's proposal to expel the Arabs offers a simple answer to Israel's immediate economic and security problems. Moreover, Kahane argues, it provides the only answer to Israel's demographic

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[38] As such he was able to harvest some of the jingoist sentiment whipped up during the Lebanon War by Sharon and Eitan, especially since neither of them headed a party list.

[39] Kahane, public speech, Jerusalem, July 1985.

problem. While statistics vary on the issue, there is agreement
that the Arab birth rate is higher than the Jewish birth rate, and
that the overall Arab population is growing faster. Unless there
is a leap in Jewish immigration to Israel or Arab emigration, the
logical result is an ever increasing proportion of Arabs in
Israel. As Chairman of the Israeli Political Science Association,
Professor Gabriel Ben Dor said in July 1985:

> If present trends continue, there will be 20 Arab
> members of Knesset by 1999, a development which may
> force us to change the rules of Israeli politics. ...
> . There is a huge reservoir of future Arab voters due
> to their higher birth rate and lower median age. We
> are witnessing the beginning of a process in which the
> Israeli Arabs will test the limits of the Israeli
> democratic system.[40]

Ben Dor's estimates, moreover, are based on the assumption that
Israel will not choose to absorb the occupied territories with
their additional 1.2 million Arabs. Since annexing the territo-
ries is a given for anyone voting for Kahane, a more drastic pro-
jection would be more accurate for them.

Despite the shock expressed by many Israelis, in light of the
developments traced above, it is hardly surprising that the modest
yet significant sum of 25,907 Israelis voted for Kahane in July
1984. The 1984 vote displayed the polarization described above,
and especially a shift of previous Likud voters further to the
right. Likud lost seven seats in 1984 but not to Labor (which
also lost three), Tehiya gained two, the combined Zionist relig-
ious parties (NRP, Shas, and Morasha) gained four, and Kahane

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[40] Gabriel Ben Dor, speech to Hebrew University Conference on
Multi-Ethnic Societies, Jerusalem, July 2, 1985. (emphasis
mine).

gained one. Kahane's support and Tehiya's as well came largely from young and Oriental voters.[41] If the military vote had been projected over the entire population (the military includes almost all young Israeli voters: men aged 18-20 and women aged 18-19) Tehiya would have received fourteen seats instead of five and Kahane three instead of one.[42]

Thus, it seems that the young, historically an accurate political barometer, have shifted to the right in Israel even more than the older sectors of the population. This can be partially explained by the increasing Orientalization of the electorate, especially its younger sectors. By 1984, Orientals, who tend to be more right-leaning, comprised 55% of the Israeli population. Their voting power can be expected to rise still further since 53.7% of the Oriental population is still too young to vote, compared to only 35.8% for Jews of European origins.[43]

Kahane's popularity, at least according to opinion polls, has increased steadily since July 1984. In January 1985 a Ma'ariv poll projected five seats for Kahane.[44] According to a September 1985 poll, Kahane would have won nine or ten seats if elections had been held then.[45] Moreover, according to pollster Meenah Tsemach, more than 40% of Israeli high school students sympathize

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[41] Jerusalem Post, July 27, 1984, p.1.

[42] Schocken, p. 89.

[43] Arian, p.24.

[44] Ma'ariv, January 11, 1985, p.1.

[45] Jerusalem Post, September 7, 1985, p.14.

[46] Ma'ariv weekly magazine section, June 28, 1985, p. 10.

with Kahane.[46] Such statistics undoubtedly make some Israelis nervous, especially those who laughed off Kahane's original election as a fluke.

The statistics collected by these opinion polls, though significant, may not accurately reflect Kahane's true electoral potential. Since the election, Kahane has not stopped campaigning. With the exception of Shabbat, he travels to a different town in Israel every night to deliver a public speech. This often requires a four hour drive each way after the Knesset session ends in the afternoon. Since no other party has been campaigning since the election, it is not surprising that Kahane has gained in the polls relative to other parties. When the next election approaches rival parties will expand their public exposure and draw support away from Kahane. As long as Kahane's positions are uncontested on a day to day basis, his popularity will remain at exaggerated levels. Even more basically, telling a pollster that one intends to vote for Kahane is not equivalent to actually doing so. A citizen may say he would vote for Kahane to express discontent or cynicism, but actually cast his ballot for a more moderate party. Also, there is a prevalent opinion among Israelis that having Kahane in the Knesset provides a healthy balance against the extreme left-wing and Arab members. Kahane's attacks on the left are by far the most popular portions of his speeches. One line that invariably draws laughter is, "Yossi Sarid (a left-wing Knesset Member -- S.L.) that dog! It is too bad he is Jewish!" (The implication is that Kahane could not expel him because he is

Jewish.) People who hold this view may be happy to see Kahane with one seat, and may even tell a pollster that they support him, but it remains questionable whether or not they would really vote for him.

Even if the statistics cited overestimate Kahane's popularity, it is not surprising that his support has grown since his election. The prominence he enjoys simply by being a Knesset Member lends Kahane a legitimacy which was previously unavailable to him. Israelis who agree with Kahane's ideas need not be embarrassed to admit it now that those ideas are connected to a Knesset Member instead of a fanatical American rabbi. The prestige of his new position has not escaped Kahane's attention. He encourages his followers to refer to him as "Member of Knesset, Rabbi Meir Kahane" when speaking about him in public, and all of his propaganda pamphlets use that title. Furthermore, Kahane's election is perhaps the best way to convince potential supporters that he is a viable leader and that their support will not be wasted. If people believe that Kahane or any other candidate is incapable of attracting enough votes to secure a seat, they will hesitate to vote for him even if they agree with his platform.

Kahane's growing popularity is also a result of the structure of the so-called unity government. After the 1984 election neither Labor nor Likud had enough seats to form a ruling coalition in the Knesset, so the unity government was formed in which both Labor and Likud are coalition partners with a rotating prime ministership. Likud's participation in a Peres-led government pre-

cludes it from its traditional role of opposing Labor policy. As
a result, Likud may lose support on the right side of the politi-
cal spectrum in the eyes of those who view any coalition with
Labor as ideologically inexcusable. Moreover, since Likud has a
stake in the survival of the coalition until Shamir becomes prime
minister, those in the Shamir camp of the Likud are less strident
in voicing discontent than they otherwise would be. Likud has
been put in the difficult position of trying to please its sup-
porters by criticizing Labor but guarding against a rift which
would cause new elections before its turn comes to lead the gov-
ernment. In addition, Likud has been plagued by internal sniping
and factionalism, since Likud challengers Ariel Sharon and David
Levy would prefer to hold new elections than to allow Shamir to
become Prime Minister again. Meanwhile, the parties to the right
of Likud have been strengthened by the unity government. Not only
do they monopolize the role of criticizing the Labor regime, they
have also inherited the support of those former Likud supporters
for whom a coalition with Labor is anathema.

Ironically, the media ban against Kahane, described in chapter
one, may actually contribute to his support. Since Kahane is not
quoted in newspapers and cannot appear on television, he is able
to tailor his comments to fit each audience without fearing that
they have heard him say something different on television. Kahane
is a master of political choreography and is successful in leaving
audiences with a carefully engineered picture of him. His content
never changes, but his emphasis does. When speaking to religious

audiences, he selectively quotes the religious sources which support his views. For instance, to a largely religious audience in Jerusalem, he said:

> The Education Ministry declared this year the year of the Rambam (a famous Jewish scholar -- S.L.). Let's hear what the Rambam had to say about the goyim in Israel. He differentiated between goyim who want to live in peace with you and other goyim. About the latter there is no doubt that they are to be expelled. About the former he says: taxes and slavery. Taxes and slavery?!! What about equal rights?!![47]

Secular audiences rarely hear Kahane's explicit religious references and see him primarily as an extreme nationalist. Though both religious and secular Israelis know what Kahane stands for, with the media ban, Israelis cannot know that he alters his comments to suit his audience unless they make the effort to hear him address several groups.

Perhaps the most obvious source of Kahane's growing popularity since the election is the slew of Arab terrorist incidents committed against Israelis.[48] Kahane attempts to exploit each attack by speaking in the hometown of the victim. Recent restrictions on his parliamentary immunity, as discussed in chapter two, have constrained Kahane from doing this as much as he would like. When he does speak, he unabashedly stirs up anti-Arab sentiment by playing on the citizens' anger at the recent killing. When two teachers from Afula were killed during the summer of 1985, Kahane's speeches nearby during the following week helped produce an atmosphere in which gangs of Jewish youths roamed the streets

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[47] Kahane, public speech, Jerusalem, July 1985.

[48] In 1985, there have been more than twice the number of fatal terrorist attacks in Israel than in 1984.

searching for Arabs. Kahane's benefit from such incidents is based primarily on raw anger, and therefore, may be short-lived. Still, there can be no doubt that acts of Arab terrorism have contributed to Kahane's growing prominence.

Thus, in this chapter we have traced Kahane's political development in Israel from 1971 until 1985. By deliberately focusing on contingent historical events, we saw why Kahane found it so difficult to attract much support until Begin retired and the Lebanon War destroyed Israeli unity and political consensus. Only then was Kahane able to fully capitalize on the general swing to the right among Israelis. We turn now, in the sixth chapter, to fundamental structural reasons why Israeli politics are such fertile grounds for extremism and seek to explain why that fertile ground took so long to bear fruit.

Chapter VI

MEIR KAHANE AND ISRAELI POLITICAL STABILITY

In chapter five, we consulted the historical record of Israel
to explain Rabbi Kahane's failures and successes since he made
aliyah in 1971. While not providing the entire answer, historical
contingencies go far in explaining both Kahane's relative obscu-
rity from 1971 until 1984 and his recent burst of popularity. In
this chapter, we focus our attention on Israel's political and
social structure to determine whether they promote or discourage
Kahane's brand of extremism. What we find is that Israel's polit-
ical, economic, and sociological features all worked to Kahane's
advantage as an anti-Arab extremist. This structural analysis,
when combined with our previous historical investigation, should
dispel any doubts about Kahane's ability to get elected. Accord-
ing to political scientists who treat the subject of political
extremism and its causes, a country could not be much more suscep-
tible to anti-alien extremism than Israel. In fact, the truly
challenging question is not why Kahane was elected in 1984, but
rather, why sentiments such as his have not succeeded politically
before? A close scrutiny of Israeli political history reveals
that organized extremist movements are rare. Moreover, those
extremist elements that do exist have been, for the most part,
Oriental leftist groups that focus on integrating into society

rather than changing it. Right-wing, anti-Arab extremism, the type which Israeli political and social structure promotes most strongly, is not just rare in Israeli history, it is nonexistent.

The relative lack of extremism in Israeli history, despite its fertile soil is a paradox which requires an examination of the subtle yet powerful influence of political culture to explain it. The political values shared by Israelis, especially those of European descent who comprise the bulk of the Israeli political elite, contain heretofore inviolable taboos against expressing anti-democratic extremism in public. Only someone from outside the Israeli environment, like Meir Kahane, has ever dared to break those taboos. By doing so, he poses a provocative challenge to Israelis, forcing them to confront the inescapable question of whether Israel can be both Jewish and democratic. To some extent contradictions and/or tensions are built into the foundations of most modern nation states, nevertheless, provided that prosperity or consensus does not break down, political harmony will counterbalance strife. But the potentially contradictory goals of the Israeli state to be both Jewish and democratic is a fault line along which major earthquakes may erupt. Since shared values have been responsible for preserving Israel's democratic order against threats inherent in its structure, a disintegration of those values could be tantamount to the disintegration of Israeli democracy in general. Perhaps this is the very fear which inspires the Israeli establishment's obsessive reaction to Kahane that we noted in chapter two.

The extremist threat in Israel is not monolithic in origin; it arises from economic, sociological, and political sources. Within the political sphere, Israel's proportional representation system is perhaps the most obvious source of potential extremism. In Israel, any party receiving 1% of the vote captures a Knesset seat with all of its attendant advantages. For example, in 1984, a party needed to attract only about 20,000 votes to qualify one of its members for Knesset, a task which is especially easy since the country's small size allows candidates access to nearly every voter. The result, as we expect from proportional representation, is a multi-party system.[1]

Such a representative system is destabilizing for two reasons. First, it places a premium on differentiating one's own party from opponents instead of encouraging compromise and unification.[2] According to Downs, "It is likely that in multiparty systems, parties will strive to distinguish themselves ideologically from each other and maintain the purity of their positions."[3] As the number of parties increases, as it normally does in a strictly proportional system, each party attacks those with whom they have the most in common since these are the most likely choices for one's own supporters if they choose another party.[4] The result, writes Ferdinand Hermens in his scathing attack on proportional

[1] Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, NY: Harper and Row, 1957, pp.124-127.

[2] Downs, pp.127-133.

[3] Downs, pp.126-127.

[4] Seymour Lipset, The First New Nation, New York: Norton Co. 1979, p.307.

representation, is that "political differences are not only more clearly expressed, but multiplied and intensified."[5]

The second destabilizing dynamic of proportional representation, and the one that most concerns our present investigation, is that it induces groups on the edge of the political spectrum to radicalize further.[6] This effect is partially due to the first dynamic: since extreme parties seek to attract society's most radical voters, they must distance themselves as far as possible from "establishment" groups and from those nearest to them on the political spectrum. In this way, they stake out a distinctive niche for themselves, preserving their ability to attack the entire established system, and to exacerbate those fringe frustrations from which they derive sustenance. Also, a multiparty system can actually cause the divergence of voters' political attitudes by increasing the range of political rhetoric. As Downs puts it:

> The number of parties in existence molds the political views of rising generations, thereby influencing their positions. . . . In a plurality structure, since a two-party system is encouraged and the two parties usually converge, voters' tastes may become relatively homogeneous in the long run; whereas the opposite effect may occur in a proportional representation structure.[7]

Thus, proportional representation continually broadens the range of the political spectrum. Finally, voters in proportional democracies are also aware that their ballots cast for extremists are

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[5] Ferdinand Hermens, Democracy or Anarchy?, New York: Johnson Co. 1972, p.18.

[6] Downs, pp.124-127.

[7] Downs, p.124-125.

less likely to be "wasted" than in a plurality system since a fringe party stands a better chance of being elected.

In majoritarian democracies, the dynamics mentioned above work in precisely the opposite direction, thereby acting as moderating forces. Since a majority (or at least a plurality) vote is required to be elected, groups are encouraged to overlook their disagreements with their kindred groups in order to unite against those with whom they disagree more. Thus, radical groups often compromise, offering their support to one moderate group to ensure that the more odious moderate is defeated.[8] Finally, in most majoritarian systems, "each party will try to resemble its opponent as closely as possible" in an effort to maximize its votes.[9] Seymour Lipset, in The First New Nation, attributes the consistent failure of radical challenges in the United States largely to the nature of America's representative system.[10]

In America, we enjoy a certain confidence that the basic democratic nature of the state is guaranteed by the Constitution and the checks and balances mandated by it. The absence of a formal constitution in Israel augments the dangers presented by the proportional representation system. Considering all of the threats to Israel's democratic order presented in this section, the lack of formal checks on governmental authority is all the more conspicuous. Theoretically, Knesset operates without constraints on

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[8] Hermens, pp.20-25. Also see, Brian Barry, Sociologists, Economists, and Democracy, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp.99-126.

[9] Downs, p.127.

[10] Lipset, First New Nation, p.287.

its power, and it could even alter the very nature of the

regime.[11] As Nadav Safran muses rhetorically:

> True, Britain does not have a constitution or any
> limitation on the power of Parliament, and its democ-
> racy does not seem to be the worse for it. But, then,
> could a young nation-state such as Israel be expected
> to have the equivalents of the long parliamentary
> tradition, the political experience, and the kind of
> public opinion which have acted as informal restraints
> on the power of the majority and as buttresses of
> liberty in Britain?[12]

Aside from these aspects of the political system which promote

instability and extremism, Israel faces political issues and dis-

putes which threaten democratic stability. As Gabriel Almond and

Sidney Verba write in The Civic Culture, "unresolved political

issues of great importance eventually create instability in a

democratic system. . . . If politics becomes intense, and if it

remains intense because of some salient issue, the inconsistency

between attitude and behavior will become unstable." They add in

a footnote that, "this model applies best to those political dis-

putes in which individuals are involved and have relatively spe-

cific demands that they would like satisfied by the government."[13]

Israel certainly satisfies these particular criteria for political

instability since she faces several critical and unresolved

issues. The conflict between Israel's religious and secular popu-

lation, for instance, has persisted since the state's founding,

affects virtually every Jewish citizen, and consistently provokes

[11] Nadav Safran, Israel: The Embattled Ally, Cambridge, MA: Har-
vard University Press, 1981, p.126.

[12] Ibid. pp.126-127.

[13] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture, Princeton,
N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp.483-484.

strong reactions on both sides. Conflicts between Orientals and Europeans and the question of the Arab minority qualify as persistent and intense political issues as well. Israel, from 1948 until today, has had to balance the quest for a distinctive Jewish state with the presence of a sizeable Arab population that feels no loyalty to the state and has even demonstrated its hostility on occasion. Thus, Israel possesses not only the structural prerequisites for democratic instability, but also the festering disputes which could catalyze it.[14]

Even Israel's political style points toward instability. According to Sidney Verba, "There is a tendency . . . to connect political stability with a pragmatic political style that stresses open, implicit, and instrumental political beliefs. And the connection makes sense."[15] Verba claims that the replacement of ideological or traditional criteria for political decisions with purely rational ones is a hallmark of modernity and stability.[16] Israeli political debate is noteworthy for its ideological nature, inflammatory rhetoric, and reliance upon traditional religious

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[14] The threat of Arab invasion, though clearly a serious and persistent issue, promotes unity and loyalty among Israelis. It is not an issue which lends itself to intra-Israeli strife since the consequences of division are so catastrophic. It is important to recognize, however, that this external threat exacerbates the Arab versus Jew conflict within Israel since Arabs are often perceived as part of the intransigent enemy.

[15] Sidney Verba, in Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965, p.548.

[16] Ibid. p.546. He does, however, recognize the stabilizing influence of mild emotional commitment as well since purely pragmatic bases for loyalty depend too heavily and unforgivingly upon system performance. See The Civic Culture, p.488.

symbolism. As Leonard Fein observed:

> The tacit requirement that all political debate be
> phrased ideologically necessarily affects the subs-
> tance of the debate, limits what can be said on either
> side, invests discussion of simple policy problems
> with emotion appropriate only to more fundamental
> questions. The White Knight and the Black Knight
> tilt, in full regalia, in defense of Virtue, where the
> real issue is an increment to the cost of living
> allowance provided government clerks.[17]

Beyond political rhetoric, the political parties seek to indoc-
trinate members and reinforce attachments through youth movements,
soccer teams, financial institutions, health plans, and party
sponsored newspapers. These movements and institutions are
designed to instill an affective commitment in members.[18] The
more established secular parties (e.g. Herut and Labor) can be
traced back to ideologically opposed movements dating to the nine-
teenth century in Eastern Europe.[19] These secular Zionist move-
ments in Europe developed into ideological movements in order to
provide an emotional equivalent to the religious commitment and
the disputatious tradition of religious Jewish scholarship that
they sought to replace. Today's parties, therefore, harbor his-
torically reinforced, ideological animosity toward each other
manifested largely in the rhetoric alluded to above. The relig-
ious parties, representing more than ten percent of the elector-
ate, make no gestures whatsoever toward accommodation, instead

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[17] Leonard Fein, Israel: Politics and People, Boston: Little Brown
and Co. 1968, p.92.

[18] As opposed to instrumental or rational commitments. See Almond
and Verba, p.488.

[19] Of course, several religious parties originated in Europe also,
as with the Mizrahi and Agudah movements.

basing their positions entirely on immutable religious dogma.[20]
It should come as no surprise that almost all Israelis possess
definite political opinions and attachments as is manifested in
the unusually high 80% average rate of voter participation.[21]
According to Almond and Verba, the type of intense, emotional
attachment promoted by Israeli political groups, "tends to 'raise
the stakes' of politics: to foster the sort of mass, messianic
movements that lead to democratic instability."[22] In short, then,
ideological strife, fiery rhetoric, and intransigence characterize
Israel's political arena, opening the way for democratic disinte-
gration.

Israel's ostensible predilection for political extremism does
not just stem from her political structure, institutions, and
style. Israel's intermediate level of economic development, espe-
cially when combined with her speedy socioeconomic modernization
should, by all indications, give rise to extremism.[23] Since 1948,
the Jewish population has leaped from 650,000 to more than
3,000,000. Between 1950 and 1967 Israel's GNP rose at an annual
rate of 9.3%, and GNP per capita rose at 3.4%. Only Japan sur-
passed Israel in growth during that period. Since 1958, moreover,
Israel's average standard of living has more than doubled, sky-

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[20] They do compromise, but not on issues which concern Jewish law.

[21] Asher Arian, Politics in Israel, Chatham, N.J.:Chatham House, 1985, p.133.

[22] Almond and Verba, p.488

[23] Sammy Smooha, Israel: Pluralism and Conflict, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978, pp.106-110.

rocketing at an annual rate of 8.8% between 1958 and 1978.[24]
Since 1973, however, Israel's growth has stagnated at a rate of
less than 3%. Given these statistics, Samuel Huntington and Jorge
Dominguez leave little doubt as to what we should expect in
Israel. "Civil violence," they write, "is thus likely when aspi-
rations and capabilities are changing and when the gap between
them is increasing. This is, of course, precisely what takes
place during the process of socioeconomic modernization."[25] More-
over, Israel, as a country which experienced strong economic
growth followed by a downturn, should have an extremely strong
predisposition for civil violence.[26] They also indicate that
political disorder and civil violence is most likely in countries
at intermediate levels of development, such as Israel.[27] Thus, by
virtue of its dynamic nature and intermediate development, Isra-
el's economy intensifies the inclination toward extremism.

Israel's social makeup not only adds to those threats of demo-
cratic instability; it also provides anti-democratic movements
with both a logical rank and file, Oriental Jews, and an obvious
target, Arabs. Broadly speaking, Israel's is a three-tiered soci-
ety with Arabs at the bottom, far below Oriental Jews and still

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[24] Smocha, p.107.

[25] Samuel Huntington and Jorge Dominguez, "Political Development",
in Handbook of Political Science, Fred Greenstein and Nelson
Polsby (eds.) vol.3, Reading, MA: Addison and Wesley Publish-
ers, 1975, p.8.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid. p.9.

[28] Here I refer to status considerations that transcend economic
rank.

further below the European elite.[28] As members of the hostile Arab nation surrounding Israel, largely excluded from the army,[29] and possessing separate language, religion, and educational institutions, the Arabs are decidedly Israel's "out group" and stand little, if any, chance of integrating. Israeli social structure seems prone to what Lipset and Raab call low status backlash analogous to that which gave rise to the Ku Klux Klan in America.[30] By virtue of that structure, Israel fulfills the three prerequisites for right-wing extremism cited by Lipset: social strain, identification of that strain's cause, and designation of a specific solution.[31] What we will see below is that while Oriental Jews perceive social strain, in the infrequent event that they react at all, they act not toward the Arabs but toward the Europeans, seeking full integration. Moreover, when they do act, their movements have had left-wing instead of right-wing orientations.

The socioeconomic and political influence gap between Oriental and European Jews has been mentioned several times above. Scholars have analyzed the problem at length largely in an effort to assign blame either to the Israeli establishment for discrimination or to the Orientals for failing to master the necessary skills to succeed.[32] Such analyses need not concern us; what is

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[29] Arabs are permitted to volunteer for the army, and many Druzes and Bedouins serve.

[30] Lipset and Raab, pp. 116-119.

[31] Ibid. p.23.

[32] See, for example, Avraham Shama and Mark Iris, Immigration Without Integration: Third World Jews in Israel, Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing, 1977.

important to us is that the Oriental community feels aggrieved and frustrated in Israel (see chapter five). Their political equality, in terms of political rights, has never been questioned and "no discriminatory ideology toward any Jew has ever been promulgated."[33] Still, their de facto inequality in terms of political influence has been a persistent fact of life in Israel, one which should incline them toward protest action. Lipset argues that the persistent elitism of one class while mouthing the values of equality, such as in Israel, magnifies the lower class's resentment. In support, Lipset invokes Tocqueville, "To conceive of men remaining forever unequal on a single point, yet equal on all others is impossible; they must come in the end to be equal upon all."[34] Moreover, Oriental Jews, originating largely from Arab countries or from other nations with authoritarian regimes, lack the experience of democracy. Thus, their propensity toward extremism is accentuated by an absence of historically grounded respect for democratic values.

Originating from non-democratic cultures, socioeconomically underprivileged, and frustrated for over three decades, Oriental Jews seem to be perfect candidates for protest and anti-democratic extremism. An analysis of Jewish group attitudes suggests that both Arabs and Europeans are likely targets of that action. Europeans are regarded by Orientals as the partial cause of their

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[33] Yochanan Peres, "Ethnic Relations in Israel" in American Journal of Sociology May 1971, p.1025.

[34] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969, p.56. Quoted in Lipset, First New Nation, p.288.

depressed state. The Arabs, besides their susceptibility to low status backlash, are regarded by the majority of Jews as aliens.[35] Studies conducted by Yochanan Peres showed that Orientals view Arabs with even more hostility than Europeans. Of 246 Orientals polled by Peres, 93% said Israel would be better if there were fewer Arabs, 83% felt that every Arab hates Jews, and 78% would refuse to have an Arab as a neighbor. Europeans displayed no affection for Arabs but were less overwhelmingly hostile than the Orientals.[36] This may seem surprising since Orientals presumably understand Arab culture and could potentially bridge the gap between Europeans and Arabs. Two factors overshadow this effect, however. The Orientals carry a legacy of resentment from their experiences under Arab rule. But as Peres argues:

> this explanation seems insufficient to account for the extreme hostility revealed in the findings. The antagonism of Orientals toward Arabs should be seen in the context of their present illusion as well as a result of past experience. The Orientals feel that they must reject the remaining traces of their Middle Eastern origin to attain the status of the dominant European group. By expressing hostility to Arabs, an Oriental attempts to rid himself of the 'inferior' Arabic elements in his own identity and to adopt a position congenial to the European group which he desires to emulate.[37]

In support of this hypothesis, Peres cites data showing that Oriental Jews tend to be more hostile to Arabs the more they resemble Arabs in accent or appearance.

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[35] Smooha, p.46.

[36] Peres, p.1039.

[37] Peres, p.1040.

Arab attitudes and actions make them an even likelier target of extremist backlash. Opinion polls show that the majority of Israeli Arabs question Israel's right to exist, and of those who accept Israel, most advocate withdrawal to the United Nations Partition borders of 1947.[38] Israeli Arab writers display a deep resentment toward their subordinate status in Israel.[39] Such resentment results in a greater willingness among Arabs to indulge in socially deviant acts. Adult crime rates among Arabs, especially violent crimes, is more than twice that of Jews. More importantly, Israeli authorities convicted more than 400 Arabs for collaborating with the enemy between 1967 and 1975 alone. Israeli Arabs were also counted among the ranks of the suicide squads responsible for the brutal massacres of Israeli schoolchildren in Kiryat Shmoneh and Ma'alot in 1974.[40] In the eyes of Israelis, collusion in such terrorist acts is the ultimate act of treason, lending support to those who advocate tougher measures toward Arabs.

Israel, by all appearances, should be a veritable hotbed of extremist movements. Proportional representation, no formal constitution, ideological political style, unresolved critical political issues, speedy economic development followed by stagnation, and an intermediate level of economic advancement all coalesce into an almost perfect extremist milieu. The demographic raw

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[38] Smooha, p.207.

[39] See, for example, Fouzi El-Asmar, To Be an Arab in Israel, London: Frances Pinter, 1975.

[40] Smooha, p.215.

material for extremism exists also. Fault lines run deep through Israeli society between religious and secular, Oriental and European, Jew and Arab. This last division seems particularly prone to conflict given the absence of any cross-cutting affiliations, language, or religion, to mitigate the often murderous hostility which exists. Moreover, the Jews most disaffected with their position in Israel and most prone to protest, the Orientals, are the same Jews who harbor the most intense resentment for their Arab neighbors.

In spite of this overwhelming constellation of proclivities toward extremism, organized extremist movements are largely absent from Israeli history. Moreover, the few which have existed did not question Israel's basic commitment to pluralist democracy; rather they objected only to the relative status among groups within that basic framework.

Oriental dissent constitutes the bulk of organized protest in Israeli history, and even these have been relatively short-lived and amicably placated. The Wadi Salib riots of 1959, triggered by the shooting of a Moroccan Jew by a policeman in a Haifa slum, was one of the most serious manifestations of Oriental discontent. For several days, North African Jews (statistically the most disadvantaged subgroup of Orientals), under the name of the Union of North Africans, demonstrated in the streets of Haifa and surrounding towns, looted European properties, and roughed up passers-by. Their stated grievances were police brutality, unemployment, inadequate housing, and ethnic discrimination. The outburst was sig-

nificant in displaying the depth of Oriental resentment, but its lasting impact was minimal. The press highlighted the problem for a few weeks, and a special public inquiry investigated the grievances, but the issue soon faded. The leader of the Union of North Africans ran for Knesset in the ensuing election but failed to win a seat.[41]

The Black Panthers protested against the same alleged ethnic discrimination but with more stamina and organization. The Black Panthers started in 1970 as an unorganized group of Oriental youths from the slum areas of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The group evolved from a street gang to a protest movement, and finally into a party with electoral ambitions. The Black Panthers staged a series of vocal demonstrations, occasionally involving violence, spanning much of 1971, and demonstrated less vigorously thereafter as they mounted an unsuccessful campaign for the 1973 Knesset election. By achieving a prominence greater than the Wadi Salib group, the Panthers more successfully publicized the Orientals' grievances. In brief, the Panthers desired better education, improved housing, increased financial support for large families, job training for unemployed youths, and admission to the armed forces.[42] They also attracted the support of some Israeli leftists who provided them with ideological articulation for their demands in terms of the class struggle. As Shalom Cohen, one Communist who was attracted to the Panthers put it, "We do not consider this

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[41] Smooha, p.209.

[42] A disproportionate number of Orientals were refused admission to the army for reasons of illiteracy or criminal records.

an ethnic problem but a class problem. There are wealthy Yemenites, Syrians, Moroccans. What is important is the high correlation between ethnicity and class."[43] The influence of leftists such as Cohen on the Panthers was so pervasive that they even called for a Palestinian state on the West Bank, a proposal which probably would not have emerged independently from an otherwise purely Oriental protest group.

The Panthers' demands are significant primarily because they are so mild. As Eva Etzioni-Halevy wrote:

> The striking fact about these demands is that they provide evidence of the acceptance by the Black Panthers of some of the basic premises on which the Israeli society and politicoeconomic system is based: for instance, acknowledgement of the legitimacy of Israel's government, . . . acceptance of the tenet that the government is responsible for allocating certain economic rewards such as housing and employment; and finally, acknowledgement that the supreme test of full acceptance into (and participation in) Israeli society is admittance into the Israel Defense Force. As time went on, the Black Panthers did not radicalize their demands.[44]

Thus, while the Black Panthers proved that some Orientals deeply resented their position, in essence they were a radical affirmation of Israeli democracy and a demand to be part of it. In fact, 90% of the Panthers favored complete ethnic integration of schools, neighborhoods, and marriages.[45] Moreover, the Black Panthers were the most radical Oriental protest group yet formed,

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[43] David Schnall, Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics, New York: Praeger, 1979, p.163.

[44] Eva Etzioni-Halevy, "Protest Politics in the Israeli Democracy", in Political Science Quarterly, Fall 1975, p.505. Emphasis hers.

[45] Smooha, p.78.

and Orientals rarely avail themselves of any other avenues of protest.

To be sure, other Jewish protest groups have existed in Israel, though, with the exception of Gush Emunim, none attained even the popularity of the Black Panthers. In a survey of Israeli extremist politics, Sprinzak mentions two small undergrounds during the 1950's: the anti-secular Covenant of the Zealots, and the nationalist Tzrifin Underground, both of which dissolved when their leaders were jailed.[46] Religious zealotry, like that of the anti-state Netorei Karta, though common, has normally been limited to short outbursts.[47] Until 1973, despite all his frustrations and notable political failures, Kahane was the most noteworthy protest leader outside of the Black Panthers. Even after 1973, until the recent discovery of a Jewish terrorist underground, the Israeli extreme consisted of only Gush Emunim and Kahane. Gush, like the Panthers, does not wish to overthrow Israeli democracy, but merely to be allowed to settle on the West Bank. In fact, they have enjoyed basically cordial relations with the government, even Labor governments, who chose not to prohibit Gush's actions. The Jewish Underground is a significant exception to Israel's otherwise uniformly moderate history. Made up mainly of Gush members, the underground engaged in campaigns of intimidation and committed violent acts against Arabs on the West Bank. Aside from Kahane, they mark the first organized expression of anti-Arab extremism

[46] Ehud Sprinzak, "Extreme Politics in Israel", in Jerusalem Quarterly Fall 1977, pp.35-38.

[47] Smooha, p.213.

since the state's founding.[48] There is an important distinction, however, between purely violent and electoral protest. The underground, by choosing the means of violence and terror severely limited their potential for direct impact on Israeli politics. Their actions doomed them to the role of the "lunatic fringe". By running in elections, Kahane submits his platform to the public in hopes of gaining legitimacy and influence, something which is permanently unavailable to terrorists. Therefore, Kahane is unique in Israeli history since he expresses his extremism in the electoral realm, attempting to convince Israeli voters that his radical proposals must be embraced if Israel is to survive.

Israel, then, has not experienced the extremism that our investigation of her political institutions, economy, and demographic makeup leads us to expect. Kahane represents a radical break with all Israeli political phenomena before him. Nobody else, past or present, ever sought election with a program that was so unequivocally radical, or that questioned such basic assumptions as democracy and civil rights. Kahane is the first organized manifestation of the right-wing backlash, of the political resentment, of the democratic instability that Israel "should" have been facing since 1948. What accounts for Israel's mild history?

The answer, in part, lies in Israel's international situation. Since 1948, Israel has lived with the constant and contingent threat of full scale Arab attack, not to mention the daily "peacetime" Arab terrorism which has claimed hundreds of civilian lives.

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[48] Spontaneous incidents of anti-Arab extremism do occur from time to time, especially in the territories.

Existential threats foster unity among the besieged since the cost
of internal strife could be total destruction. Moreover, an ever-
present enemy serves as a national outlet for aggression, includ-
ing for frustrated groups. Universal army service for Jews, a
product of this same situation, cannot be overemphasized as an
integrating force for Israelis of diverse backgrounds, thereby
militating against extremism.

One other contingent factor ameliorating the extremist tenden-
cies should be mentioned. Seymour Lipset writes that, "effective
Sephardic activism is held back by the fact the North African
Jewish leadership did not immigrate; only the less educated, less
privileged parts of the society came to Israel."[49] Moreover, the
European establishment effectively coopted those Oriental leaders
which did arise, leaving the Oriental community without a means to
mobilize political resentment.

A more fundamental, if enigmatic, moderating force underlies
these others. More precisely, the relative lack of radical Jewish
dissent and anti-Arab extremism reflects the underlying values of
the Jewish population, that is, its political culture. Political
culture, according to Huntington and Dominguez

> consists of the empirical beliefs about expressive
> political symbols and values and other orientations of
> the members of the society toward political objects.
> It is the product of the collective history of a
> political system and the life histories of the indi-
> viduals who currently make up the system. . .
> Although central political values can change through
> time, they change very slowly. . . . Under the impact
> of economic growth and social change, institutional

[49] Seymour Lipset, "The Israeli Dilemma", in Michael Curtis and
Mordechai Chertoff (eds.) Israel: Social Structure and Change,
New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1973, pp.358-359.

arrangements make adjustments to new conditions <u>within</u> the framework of a dominant value system.[50]

Almond and Verba, in The Civic Culture, argue that a proper political culture can go far toward creating and/or maintaining stable democracy.[51] Elsewhere, Verba breaks down the content of political cultures into four general components: national identity, identification with one's fellow citizens, governmental output (i.e. what the government is or is not justified in doing), and the decision making process.[52] In Israel, these components, especially national identity, promote a national consensus for a Jewish democracy, intent on economic development, and a self-enforced higher moral standard. It is this consensus which, in large part, accounts for Israel's democratic stability and which is currently under attack from Meir Kahane.

Israel's political culture relies on a core set of values derived primarily from the Zionist movements in nineteenth century Europe. Zionism is the modern quest to realize the 2000 year old Jewish dream to return to the Holy Land and re-establish Jewish sovereignty. Modern Zionism developed in Europe and was affected by that environment. The principal stream of Zionism, labor-Zionism, is decidedly secular and socialist, and it dominated Israeli politics until 1977 in the form of what is now the Labor Party. Religious Zionists, the General Zionists, and Revisionists opposed the socialists on several points, often acrimoniously.

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[50] Huntington and Dominguez, pp.15-16.

[51] Almond and Verba, pp.473-475.

[52] Sidney Verba, in Pye and Verba, pp.529-543.

The political disagreements among the Zionist strands are many, but their broader agreements are of more concern to the present discussion. All Zionist groups dreamed of settling Israel and creating a Jewish state by ingathering the scattered exiles of the Diaspora. They all stressed the ultimate unity of the Jewish people and their potential to create a state that would be a light unto other nations. That state would be democratic, in accordance both with their socialist ideals and with the democratic structure of most European Jewish communities. Perhaps most importantly, European Zionism was a reaction to anti-semitism. Most Zionist leaders and nearly every member of the original Israeli political elite was haunted by the virulent anti-semitism of Europe, be it in the form of pogroms or the Holocaust. These experiences strengthened their egalitarian, democratic ideals and inspired them to be vigilant against recreating the discrimination to which they had been subjected. The Declaration of Independence reflects their value orientation. It reads, in part:

> The State of Israel . . . will ensure complete equal-
> ity of social and political rights to all of its
> inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, or sex. .
> . . We appeal . . . to the Arab inhabitants of the
> State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in
> the upbuilding of the state on the basis of full and
> equal citizenship.[53]

Whether or not such equal rights were conceivable given the demographic realities is open to question. What matters is that Zionism, an ideology shared in one form or another by nearly every Israeli, embraced democratic egalitarianism as an indispensable characteristic of a moral state.

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[53] Quoted in Kahane, They Must Go, p.5

Other shared values of the Israeli political culture are not so deeply felt by as many Israelis. Especially in the state's early years, socialism prevailed as the dominant economic ideology, albeit with significant dissent. Israel prided herself on providing housing, jobs, and basic needs to her entire population. The state's immigrant nature required such priorities. Related to this was a powerful commitment to economic development and modernization with which even the anti-socialists identified. The combination of Zionism, modernization, and socialism forms what Smooha calls Israel's triple ideology:

> The triple ideology which negates ethnicity has been so dominant over the last 50 years that one can look in vain for serious deviations from it among Orientals. My survey of pronouncements by Oriental spokesmen, ethnic publications and programmes of ethnic election lists shows a broad consensus with the established ideologies. The stated target is definitely ethnic integration, and separation is out of the question. . . . Even the two grass-root ethnic uprisings, the Wadi Salib riots of 1959 and the Black Panthers of the 1970's, were integrationist.[54]

Such a widespread consensus suggests that the content of Israel's political culture is adaptable enough to accommodate changes in the society and its attitudes. The basic values have remained constant, but the emphases have been flexible, thereby making consensus possible. Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya document just such a subtle evolution in their book, Civil Religion in Israel. They argue that civil religion is the myths, creeds, and rituals "which legitimate the social order, unite the population, and mobilize the society's members in pursuit of its dominant political goals. Civil religion is that which is most holy and

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[54] Smooha, p.77.

sacred in the political culture."[55] They outline the civil religions possessed by Israel since before 1948, concentrating on the level of appropriation of content and symbols from traditional Judaism. The influence of traditional religion, of course, reinforces the moral component of the political culture mentioned above. The precise differences among the three dominant civil religions they perceive (socialist Zionism, statism, and the new, more traditionally Jewish civil religion) is not nearly as critical in explaining Israel's dearth of political extremism as the adaptability of that civil religion that preserves the broad consensus.

Liebman and Don-Yehiya as well as Smooha note the strong consensus for the core values of Israeli political culture. In fact, argues Liebman, "civil religion implies an element of consensus or, to use Durkheim's formulation, a consciousness of 'moral unity' and a need for representation of that moral unity by sacred symbols."[56] Both cite results of opinion polls "proving" that nearly all Jews agree with these core values. What neither Smooha nor Liebman question with proper rigor is the depth to which these values are held. How strongly do Oriental Jews, hailing from authoritarian, traditional societies, believe that democracy, socialism, and egalitarianism are the only proper grounds on which to base a state? Even more important, is there a danger that Israel's value consensus, so vital in maintaining stable, moderate

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[55] Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, Civil Religion in Israel, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983, p. ix.

[56] Ibid. p. 11.

democracy, could break down under particularly unfavorable circumstances?

The historical contingencies discussed in the previous chapter: the Lebanese War, and Begin's retirement, combined with the challenge of Meir Kahane's intrusion into the Israeli body politic calls the stability of Israeli political culture into question. Since Kahane violated the long-standing taboo against questioning the legitimacy of democracy in Israel and of coexistence with the Arabs, the overarching hegemony of Israeli political culture faces a challenge. Kahane confronts Israel's political values not by rejecting the idea of a Jewish state (as others have done without success), but by carrying the idea of a Jewish state to its logical extreme. And there is logic in Kahane's questions about a growing Arab minority, namely, what will Israel do if the Arabs become a majority? If Israel must choose, will she be a Jewish state or a democracy? The mere posing of these questions in public is a real danger for Israeli political culture, and therefore, for Israeli democratic stability. This is one of the most important issues embedded in the Kahane phenomenon. If the value consensus erodes too far, Israel's potential for extremism may be actualized.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

Kahane's career as head of the Jewish Defense League and Kach, in addition to offering an illuminating case study of right-wing extremism, leads us to some general conclusions about the nature of politics that warrant elucidation and summary. First, Kahane's career helps explain the paradox of Israel's moderate political history despite the existence of many factors that promote extremism and instability. The contribution of political culture in explaining that paradox underscores the tremendous power wielded by abstract values in preserving or destroying political stability. Kahane's direct challenge to that political culture not only highlights features of Israeli value systems, but it also raises dangers associated with an extremist mix of religion with politics. Kahane is dangerous not only because he attacks the value consensus that preserves Israeli democracy, but also because his uncompromising religious fundamentalism threatens to unleash passions and conflicts that ought to be restrained.

Israeli society rests upon Western values of democracy and egalitarianism which, in large part, ensure her friendly relations with Western democracies, especially the United States. Israel depends upon these alliances for indispensable military and economic aid. Meanwhile, Kahane's intransigent anti-Arab stance

threatens to set off a dynamic of Israeli alienation from Western pluralism which, if carried through, would result in Israel's isolation from allies she can ill afford to lose. However, Kahane, as an ultranationalist, cannot imagine that his political performance leads in a direction that would undermine Israel's security. The irresponsible nature of his actions does not occur to Kahane because he epitomizes the "ethic of ultimate ends" that Weber so passionately warned against in "Politics as a Vocation".[1] By applying that other-worldly ethic to the political sphere, Kahane threatens Israel both with internal violence between Jews and Arabs and with international isolation. Thus, the man who espouses the most unrelenting Israeli nationalism is actually working directly counter to Israel's national interests.

Before discussing how the dangers of Kahane are elucidated by Weber's political ethics, I will review what has been demonstrated thus far in this thesis. In chapters two, five, and six, the issues surrounding Kahane's fate in Israel came to light. In chapter four, I reviewed the historical reasons for Kahane's near miss in the 1973 elections, the eleven years of relative obscurity that followed, and his recent surge of popularity. For many years, contingent historical factors constrained Kahane, who remained unwilling to compromise his radical views to accommodate public opinion. Finally, the tide shifted in his favor. Israeli politics moved decidedly to the right starting with Begin's election in 1977 and continuing into the 1980's. The Lebanon

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[1] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", in From Max Weber, H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

campaign, instead of unifying the population like previous wars, polarized Israeli society and prompted charges of betrayal from both sides of the political spectrum. Irresponsible economic policies designed to promote Begin's re-election in 1981, along with the financial burden of the Lebanon War, triggered a drastic economic crisis which the frustrated Israeli populace knew could only be cured by severe austerity measures (see chapter five). Continued terrorist attacks by Arabs on civilians in Israel salted an already festering wound. When Begin retired in 1983, he left Kahane largely unchallenged in the niche of right-wing demagogue. Kahane could not have asked for more propitious circumstances for his 1984 campaign, and his election should not have come as a surprise.

My analysis of the structural determinants of extremism in Israel does more than merely corroborate the predictability of Kahane's election; it suggests that extremism should be a constant plague in Israel's political arena. According to the political science literature on what promotes democratic instability, Israel is ideally suited for chronic political upheaval. In the political realm, Israel's proportional representation system, lack of formal constitutional restraints, unresolved and salient political issues, as well as a notoriously unrestrained style of political rhetoric all conspire against moderate, stable democracy. Economically, Israel's rate of development and recent stagnation are also putative sources of extremism. After experiencing speedy economic development (a destabilizing factor in itself), Israel's

economic growth faltered, causing economic performance to lag behind expectations. Furthermore, as a country falling somewhere between economic underdevelopment and development, Israel's susceptibility to extremism is intensified. Finally, Israeli social structure provides additional sources of political tension as well as likely participants and targets for extremism. Rifts between religious and secular Jews, Orientals and Europeans, and between Jews and Arabs are all precarious fault lines along which extremism could occur. Orientals, originating from non-democratic cultures and perceiving themselves as aggrieved in Israel, are likely candidates for protest in general and low status backlash against Arabs in particular. In short, we saw that Israel's political, economic, and social structures all suggest that democratic stability should be unlikely in Israel, and that something like Kach "should" have emerged long ago.

Nevertheless, Israel's democracy has been stable and its internal protest mild by any standards. My survey of Israeli extremist groups indicates that Israel has been free from radical protest except for a few relatively short-lived movements. Even these, specifically the Wadi Salib group and the Black Panthers, were not challenges to the democratic political structure, but demands to be incorporated into the establishment, even to the point of demanding the right to serve Israel in the armed forces. Even Gush Emunim, often mentioned as a radical challenge group, came to a modus vivendi with the establishment (see chapter five). All other extremism has been confined to isolated incidents or to

small groups with no intention of participating in electoral politics. Religious zealotry, for example, is a common occurrence in Israel, but rarely, if ever, extends beyond localized squabbles. Most importantly, when anti-Arab and anti-democratic movements besides Kahane's have existed in Israel, (for example, the recent Jewish Underground) they have opted to confine their actions to random acts of violence, eschewing electoral politics. Thus, Kahane, essentially an outsider, is the first Israeli to voice racist, anti-democratic views as part of an electoral platform. In 37 years of statehood, despite the seemingly inexorable structural inclination for extremism, Israel has faced but one radical rightist electoral challenge to her system, and that from an American-born immigrant.

Our analysis of Kahane led us not only to this paradox, but also to its solution: the role played by Israel's political culture. Kahane is unique in Israeli history not because his views are unconventional, but because he challenges the basic values upon which Israeli politics are based. These basic values, the political culture, sprout primarily from the secular Zionist movements, but are laden with the ethics and symbols of traditional Judaism. Emanating from a European environment, these values reflect a concern for democratic egalitarianism and a passion for creating a state on a new, higher, plane of morality. Israeli political culture, in slightly varied forms, has been almost universally embraced by Israelis of all backgrounds and political orientations. At the very least, the political culture has set

the boundaries of acceptability for the political arena by dictating the groundrules for political behavior and rhetoric. By violating the rules of the system, Kahane has been denied the democratic protections normally enjoyed by political actors in Israel. Kahane does not merely advocate unpopular positions, he has struck a raw nerve in the Israeli establishment and population at large. His rejection of the basic value consensus prompted the establishment's obsessive reaction to him that I described in chapter two. Since no political leader besides Kahane, no matter how demagogic, dared to break the rules and taboos erected by the political culture, Israel's political culture has overcome the dangers posed by her structure. The impact of Israel's political culture so overwhelmed her political structure that it provides a compelling case in which structural variables are unreliable indicators of the level of political upheaval. Our analysis of Israel suggests that the abstract values of the political actors should be a primary variable consulted when analyzing the prospects for political stability.

It is precisely because Israel's democracy depends so heavily on political culture that Kahane is so dangerous. In America, for instance, even though the value system is important, the political and social structures minimize the impact of extremism (see chapter four). Israel's democracy, however, is more tenuous, and relies heavily on an abstract value consensus. Kahane challenges that value consensus, and his recent successes signal that it is beginning to erode. Even if Meir Kahane never rises to a position

of influence, any chinks his ideas put in the armor of Israeli political culture have repercussions for Israel's future. The danger is that Kahane may have opened the door for future extremists to assume positions which also violate the bounds set by the previously sacrosanct value consensus. If so, then that consensus may deteriorate to the point where it will no longer be able to preserve democracy.

But there is another, equally compelling reason why Kahane is dangerous. In chapter three, I analyzed Kahane's ideology, showing that it derives from formative experiences in his youth, his family background, and his singularly obsessive personality. In the political arena, I classified his ideology as religious totalitarianism, an other-worldly creed distinct from the totalitarianisms analyzed by Arendt and others. Kahane, and other religious totalitarians such as Khomeini, seek to transform all aspects of life by wielding unlimited state power, worldly power, to achieve other-worldly goals. The goals of the religious totalitarians is what makes them so different from a Stalin or a Hitler. Religious totalitarians desire state power in order to make society conform to the demands of an established religion. Thus, their ultimate goal is something more that their own power, it is a divinely ordained end. As such, their programs are absolute, uncompromisable, and most importantly, unconcerned with practical consequences.

We can turn to Max Weber to underscore why religious totalitarianism is so dangerous. Weber was a nationalist and his political

ethics reflect his concern for the survival of nation-states. This is not because he harbored any notions about the intrinsic superiority of Germans or any other national group, but because he considered internationalist aspirations to be utopian. Weber realized that politics necessarily involves coercion and violence, and so, if the nation is to survive, politics must be conducted only by those with the proper sense of proportion and responsibility to the national community. Kahane claims to be responsible to Israeli national interests, but, in fact, he completely ignores the practical effects of his policies. His very presence in the Israeli body politic threatens to undermine democracy, spark violence between Jews and Arabs, and alienate Israel from her Western allies. As an other-worldly religious totalitarian, Kahane is unaware of the practical, this-worldly, dangers he poses. Thus, in Weber's terms, he pursues the "ethic of ultimate ends".[2]

Religious totalitarianism, as defined above, epitomizes what Weber refers to as the ethic of ultimate ends and contrasts with the ethic of responsibility. As Weber put it:

> there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends -- that is, in religious terms, 'The Christian does rightly and leaves the result with the Lord' -- and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the fore-seeable results of one's action.[3]

Politicians who obey the ethic of responsibility may be said to act, in Weber's terms, with instrumental rationality, since their sights are set on the consequences of their actions as well as on

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[2] Weber, p.120.

[3] Ibid.

the goals pursued and the means employed. Conversely, the ethic of ultimate ends denies any responsibility for the consequences of action so long as one acts in accordance with the prescribed maxim. Thus, the ethical stance of a political prophet who pursues an ethic of ultimate ends is inappropriate for responsible political behavior.

By this Weber does not mean that politicians should be emotionless or without a "cause". In fact, Weber cites "passionate devotion to a 'cause'"[4] as one of the three decisive qualities for the politician. But passion must be combined with "a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion".[5] Thus, when Weber says, "an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man -- a man who can have the 'calling for politics'[6], he does not mean that politicians can justifiably act according to the ethic of ultimate ends in the political sphere. Weber merely means that to be "called" into politics requires a certain passion, but, once inside the political sphere, passions must be made subordinate to responsibility and proportion.[7] "Only he has the calling for politics who is sure that he shall not crumble when the world from his point of view is too stupid or too base for what he wants to offer."[8] Such a man is

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[4] Ibid. p.115.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. p.127.

[7] Joseph Soares, Graduate Seminar Paper, unpublished, 1985.

[8] Ibid. p.128.

mature enough to fight for what he believes in but can accept compromise when he fails to achieve it. Thus, for Weber, only the ethic of responsibility has any place in the political arena.[9]

The consequences of applying the ethic of ultimate ends to the political sphere are severe, especially since, for Weber, "the decisive means for politics is violence."[10] As such, politics demands the utmost care and responsibility, and political actors who seek other-worldly ends without deference for this-worldly consequences, doom themselves and those around them to unrestrained violence.[11] For Weber, Kahane and other religious totalitarians are patently unfit for modern politics. Given the tenuous basis of political stability in Israel, the ethic of ultimate ends is particularly perilous there. As discussed above, Israeli democracy has survived until now, in part, because its political culture proscribed all anti-democratic and racist policies. Religious zealots eschew politics, thereby limiting the political participation, even of Orthodox Jews, to those who are willing to compromise, that is, to those embracing the ethic of responsibility. Kahane is the first Israeli politician to act unabashedly according to an ethic of ultimate ends, seeking to mold Israeli society according to his conception of God's will. "He who seeks

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[9] This is not meant to imply that Weber believed politics to be a realm in which everyone follows or eventually would follow the ethic of responsibility. In "Politics as a Vocation", he is not telling us "what is", rather, he is prescribing "what ought to be".

[10] Weber, p.121.

[11] Ibid. pp.124-126.

the salvation of the soul, of his own and of others, should not seek it along the avenue of politics,"[12] urges Weber. Kahane not only ignores his advice, he thrusts himself completely and whole-heartedly into the political sphere, oblivious to the dangers he poses.

Therein lies the principal challenge of the entire Kahane phenomenon. His religious totalitarianism prevents him from adopting an ethic of responsibility; and his ambition prevents him from renouncing politics as a vocation. As long as he is permitted, Kahane will participate in politics, blindly pursuing his ethic of ultimate ends, and Israel will suffer the consequences. Kahane's inflammatory rhetoric fuels the fires of Arab-Jewish confrontation, promoting internal violence in Israel. His dissent from the Israeli political culture endangers Israel's democratic stability. Finally, Kahane's growing prominence undermines Israel's commitment to Western pluralism and democratic values. If his ideas begin to take hold, Israel could face disastrous isolation from her Western allies. Thus, Kahane, while claiming to warn Israel about her most imminent dangers, actually embodies one of them.

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[12] Ibid. p.126.

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