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EDITORIAL

REAGAN NUKES LOCAL POWER

President Reagan, who speaks of local autonomy as if it were one of the Ten Commandments, is suddenly pushing big government. In 1984, he pledged that Federal authority would not be imposed on state and local governments' emergency evacuation plans for areas around nuclear power plants. Now he has issued an executive order giving just such power to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the old "duck and cover" Civil Defense Agency.

The trouble with local autonomy, it turns out, is that people won't behave the way the nuclear establishment wants them to. They used their political clout to shut down the Shoreham plant on Long Island, New York, and the Seabrook plant in New Hampshire, insisting that evacuating large numbers of people—themselves—in the event of a major accident is impossible. Anyone who has ever driven the Long Island Expressway knows this makes perfect sense.

But we are talking money here, not safety. Those co-conspirators, the nuclear industry and the Department of Energy, are hellbent to recharge the nuclear power business for the 1990s. So are President-elect George Bush and his newly appointed chief of staff, John Sununu, who zealously promoted Seabrook while Governor of New Hampshire. Three Mile Island and Chernobyl may be remembered at the local level, but in Washington they are just wispy mishaps.

The pro-nuclear cause was further advanced by a second, equally ominous, executive order signed by the President: It permits the Federal government to take over a nuclear plant in case of a national security "emergency." Nobody in or out of government seems altogether clear on just how broadly "national security" will be construed. Chances are, though, that it will at least include meetings of Mothers Against Nuclear Power in the church basement.

THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL

Edward W. Said

PEARL HARBOR

Charles
Shirō Inouye

VOICES RIGHT & LEFT

Jon Wiener

CAMELOT AND DALLAS Jefferson Morley

'ANIMAL LIBERATORS' Harriet Ritvo

ISRAEL'S HARD LINE

AMERICAN JEWS BREAK RANKS

EDWARD TIVNAN

After decades of playing rubber stamp to Israeli policy, no matter how foolish or suicidal, American Jews have finally begun speaking their minds—and in public. Distressed by Israel's harsh measures against the Palestinian *intifada*, frustrated by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's intransigence and now confronted with the victory of the nationalist and religious right in the recent election, the American Jewish community is becoming more vocal in its criticism of Israel.

This new candor comes at a critical juncture. On November 15 in Algiers, the Palestine National Council declared an independent state, embarking on a serious peace initiative that the Bush Administration cannot ignore. Inevitably, the United States and Israel will collide over such issues as Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and returning land for peace. The strong pro-Israel lobby in Washington will certainly continue all efforts at damage control, but the ground rules of the debate, and the participants in it, clearly are changing.

"The spell has been broken," says Arthur Hertzberg, a professor at Dartmouth College, a former president of the American Jewish Congress (A.J.C.) and an American Zionist persistently critical of the policies of Shamir's Likud Party. Until recently, public dissent from Israeli policy was branded as treason to the Jewish state, ammunition for its enemies. But in the past year, a small group of American Jewish leaders and intellectuals with strong ties to Israel's Labor Party and the Peace

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EDITORIALS.

Power Broker

When the Bush League boys take the field in January, John Sununu will serve as playing coach. The three-term New Hampshire Governor is notoriously uncomfortable on the sidelines. He ran his small but strategically placed state like an owner-operated business: He centralized power in his own hands, computerized the whole system and then kept the data to himself. He drove Republicans as well as Democrats to distraction. The right-wing Manchester *Union Leader* used to call him "King John." His fellow Republi-

cans among New Hampshire's elected officials are not solid supporters; both Senator Gordon Humphrey and Governor-elect Judd Gregg blame Sununu for President Reagan's recent order transferring command over nuclear power plant evacuation plans from local to Federal control—a last chance to save Sununu's pet installation at Seabrook.

Sununu's presence in the first wave of George Bush's appointments seems something of an anomaly. He looks out of place against the gray expanse of mandarins, bureaucrats, holdovers and insiders that already colors the Cabinet. But if there is any precedent for the Sununu aberration it is none other than Dan Quayle, a loose bazooka of a different sort whose nomination confounded Washington

mous became a refuge from the disintegration of public life seen in *Taxi Driver*. Camelot and conspiracy in Dallas were domesticated for prime time. "Who shot J.F.K.?" became "Who shot J.R.?"

By November 1983, the Camelot backlash was in full swing. The twentieth anniversary of the assassination received even more media exposure than had the anniversaries of 1978 and 1973—much of it devoted to nostalgia about the Kennedy family and the Kennedy "charm." The underside of Camelot was acknowledged, then dismissed as unimportant. Adam Walinsky, a former Robert Kennedy aide turned Reagan supporter, asserted the prevailing elite mood in *The New York Times*: "We are done with the debunking."

As for conspiracy, there also was a certain (perhaps understandable) impatience with the rich ambiguities of the assassination. *The Washington Post* said the truth would never be known. A *Los Angeles Times* reporter dared to conclude that the Warren Commission was right. *Newsweek* left the public misgivings about the government's version of events to an inarticulate barber in Iowa. The magazine asked who was responsible for the Kennedy assassination. "People in general, I guess, or the higher-ups," the man answered. "In other words, not just your run-of-the-mill people that are walking the streets."

This year's twenty-fifth anniversary was, as they say, the biggest yet. The presidential campaign, echoing with themes of Kennedy and conspiracy, was a prelude. Dukakis and Quayle both packaged themselves as Kennedys and failed. Bush packaged liberalism as a kind of conspiracy and succeeded. Updating Joe McCarthy and Phyllis Schlafly, he presented the L-word as an ongoing plot of a "card-carrying" elite against the common man. Reagan again linked himself to Kennedy, great leaders who provided a bulwark against the conspiracy that dared not speak its name.

In commemorations of the anniversary of the assassination itself, conspiracy returned with a vengeance. Several TV specials and books identify the Mafia as the culprit. In DeLillo's *Libra*, Camelot is rotten with conspiracies. The change in mood from 1983 was exemplified by the NBC miniseries *Favorite Son*. Five years ago, the miniseries of the assassination was *JFK*, a pious epic of Camelot starring Martin Sheen. *Favorite Son*, by contrast, was a satiric romp through the intrigues of the Kennedy and Reagan years: attempted assassination, Latin American counterrevolutionaries, rogue C.I.A. plots, kinky sex performed as frequently as possible and a genial grandpa of a President who sets everything right at the end.

If only the unsettling celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary could be concluded so neatly. Camelot and conspiracy are not just tokens of our nostalgia but fundamental questions of the political order. Is history beyond the reach of ordinary Americans? Can (or should) the United States recapture the imperial grandeur of the Kennedy years? In reliving what DeLillo calls "the six seconds that broke the back of the American century," we feel a deep unspoken tension. That's why the gunfire in Dealey Plaza still scares us, still rings in our ears. □

American Jews

(Continued From Front Cover)

Now movement has concluded that silence in the face of Likud hard-lining may be an even greater threat to Israel's security. "The path of least resistance—privately criticizing Israel but publicly supporting it or remaining silent—is actually a dramatic betrayal of the interest of our people," wrote Michael Lerner, editor of the Jewish journal *Tikkun*, in the March issue. "Americans must use every possible means to convey to the Israelis . . . that Israel is in deep jeopardy and that the occupation must end."

Even Jewish establishmentarians to the right of Hertzberg and Lerner have demanded that Israel be more flexible. Morris Abram, head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, a centrist umbrella for forty-five Jewish groups that has consistently supported Shamir, warned Israel's leaders early this year that "it will be increasingly difficult to maintain support for Israel if conditions don't improve." Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the dovish president of Reform Jewry's Union of American Hebrew Congregations (U.A.H.C.) and a former chair of the presidents' conference, lambasted the Israeli policy of putting down the riots by administering beatings and called for an international conference. So did the American Jewish Congress, another liberal group.

Such talk represented a profound breakthrough in relations between American Jews and Israel. Yet no sooner had this dissent broken out last winter, in the wake of the *intifada*, than it seemed to peak. Israel's Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, had hammered Shamir even before the uprising for his refusal to move toward an international peace conference, and a few American groups, like Schindler's U.A.H.C. and the A.J.C., followed suit. But like Shamir, Peres has refused to deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization—and the American dissidents retreated behind a Mafia-like *omertà* on this central issue in the quest for peace in the Middle East. Jerusalem's spell had not lost its power to mesmerize even the most dovish of American Jewish leaders who, in more candid moments, concede that any "peace process" without the P.L.O. or its seal of approval can only be a political charade. Just when the American Jewish community needs its own Anwar el-Sadat, its pulpits and daises have filled only with ersatz Shimon Pereses.

The history of American Jewish dissent is, in part, the story of the failure of Israeli doves to find a welcome anywhere but on the margins of the American Jewish community. Israeli editorialists, academics, peace activists and peace-minded politicians have been arguing for years that the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will destroy the Jewish and democratic character of Israel and that it is time to talk directly with the Palestinians. The

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mittee, 53 percent of American Jews favored Peres in the recent election. In a similar poll by the *Los Angeles Times* last April, two-thirds of the American Jews surveyed preferred some form of political accommodation with the Palestinians, and more than 60 percent favored the plan of Secretary of State George Shultz, which calls for an international peace conference—both of which Israel's Prime Minister has rejected categorically.

Clearly, organized Jewish groups and their leadership do not represent the Jews of America, 60 percent of whom do not bother to affiliate with any of these groups. Indeed, over-protective leaders have misrepresented the opinions of the nation's Jews to Washington since 1977, when Israeli voters brought Menachem Begin's right-wing Likud coalition to power. The Jewish establishment has supported the Likud hard-liners; most Jews have supported the moderates. Jewish leaders still prefer keeping their criticisms of Israel "in-house"; most American Jews are ready to go public. (Fifty-six percent, according to the recent American Jewish Committee poll, believe it proper to criticize Israel in public.) "My goal in speaking out is to stop this pretense that there is only Shamir's Israel," explains Hertzberg. "It must be said that a majority of the Diaspora are not behind him, and I will not allow him to put us in the position where we can't speak up for the moderate half of Israel without being terrorized."

The presidents' conference is unlikely to join Hertzberg and other dissidents, pleading its role as a consensus body to excuse the group from addressing the hard choices facing all friends of Israel. After the November 1 election, Morris Abram told a Jewish newspaper that the Likud might be better able to guide Israeli hard-liners to the peace table. Two weeks later, Abram dismissed the P.L.O.'s new diplomatic initiative, saying, "What we have here is a declaration for propaganda use" [see Edward W. Said, page 637].

But American Jewish doves—adamant that their criticism constitutes genuine loyalty—are no longer going to let the Jewish establishment make the only response to these developments. Last April, a coalition of twenty Jewish groups, including the New Jewish Agenda and the Labor Zionist Alliance, demonstrated in New York City against the Likud's rejection of territorial compromise. More than 6,000 Jews have signed the agenda's petition calling for an international conference that includes the P.L.O. Others have gone so far as to create a political action committee, the Israeli-Palestine Peace PAC, to support Congressional candidates who will back a two-state solution in the Holy Land.

The victorious Likud's renewed rejection of any form of withdrawal from the occupied territories sets the scene for a confrontation with American policy centered around the land for peace formula. One next step for the United States would be to press Likud to the negotiating table by threatening to cut aid to Israel. But not even diehard American anti-Likudniks would support that tactic. "It's treason," says Hertzberg. "The moment you say cut aid, you're delivering the good guys in Israel as well as the bad guys to their enemies." Shamir's American critics now fear a backlash if the sympathy many Jews feel for the Palestinians fails to produce a partner for peace. Thus, it is unlikely that the major

Jewish groups will follow the New Jewish Agenda's call for P.L.O. representation in the peace process, at least for now.

The *Los Angeles Times* poll only confirms skepticism and confusion within the Jewish community about the P.L.O. as a negotiating partner. While two-thirds of those polled want to deal with the Palestinians and 41 percent believe that "racism was involved in the attitudes of the Israelis toward the Arabs," they reject U.S.-P.L.O. negotiations 2 to 1. (A majority of non-Jewish Americans favor such talks.) The polls did not ask with whom Israel should be talking about the future of the West Bank. "If we truly want peace, then we will have to talk to the people with whom we can make peace," says Ezra Goldstein, co-chair of the agenda's task force on the Middle East, which intends to campaign against "the demonization of the Palestinians."

At the moment, all these concerns have been sidetracked by the heated disagreement over Shamir's postelection promise to the religious parties that he would narrow the definition of "who is a Jew" to exclude Reform and Conservative converts, thus insuring that Likud would be able to form a majority coalition. But protests by secular Israelis and American Jews may be causing second thoughts. As of this writing, Likud and Labor were exploring forming a new national unity government with Labor as the junior partner. That prospect undoubtedly heartens the American Jewish establishment, which fears that a change in the law would alienate many American Jews.

Given the Likud's imminent success in forming a new government, it has to be asked: Aside from the "who is a Jew" issue, will all this criticism have any effect on Shamir's policies, or Washington's acquiescence to them? The Prime Minister's critics in Israel had hoped Shamir's contempt for the Shultz plan would earn him the stick when he visited Washington last spring. Instead, he returned home with a basketful of carrots—the promise of seventy-five F-16 fighter-bombers and the assurance that a series of close "strategic cooperation" deals would be institutionalized. The following month, Shultz stopped in Jerusalem to sign a memorandum of understanding between the two countries formally designating Israel as "a major non-NATO ally of the United States."

Certainly, the United States should not turn its back on Israel. But a way has to be found to persuade American Jews that they must follow their inclinations toward moderation and compromise even in the face of Israeli reservations. *Who* to persuade them? A place in Jewish history is assured anyone able to galvanize the questioning majority of American Jews into a genuine peace movement. And when the Israeli Prime Minister inevitably attacks the Americans for "meddling in the affairs of the democratic state," they might unfurl a remark by one of the Jewish right's own heroes, Ariel Sharon. In 1980, when the U.S. representative to the United Nations voted for a resolution condemning the Begin government's policy of settling Jews on the West Bank, Sharon joined American Jews in roasting the Carter Administration: "I don't like to interfere with internal United States affairs," explained Sharon, "but the question of Israeli security is a question for Jews everywhere in the world." □