

An appreciation of Nahum Goldmann

by Mark Burdman, European Correspondent

At a time when the human race is passing through its greatest general crisis in centuries, the death of Nahum Goldmann must be mourned for the loss to humanity of one of its most vital living connections to those profound historical truths which alone can ensure the survival of civilization.

In his more than 70 years of political activity, primarily in Jewish and Zionist affairs, Goldmann represented and expressed the continuity of Jewish achievements through the centuries in culture and the spirit, and the coherence of these achievements with the great tradition of the Weimar German classical period. He understood, as only a minuscule few alive today do, the inner, immortal and necessary unity of the best expressions of German and Jewish culture. He became a living counterpole to, an organizing center against, the irrationality that earlier in this century produced the Nazis and which has more recently been spreading like a plague throughout the Middle East, a region with which Goldmann was for decades so lovingly concerned.

Goldmann's own immortality is especially ensured by the heightened intensity and pace of intervention that he made particularly into Jewish and Israeli life in the last weeks, even days, of his life. Goldmann's last years coincided with the plunge of civilization toward hell, and while most world leaders seemed to show that they had learned nothing from the tragedies of history, Goldmann's ideas were a constant reminder that statescraft must embody a moral vision possessed of an understanding of the long sweep of generations past and the necessities for the future to come. To the pragmatists of today, especially the short-sighted "provincials" ruling Israel whom he so regularly took to task, Goldmann counterposed the idea that the only legitimate and enduring "realism" is that based on nurturing the best and most enduring potentials in the human being.

This defined his approach to the emotion-racked question of relations between Israelis and Arabs today, and established him as a conscience for the state of Israel and world Jewry.

Goldmann's passion was to bring modern Jewish and

Israeli life into atonement with the moral exigencies to be drawn from the rich history and "special character" of the Jewish people.

The special character of Jewish history

As he wrote in the second volume of his autobiography (*Mein Leben: U.S.A.-Europa-Israel*), "the distinguishing basis for [the Jewish peoples'] unique existence was the religious idea. . . . The distinguishing idea, that Judaism has created; the concept of one God for the entire world, perhaps the greatest and most revolutionary idea of humanity, is still today in its character not fully appreciated. . . . The thought, that one God has created all of humanity, and is the same God for the multitude of all peoples, nations, and races, is the boldest, most revolutionary, loftiest idea, that a people or its religious leaders has ever formulated."

This notion of one God is necessarily linked in Goldmann's view with the conception of the Messiah, of potential perfection on earth, and with the otherwise unique notion of the Jews' "chosenness" (*Auserwähltheit*). Together, these elements create the notion that the Jew has a special mission to seek the good on earth. It is the endurance of this combination, in Goldmann's view, that has made for the "exceptional" achievements of the Jews through the centuries, and which explains the Jews as a "non-conformist" and, half-ironically stated, a "troublemaker" (*Störenfried*) through the ages.

"The Jewish people has survived thanks to the Prophets, to Moses and the Bible, thanks to Einstein and Heine, and not thanks to the generals or to Begin's demagogues," he stated in an interview days before his death, with the West German magazine *Der Spiegel*.

Animated by a sweeping appreciation of the breadth of the Jews' historical experience and by the crisis of Jewish life in the twentieth century, Goldmann was deeply involved in Jewish and Zionist affairs for over 70 years. Following a

1914-18 position in the Jewish department of the German Foreign Ministry, Goldmann in the early 1920s was elected to the Zionist General Council, the parliamentary body for the World Zionist Organization (WZO). In 1935, he was chosen as the WZO representative to the League of Nations, and was voted onto the Zionist executive, on which he served for 33 years, including twelve (1956-68) as president of the WZO. In 1936, he helped found the World Jewish Congress, and was its president from 1951 to 1978. He also served eight years as head of the New York-based Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; edited the seminal reference work, the *Encyclopedia Judaica*; and served as chairman of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

The founding of the World Jewish Congress points to Goldmann's central concern for Jewish life in its universal and global sense, not only in its national-Zionist sense, especially as the great majority of the world's Jews in fact do not live in Israel (nor, in 1936, were they committed Zionists). From this standpoint, Goldmann, differing from more provincial Zionist leaders and much of the Israeli establishment, has seen the creation and survival of Israel as important in *universal Jewish terms*, as distinct from the various shades of Israeli-Zionist thinking which view the entire history of the Jews between the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans and the creation of the State of Israel as irrelevant, and which think of Israel as a linear descendant of the Hebrew-Israelite-Judean people of ancient times. As he identified on many occasions, Goldmann thought of Zionism as a "synthesis of East and West," combining the different branches of Jewish life into one new culture.

Speaking from the depths of his lifelong experience and knowledge, and probably from his reading of the German poet, historian, and playwright Friedrich Schiller, Goldman came to view the Israeli situation in the past years as "tragic." Instead of embodying and expressing the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual visions of great Jews of history, Israel, in Goldman's eyes, lived on the basis of short-sighted, chauvinistic, narrow-minded considerations on the one hand and on a simultaneous, if paradoxical, impulse toward "normalcy" on the other—with "normal" organized crime, "normal" pettiness, and so forth. "This conception of 'normalization' I have for years rejected," Goldmann wrote in volume two of his autobiography, "for I see it as a disavowal of the entire Jewish history. The suffering of the Jewish people of centuries would become senseless, if the summit of Jewish life were to be a small 'normal' state, with all the negative manifestations, as they appear today in all other states."

Especially aghast at the Israeli situation under the Begin regime beginning in 1977, Goldmann warned, in a famous July 1980 article entitled "Out of concern for Israel," that the country, if it proceeded on its current path, "will be shoved ever closer toward the edge of the precipice on which it now finds itself, and which must lead to the abyss." Of all the problems that he perceived at the time, Goldmann wrote, "worst of all [is] the persistent weakening of morality, which

was always Israel's greatest source of strength."

In the same article, Goldmann expressed the psychology of the Israeli population with a humorous Jewish story (Goldmann regarded his sense of humor as one of his strongest attributes:) "A Jew is traveling on a train. At every station, he sticks his head out the window, reads the name of the station, and moans. After four or five stations, another passenger asks him why he is wailing so. The Jew answers him: 'I keep travelling in the wrong direction.' " "Many Israelis have this feeling," Goldman noted, "but do not dare to switch over to another train."

The "original sin" of the Zionist movement and Israeli state policy, in Goldmann's eyes, has been the abject refusal to pursue an effective approach toward peace with the Arab countries. One of the most intense pursuits of Goldmann's life, to the very end, was to preempt a process of radicalization of the Arab world that could result in Israel being surrounded with the plague of "Khomeinism" and which would pit 120 million Arabs in confrontation with four million Israeli Jews. In this pursuit, Goldmann came into the most direct clash with the short-sighted Israeli leaderships who have perceived Arab radicalization as "useful" to Israel.

Goldmann's life was punctuated with important interventions for an Arab-Israeli settlement. In the mid-1950s, he enlisted the great Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru in a mission to intercede with Egyptian President Nasser to arrange direct Egyptian-Israeli peace talks—an effort that failed in large part because of the British-guided imperialist Suez adventure. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, he tried to head off the "greater Israel" chauvinism spreading over Israel by arguing that the war victory compelled Israel more than ever to seek compromise with the Arabs. Up to the last days of his life, as he witnessed with great anguish Israeli Defense Minister Sharon's rampage into Lebanon, he tried to make direct contact with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat, to help shore up Arafat against the Sharon-allied Palestinian extremist factions, and to lobby for a Palestinian government-in-exile that would expedite the mutual recognition of Israelis and Palestinians. "Reasons of Jewish history," Goldmann stated, compelled him to make this intervention in the eighty-seventh year of his life.

For years, Goldmann advocated the creation of a "Middle East Confederation" that would bring about "Jewish-Arab cooperation [that] would hasten in completely unprecedented fashion the already begun Renaissance of the Mideast."

When this idea came to seem for the present unfeasible, Goldmann came to advocate more and more the idea of the neutralization of the state of Israel, and the guaranteeing of that neutralized state by the major powers—including, with wonderful poetical-historical importance, West Germany.

A neutral state, he wrote in 1980, would be "appropriate for the singular character of the Jewish past. It would permit the Jewish people a new intellectual and moral center, a source of new inspiration for the Diaspora, thereby creating

security for the Jewish future. . . . Seen world-historically, a neutralized Jewish state could give the Jewish people a concrete chance to stand again at the center of intellectual history. It would thus allow this people once again to continue its centuries-old contributions to human culture, and thereby to secure itself a future which in its meaning and its content would correspond to the unique character of its past.”

In his autobiography, he adds that such a state would allow for the flourishing of the “religious, intellectual, and cultural” pursuits

that would be in atonement with the works of “the Prophets, the Jewish philosophers and ideologues of the Middle Ages and of modern times, Spinoza, Heine, Freud, and Einstein.”

Germans and Jews

The deeper reservoir of his understanding from which Goldmann drew to put forth such world-historical proposals

LaRouche mourns Nahum Goldmann’s death

The following open telegram was issued by EIR founder Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. on Aug. 30.

Hang out the flag at half-mast around the world. Let President Ronald Reagan decree a national day of mourning, and let the Congress, wherever the members may be, stand for a solemn ten minutes of thoughtful silence at sunset today. A great world leader, Nahum Goldmann, the grand old man of world Jewry, died last night.

We all have suffered a great loss. In a time when the leading circles of most nations are chiefly composed of little, bungling, petty careerists, this 87-year-old giant from the better-age past was one of the few voices of true grandeur of intellect and lovingness to rally something better from within us.

My wife, Helga, and I were privileged to meet privately with Nahum Goldmann only once, during late 1979 at his home in Paris. We both fell in love with this man at once. Since then, it has been a source of joy to both of us to witness his interventions into critical moments of current history, and to support his efforts in these matters.

This man was a true Jew, as he himself described the function of Jewish culture most recently. I know something of the work in which he was most recently engaged, not as intimately as those closest to him, but enough to say that the level and quality of his actively leading role would astonish most persons if the full facts of this matter could be made public. This man has been a giant among us.

Helga and I shall miss him very, very much.

lay in his knowledge of the inter-relatedness of the German and Jewish historical experiences, and his direct access to the processes whereby the state of Prussia was created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the assistance of Jews granted legal status by the great Prussian elector.

In the first volume of his autobiography (“Mein Leben als Deutsche Jude”), Goldmann made the following observation: “Despite all criticism, no doubt can exist that Germans as well as Jews were and are very great people. Their great ambitions, their creative qualities rank them unquestionably among the greatest peoples of world-history. Perhaps both are inevitably connected to each other. . . . I have in my youth in my diary written: ‘The Jews are a people, that one must admire, but cannot love.’

mans. Both are unloved. Especially the greatness of both peoples—the Germans unique in their metaphysics, musically in manifestations like Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, the Jews unsurpassable in their prophets and their religious geniuses, among which one can count Jesus and Paul, in their stubborn loyalty to their beliefs—explain in large measure the attitude of non-Jews and non-Germans to both peoples.”

Goldmann elsewhere expands on his love for German classical music. “No people and no culture, not even the Jewish, have influenced me so strongly as the German. . . . The strongest emotional experience I had and I have have been by listening to the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart.”

“None of the spheres of culture has so deeply made an impression on me as music. My musical taste is considerably conservative, from the standpoint of the younger generation it would seem old-fashioned. My deep interest is for the classics, before all Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. . . . my great love in the world of opera is Verdi and Mozart. . . . For Wagner I have never had a deep understanding.”

In the same vein, his writings are liberally sprinkled with references to the works of Schiller, Heine, and Lessing, and emphasis on the power that they had on the minds of Jews throughout the nineteenth century.

In 1915, while in the German Foreign Ministry, Goldmann authored a document, with the somewhat misleading title, “The Spirit of Militarism,” which clearly identifies a direct connection in his ideas and experiences with the Jewish-aided building of the humanist Prussian Cameralist state of the century past. Although Goldmann never in the future explicitly further developed the concepts contained in the piece, it stands on its own as a fascinating historical document, and as a “mind-print” to the deeper recesses of Goldmann’s

The piece is a defense of a conception of Prussian system economics (in which, inclusively, he calls the Prussian general the “personification of the Kantian categorical imperative”), and the ecumenical nature of life in Germany, as against the corrupt life of the “French salons” and the “Houses of the British Lords.”

“It would be an interesting task,” Goldmann wrote, “to

examine the error from which the incomprehensible misjudgment has come about which is dominating the opinion of the continent about England since 150 years; the idea that the Island Kingdom is democratic. The main fault of this misconception is the confusion of liberalism and democracy." Goldmann explained that liberalism is the *contrary* of democracy, since the former signifies "random freedom" and converges on "animal" behavior, whereas the latter signifies "equality, which is a product of culture and which can only be established by conscious human creation and effort."

He then attacked Britain for being "at the spearhead of the campaign against the German spirit," and British ideology as "pure individualism" characterized by "empiricist and inductive" habits leading to "atomizing thinking." British ideology, he asserted, cannot understand "concepts and ideas," and "one can see the same in British jurisprudence, which lies in common law (*Gewohnheitsrecht*)." "Great principled norms are unknown to this system. . . . Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill are based on the dogma of the most extreme individualism."

While Goldmann did not in later years elaborate in detail on these conceptions, and did in fact later maintain ties with leading British policymaking circles and their counterparts in France, he maintained an obvious reticence about the British and never fell victim to the scurrilous British-organized "German collective guilt" campaign, despite his deep hatred for the Nazi leadership.

In the first volume of his autobiography, he said bluntly, "I do not belong to those who consider Hitler to be a typical German. The theoretical foundations of modern anti-Semitism were formulated by Frenchmen like Gobineau, Drumont, Maurras, or by British thinkers like Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who, as everybody knows, was a son-in-law of Wagner."

The same volume contains the assertion that "it was the unholy policy of Chamberlain and Daladier, supported by the capitalist circles in the City of London and France, supported by the British and French press, that coolly accepted Hitler's policy, hoping that he would destroy communism."

Following the Second World War, Goldmann saw as one of his most important missions the accomplishment of an historical reconciliation between Israel, or Jews more broadly, and Germany. To this end, he regarded as one of his central life achievements the arrangement worked out with West German Chancellor Adenauer for the payment of reparations ("Wiedergutmachung") to the State of Israel. Not only did he take pride in how this built up the Israeli economy, but he also viewed this as the means for outflanking the "collective guilt" hysteria and for creating the preconditions whereby the greatness of Jewish-German relations of a former era could again become an efficient and motivating concept in men's minds.

Were this knowledge to be restored in contemporary times, Goldmann was aware, the chances of the human race surviving in the next years would be greatly enhanced.

WEST GERMANY

Schmidt must fight to win Hesse election

by Susan Welsh

Under the current conditions of economic crisis in the Federal Republic of Germany, detailed this week in *EIR*'s Special Report, the Sept. 26 state election in Hesse assumes the utmost importance. The coalition government of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt is on the verge of collapse, and a bad showing for his Social Democratic Party in Hesse could push it over the brink.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the chairman of the European Labor Party (EAP) who heads the party's election slate in Hesse, warned in a radio interview Aug. 28 that the current crisis could lead to fascism once again in Germany. "Anyone who sees himself as a patriot," she said, "—and I consider myself a German patriot—sees how our country is falling apart; one fears the repetition of what could be called the German tragedy—Weimar, and the threat of a new fascism. And I do not see that the leading institutions, the leading parties have any conception of how to prevent this from happening." Zepp-LaRouche called on the population to mobilize for a "new world economic order" to prevent a 1930s-style depression, and to outlaw the fascist Green Party, as the first essential steps to preventing a national disaster.

Since the EAP first launched its call for banning the Greens as unconstitutional several months ago, the potential for a fascist revival has become increasingly apparent. Chancellor Schmidt, in a speech opening his party's election campaign in Hesse Aug. 28, was pelted with eggs by the radical-environmentalist Greens. For the first time he abandoned his customary politeness toward the disruptors, shouting back: "You are just like the SA"—Hitler's *Sturmabteilung*, the Brownshirts.

In other recent speeches, Schmidt has warned of the danger of a return to conditions resembling those of the 1930s. In an Aug. 20 address he compared the constant threats of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), his coalition partner, to bring down his government, to the role of the FDP's predecessor 52 years ago in toppling the last Social Democratic-led government of the 1930s, that of Hermann Müller. After Müller came a quick succession of Chancellors followed in 1933 by Adolf Hitler.

The Hesse election fight pits Holger Börner, the Social Democratic (SPD) governor and a close factional ally of Schmidt against the SPD leftists, against Alfred Dregger of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). The Free Democrats