

A JEWISH PEACEMAKER'S DILEMMA: KOSOV@
CONGREGATION
DELIVERED AT/DOR HADASH, JULY 3, 1999 - PITTSBURGH PA

I HAVE WORKED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE ALL MY LIFE. THIS YEAR I ATTENDED THE HAGUE ASSEMBLY FOR PEACE WHERE I WORKED WITH SOME OF MY COLLEAGUES WHO WERE THEN REFUGEES FROM KOSOV@ MORE RECENTLY, AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEACEMAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION I WAS RECOGNIZED FOR MY LONG INVOLVEMENT. BUT KOSOV@ FORCES ME AND ALL PACIFISTS TO CONFRONT HARD QUESTIONS - QUESTIONS FOR WHICH I HAVE NO ANSWERS.

IF
BACK WHEN THERE WAS A DRAFT, AND A JEW WOULD APPLY FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION STATUS HE WOULD BE ASKED SOME VARIANT OF "WHAT IF YOU WERE CONFRONTED WITH ANOTHER HITLER...?"

THE SPECTOR OF ANOTHER HITLER HAUNTS US ALL. WE HAVE STRONG MESSAGES IMPLANTED IN US EITHER FROM OUR OWN EXPERIENCE OR HANDED DOWN FROM PARENTS OR GRANDPARENTS. SOMETIMES THAT MESSAGE IS IMPLICIT - SOMETIMES EXPLICIT.

FOR ME IT IS EMBODIED IN LETTERS MY FATHER WROTE ME DURING THE WAR YEARS. - I'LL READ A SECTION FROM 1938.

AS A JEW, I FACE THE PRESENT WITH A LOT OF APPREHENSION. ANTI-SEMITISM IS SPREADING. ARE WE GOD'S "CHOSEN PEOPLE" CHOSEN FOR SUFFERING? YET WE LEAVE BEHIND US A GLORIOUS HISTORY - STUDY IT. WHAT OF LIBERALISM AND HUMANITY IN THE WORLD TODAY HAS ARISEN OUT OF OUR RELIGION AND THE RELIGION WHICH SPRANG FROM IT - CHRISTIANITY.

THE REVIVAL OF PAGANISM UNDER HITLER'S GERMANY IS THE EXACT ANTITHESES OF ALL THAT WE REPRESENT. WE ADHERE TO THE BELIEF IN A UNIVERSAL GOD - IN KINDNESS, GENTLENESS, HUMANITY AND HUMILITY.

GOD GRANT THAT FREE AMERICA - FREE IN MIND AND THOUGHT, IN RELIGION MAY REMAIN SO. GOD GRANT THAT YOU IN YOUR TURN MAY AID IN SAFEGUARDIING ITS FREEDOM. DO YOUR PART IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND IN YOUR CITY...[AND WOULD ADD - THE WORLD]

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN "SAFEGUARDING ITS FREEDOM" WHEN FACED WITH ANOTHER HITLER? UNTIL RECENTLY THAT WAS A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION THAT I COULD SET ASIDE.

I COULD SET IT ASIDE IN THE GULF WAR, BUT WITH DIFFICULTY. AMERICAN MEDIA PLAYED STRONGLY ON OUR HOLOCAUST VISCERAL

REACTIONS.. THE INVASION OF KUWAIT WAS IMMEDIATELY LABELED A *BLITZKRIEG* AND ANY SUGGESTION OF NEGOTIATION WAS CALLED *MUNICH APPEASEMENT*. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I HAD TO FIGHT BACK THIS HOLOCAUST IMAGERY TO SORT OUT THE FACTS. WHEN I DID, I CONCLUDED THAT THAT CONFLICT WAS HIGHLY NEGOTIABLE, IF ANYBODY TOOK A SERIOUS TRY AT IT.

BUT THEN ALONG COMES MELISOVICH IN YUGOSLAVIA. EVERY INDICATION IS THAT THIS GUY *IS* A HITLER - ONLY ON A SMALLER SCALE. THIS CRISIS THROWS THE PEACE MOVEMENT FOR A LOOP. FOR INSTANCE, THE MAJORITY OF THE 8,000 PEOPLE ATTENDING THE HAGUE PEACE APPEAL, WHICH WAS HELD WHILE THE BOMBS WERE DROPPING APPEARED TO FAVOR SENDING IN GROUND TROOPS. MY PEACEMAKING COLLEAGUES IN EXILE FROM KOSOV@ ARGUED STRONGLY FOR CONTINUED BOMBING.

SO WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE CONFRONTED BY A HITLER?

IN MANY WAYS IT IS AN UNFAIR QUESTION. THE HITLERS AND MELISOVICHS OF THE WORLD, BY AND LARGE, ARE THE PRODUCT OF THE FAILURE OF POWER BASED INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. SO THEY HAVE FAILED, OUR HITLER IS IN POWER, AND THEN WE ARE ASKED WHAT CAN A PACIFIST DO TO FIX IT.

NON-VIOLENT PEACEMAKING IS LIKE ORGANIC GARDENING. IT TAKES PLANNING AND CAREFUL PREPARATION AHEAD, TENDER NURTURING DURING THE GROWING SEASON, PAINSTAKING POST HARVEST BEDDING DOWN. IF THERE IS AN INFESTATION, THERE MAY BE REMEDIES, BUT THEY ARE SLOW ACTING AND PAINSTAKING TO APPLY. BUT IF THE ORGANIC GARDENER IS SUCCESSFUL, DOES THAT VEGETABLE TASTE GOOD!

POWER BASED APPROACHES ARE LIKE CHEMICAL GARDENERS. JUST SIT BACK UNTIL THERE IS TROUBLE, THEN ZAP IT WITH A CHEMICAL AND HOPE IT WORKS. THE RESULTING VEGETABLE LOOKS GOOD, BUT IT MAY SLOWLY POISON YOU

WE CAN SEE THAT IN YUGOSLAVIA NONE OF THE CAREFUL NON-VIOLENT PEACEMAKING STEPS WERE TAKEN IN ADVANCE. THE RAMBOULET "MEDIATION" WAS MEDIATION IN NAME ONLY. IT CONSISTED OF PRESENTING THE PARTIES WITH AN ULTIMATUM - TAKE IT OR WE BOMB. IT WAS A SHORT SESSION. THE ONLY PARTIES PRESENT WERE THOSE WITH THE WEAPONS.. THE NON-VIOLENT OPPOSITION AND PEACE ORGANIZATIONS OF SERBIA AND KOSOV@ WERE NOT AT THE TABLE. NONE OF THE "MEDIATORS" HAD ANY CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING AND THE TERMS WERE ASTOUNDING - INCLUDING THAT SERBIA ADOPT A FREE MARKET ECONOMY.

AM INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT WHAT CONDITIONS ENCOURAGE THE EMERGENCE AND ACCEPTANCE OF A MELISOVICH OR HITLER? WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN A MARSHALL PLAN AFTER WORLD WAR I, HENCE NO MASSIVE INFLATION DURING THE WIEMAR REPUBLIC? WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN RECONCILIATION ACTIVITIES TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN GERMANS AND FRENCH, FOR INSTANCE - TRAUMA REDUCTION AND RECONCILIATION WORK? WOULD HITLER HAVE EMERGED? OR WOULD HE HAVE BEEN DISMISSED AS ONE OF THOSE NUTS FROM MONTANA?

AND THE SAME FOR MELISOVICH? WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THERE HAD BEEN INTEGRATION OF THE YUGOSLAVIAN ECONOMY INTO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY? WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN A MARSHALL PLAN TO REBUILD YUGOSLAVIA AFTER EMERGING FROM COMMUNISM? WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN REAL MEDIATIONS INVOLVING WIDE SEGMENTS OF SERBIAN LEADERSHIP AND KOSOVAN LEADERS OVER THE RELATIONSHIP OF KOSOV@ TO YUGOSLAVIA? AND WHAT IF THE EMOTIONAL WOUNDS OF WORLD WAR II, AND OTHER ETHNIC BATTLES HAD BEEN HEALED AS THEY HAVE BEEN BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND MUCH OF THE WEST?. WOULD SERBIANS HAVE TOLORATED A MELISOVICH?

WE HAVE HAD THE ABILITY TO HAVE DONE IT ALL THAT. BUT WE DIDN'T

SO PEACEMAKERS HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF PREVENTING THE
EMERGENCE OF HITLERS THROUGH PROMOTING HEALTHY AND JUST
SOCIETIES. THEY HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF BREAKING THE CYCLE OF
VIOLENCE BY HEALING THE TRAUMA AND PROMOTING RECONCILIATION.
THEY CAN INITIATE QUIET BEHIND THE SCENE NEGOTIATIONS TO BRING
THE Warring PARTIES TOGETHER TO SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND.

BUT NO ONE DID IT IN YUGOSLAVIA. AND NOW WE HAVE MILLOSEVIC.
SO THE QUESTION REMAINS WHAT IS OUR ROLE WHEN THE MAD KILLING
IS GOING ON WHEN WE ARE FACED BY A HITLER?

MY ONLY ANSWER IS THAT WE MUST CONSTANTLY WORK TO ASSURE
THAT THAT QUESTION REMAINS A HYPOTHETICAL ONE RATHER THAN
REALITY.