

Jewish FRONTIER

In Memory of Louis Segal

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THE CHOICE: BOMBS, BIRCHERS AND BREADLINES

(Editorial)

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Hattiesburg: Harvest of Hate

by A. James Rudin

DURING February, 1964, the Rabbinical Association of Greater Kansas City, Missouri, sent me as their official representative to participate in the Ministers' Hattiesburg Project. The project is made up of rabbis, Presbyterian ministers and Episcopalian priests. These religious leaders are involved in an on-going Negro voter registration drive. This drive includes non-violent direct action, canvassing Negro homes for potential voters, speeches at mass meetings and liaison work with the white religious community of Hattiesburg. The drive began on January 22, 1964. At that time only twelve out of seven thousand eligible Negro voters were registered. By early April, 1964, the number had climbed to nearly eight hundred.

As the bus rumbled into the New Orleans depot at 4:30 A. M. one Friday morning last February, I was awakened from a troubled sleep to be told that we had arrived in the "Crescent City." Although New Orleans is a distinctly Southern town, I somehow felt that I had returned to the United States and to civilization. The depressing atmosphere, actual fright, and constant threat of violence had begun to affect all of us who were in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, last February. The advance preparations for my rabbinic trip had included the formation of a Bond and Bail Committee in Kansas City. The members of this committee included Ilus W. Davis, the Mayor of Kansas City, Charles Curry, the Presiding Judge of Jackson County, as well as local clergy, civic leaders and newspaper editors. The purpose of this committee was to guarantee quick release from jail if I had the misfortune to be arrested while picketing in front of the Forrest County Court House. I had learned from other clergymen who had been to Hattiesburg that I would be unwelcome in the eyes of the white community and my colleagues had warned me of possible bodily harm. The full impact of these warnings did not become clear until I actually reached the Hattiesburg Bus Terminal.

Since I had come to Hattiesburg for a special project and not a social visit, I was anxious to begin work and to avoid peering eyes. A sure "give-away" as to my background and intentions was a copy of the *New York Times* that I had

tucked under my arm as I left the bus. I immediately called the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project telephone number, since there was no one at the terminal to meet me. A strained and tense voice answered at the other end and would not speak further until I had identified myself. When I told the voice who I was, it suddenly became warm and friendly and said, "*Shalom*, this is Rabbi Irving Weingart of Des Moines, Iowa. We have been expecting you but, of course, we have no cars. Please take a Liberty Cab to our store-front barracks." As I went out to the cab stand, I saw no Liberty Cabs, only a large number of Yellow taxis. Suddenly it became clear to me who and what the Liberty Cabs represented. It was a Negro company and, since few Mississippi Negroes use interstate busses, there were no Liberty Cabs available at the terminal. I called one and felt quite conspicuous when my cab pulled up in front of the waiting Yellows (all with white drivers), and I climbed in beside the Negro driver. I did not even have to give him the address for he knew immediately where to take me. The driver smiled and said, "God bless you for coming to Hattiesburg." In a few moments we arrived at a dingy store-front, one-half of which was a radio and TV repair shop, appropriately owned by a Mr. Fairly (the President of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Our half of the store had many cots, mattresses and linen scattered about the large room. It contained a small desk, a single telephone, and a recently installed shower-area. This had no curtains, only a freshly-poured concrete base, which contained the words, "Remember us in Hattiesburg in 1964. Thank God you came to help us and please help us vote." These pathetic cries etched in cement became for me the motto of the entire Ministers' Project.

THE FIVE white religious leaders who were in Hattiesburg during my stay left immediately via Liberty Cab, of course, for the Morning Star Baptist Church where a mass meeting of Hattiesburg Negroes was in progress. This was not a Negro revival in the religious sense of the word; rather it was a citizenship class on a mass emotional scale. Every seat in the church was taken and the sound and rhythms of music greeted my ears as the five of us entered into the sea of Negro faces. They began to sing, "Which side are you on, Brother?" And, as they

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We express
our deepest sorrow
at the loss
of our friend
and Zionist leader,
the Secretary
of the
JEWISH AGENCY
FOR ISRAEL
Inc.,

Louis Segal

He dedicated
his entire life
to the upbuilding
of the
Jewish Homeland
and in helping
bring homeless Jews
from all corners
of the
world to Israel.

DEWEY STONE
Chairman

GOTTLIEB HAMMER
Vice-Chairman

added new and meaningful stanzas to this civil rights song, I realized that this was indeed the question that all white people needed to ask themselves—which side are we really on? After the singing was over, a young Negro arose and began to speak. He was wearing the “uniform” of a Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) leader; that is to say, he was ready for jail at any time. His apparel included blue denim dungarees, a white “T” shirt and a denim (“Ike”) jacket. The young man who began to speak was about 20 or 21 years old and a student at Morehouse College. He spoke for nearly fifty minutes and held the attention of every one present. He was perhaps the greatest social pulpiteer I have ever heard. He used humor, sarcasm, raw emotion, lucid rationalism, stories, parables, poetry and a recitation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the U. S. Constitution as his material. Two sentences stand out in my mind from this mass meeting: Frank Smith said, “It is not so bad to be in Mississippi, it is bad when Mississippi is in you.” He also turned to the rabbis and ministers present and remarked with a smile, “You white people say that you are behind us Negroes, that you are behind us in this struggle; we don’t want you behind us, we want you with us; only the police are behind us.” Frank repeated over and over again that Negroes are human beings, that voting is a right and not a privilege in America, that Negroes are not buzzards or some type of sub-human animal. For me it was reminiscent of the early days of Zionism when the downtrodden Jewish masses were told by their leaders: “You are a human being. A Jew can work, a Jew can be a farmer, a Jew can be a soldier, you are a human being.” Frank’s remarks were greeted with much handclapping and appreciative singing, but he suddenly rose to his feet and announced, “All this clapping and all this singing in a Negro church in the evening does not mean a thing unless you are on the picket-line tomorrow morning with our rabbis and ministers and unless you register to vote. You have sung too many songs in the past and then awakened the next morning and continued to do exactly what the white man told you to do. You are an American, you are a human being, you are a citizen; get up tomorrow morning and don’t clap and don’t sing, but march in the picket-line and register to vote.”

After the meeting, the five of us walked home with some of the Negroes who had attended the rally. It was the first time that I ever stayed in a completely Negro area, and I must say that I felt secure and safe in the Hattiesburg “ghetto.” By living in the Negro area, our physical safety

was almost assured, since few white people would venture into the "ghetto" after dark. As we walked down the street, people from the houses and stores would greet us and say, "God bless you for coming and don't leave us now."

The following morning we picketed with some of the SNCC workers and Hattiesburg Negro citizens. We walked around and around in front of the courthouse in a brisk wind for nearly three hours. Our signs said, "Let my brother vote; voting is a right, not a privilege in America; segregation and separation are evil; one man, one vote." We walked in a prescribed area and we were under the watchful eyes of three Hattiesburg policemen at all times. I was told by one of the Negroes that the police were there for our protection. At first I thought he was joking but, as the days went by, I found he was telling the truth. Were it not for the policemen, some of the white population of Hattiesburg would have attacked us physically, instead of just verbally. As we marched around the courthouse, we passed a statue, commemorating the Mississippi heroes of the Confederate Army. As I looked up at the statue, I saw that it had a black eye.

As we walked, I spoke to many of the Negro pickets. This in itself created hostility on the part of some white passers-by; for, apparently in Mississippi, a white man and a Negro do not converse on an equal footing. An ironic feature of the picket-line was that we walked on the pavement in front of the courthouse and barricades prevented any pedestrian from using this area. It was a wry twist from the usual procedure in Mississippi—for Negroes to walk on the pavement in the picket-line while whites walked in the street along the curb in order to reach their destination. The five white clergymen said, "Good Morning," to almost every passer-by, and all but a few failed to respond to our greeting.

On the picket-line was a 74-year-old woman who had but one tooth in her mouth. She told us that she could neither read nor write, and would be ineligible to vote. She said she was on the picket-line as a representative of the God of freedom and she winked and said, "God will know, God will know . . ."

In the afternoon the visiting clergy had an interview with the local police chief. He made three revealing statements: (1) He said that integration is coming to the entire country and there was nothing he could do about it. However, he was not going to help it along in Hattiesburg. (2) He pledged that there would be no violence in Hattiesburg, since, as he put it, "We are not a bunch of people from Birmingham." (3) When asked if voter demonstrations had done

any good since they began on January 22, 1964, he replied, "Well, I don't think you set back the Negro cause in Hattiesburg." This is high praise indeed from a Mississippi police chief.

That evening we attended another mass meeting which revealed a significant split in Negro leadership. The Reverend James Cameron, the leading Negro minister in Hattiesburg, had just returned that day from a visit to officials of the Justice Department in Washington, D. C. He was enthusiastic about the Justice Department's participation in helping Negroes register to vote in Hattiesburg. He announced in triumphant tones that a written report of every instance of police harassment was on file in the Justice Department in Washington. Rev. Cameron's implication was clear: the Negroes could not look to the city, county or state governments for redress of grievances, only the U. S. Government would come to the aid of the Negro—speedily and effectively. Frank Smith, the SNCC leader, shrewdly attacked this position and announced that the Justice Department only comes to the aid of the Negroes when the Negroes themselves create the need. Actually he phrased it in more graphic terms: "The Attorney General would never have heard about Hattiesburg had we not hit the streets. We learned that lesson in Greenwood, in Jackson, in Albany, Georgia, and in Danville, Virginia."

AS A RABBI I was particularly interested in the Jewish community's reaction to the voter-registration drive in Hattiesburg. I quickly discovered that the Jew occupies an extremely sensitive position in Hattiesburg. There are about eighty families who comprise the membership of the Reform congregation. Most of these families are engaged in retail business along Main Street and they sell, of course, to both Negroes and whites. One of the leading Jewish businessmen in Hattiesburg told me that about a fifth of his sales is to the Negro community. Although the Jews have been in Hattiesburg for many years, a vague feeling of insecurity hovers over them. This seems to be a prevalent Jewish malady and this insecurity was especially evident to me during my recent visit, and the reasons are clear. If the Jewish community openly sides with the white segregationist, they face the threat of a Negro economic boycott, and what is even more disturbing, their Jewish consciences will trouble them. If they openly favor the Negro revolution and the Negro struggle for freedom, not only will their businesses be in danger, but perhaps their very lives. Judaism teaches us not to judge a man until we have been in his place and this description of the Jewish community is not

WITH BOWED HEADS
WE MOURN THE PASSING OF OUR
ESTEEMED VICE CHAIRMAN
AND DYNAMIC LEADER OF THE
ISRAEL HISTADRUT CAMPAIGN

Louis Segal

His loss will be keenly felt
by all friends of Labor Israel,
a cause he cherished throughout
his many years of service to the
Jewish people. His name will be
inscribed forever in the hearts
of countless Histadrut members,
of Jews in many lands and of
American Jewry to whom
he gave so much of himself.

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intended as any judgment, but rather as a presentation of facts as I saw them.

A Jewish businessman mentioned that there is a feeling of anti-Semitism in Hattiesburg, although it is not of the virulent variety. He turned to me and with great sadness said, "Rabbi, I know that you and your colleagues are very sincere in coming to Hattiesburg, and I know also that what you are doing is for the best interests of freedom; but by having rabbis, Episcopalian priests and Presbyterian ministers parade daily around the courthouse—this brings embarrassment to the Jewish community. The white segregationists are convinced that all of these demonstrations and voter-registration drives are Jewish-inspired activities. I know differently and I know that these activities are sponsored by many religious organizations—yet it is an embarrassing and delicate situation in which the Jews find themselves here in Hattiesburg."

The Rabbi in Hattiesburg is himself a refugee from Germany and has been in the South for less than a year. He held pulpits in the North prior to his coming to Hattiesburg. When nine Presbyterian ministers were arrested late in January, 1964, the Rabbi was the *only* local clergyman to visit them in jail. For this he nearly lost his post. There is a complete separation between the visiting rabbis and ministers and the local religious leaders.

The Hattiesburg white segregationists would like to believe that only "outsiders" are backing the voter-registration drive and that "their" rabbi and ministers do not support this drive—and in a way they are right. Several ministers are openly frightened and fearful of economic and physical reprisals if they openly support their colleagues.

HERE THEN is the picture of Hattiesburg in the winter of 1964. The Negro community is today more united than ever before and is constantly growing in self-confidence and strength, despite massive terror campaigns to "keep them in their place."

The white community has a deeply-troubled conscience. The "button-down KKK members," that is, the White Citizens Council, are adamant and emphatic that segregation and other forms of Negro harassment will continue. There is no doubt in my mind that they will use violence to enforce their will upon the people. These people are most vocal and flood the Hattiesburg newspaper with vitriolic letters, denouncing all civil rights movements and organizations. They have bullied and terrified the Negroes for over one hundred years and see no reason to change their white-supremacy policy.

There is another group among the whites who can be classified as "moderate." It must be understood that this term is relative—for what is a moderate in Mississippi may be a reactionary in another section of our country. The voice of the moderates has been stilled and almost silenced by the fear of economic and physical violence. Many outstanding Christian and Jewish clergymen have left Mississippi in the last five years and the moderates today are without leaders and without a program.

There is also a minute segment of the white population who favor integration and equal voting rights. These people are usually found on the campus of a university or they are stationed with the armed forces in Mississippi. They are almost totally ineffective.

The Jewish community is torn between what their conscience and their ethical teachings tell them is right and what their pocketbook and their genuine fears tell them they must do. I pray that none of us will ever be placed in such a terrible position, for it is an excruciating choice to make. The Rabbi of Hattiesburg has the unenviable task of quietly teaching, preaching and living righteousness against a backdrop of hatred, fear and harassment. No one can yet see the end of this nightmare.

Since my return from Hattiesburg, people have asked me whether the situation in Mississippi will become violent. Until now the Negroes have made most of their gains through non-violent means. They have openly imitated most of Mahatma Ghandi's passive acts of civil disobedience. They have won the admiration of the entire world for their courage in the face of white bigotry. However, I must sadly report

that this non-violent activity is facing its greatest test in Mississippi.

Charles Evers, the brother of the murdered Medgar Evers, recently made a speech in Nashville, Tennessee, in which he said that if the whites in Mississippi destroy a Negro church, the Negroes will destroy a white church, and if the whites murder a Negro, the Negroes will murder a white. One can only sympathize with Charles Evers and one can be very quick to point a finger of criticism at this NAACP leader, and yet we must remember the tremendous provocation that the Mississippi Negro has suffered—and in the case of Charles Evers we must bear in mind his great personal loss.

It is obvious that such a policy of violence is a bankrupt one and can lead only to disaster—for both whites and Negroes. However, the patience and the gentleness of the Mississippi Negro is slowly melting away under a tremendous campaign of white pressure. The summer of 1964 will be the test, for hundreds of Negro and white students will be coming to Mississippi to teach and to instruct the local Negro in the art of being a free and good citizen. It is a serious question whether the white segregationists will be able to tolerate such a large-scale freedom campaign.

There are many white liberals today who believe that integration and an "open society" will not come in our lifetime. I have always disputed this point and my recent trip to Hattiesburg has only re-enforced my opposition to such thinking. When the barriers of segregation and intolerance and harassment fall, then total integration will take place rapidly in most parts of our country—perhaps in the next ten years.

An Effect of Automation

by Joshua Rothenberg

PERHAPS the anecdote that ridicules the Jewish tendency to relate everything to the Jews makes a valid point. Yet we know that automation is causing great changes in our economic and social structure. It is, therefore, natural to ask: how do these changes affect the economic position of Jews, the professions in which they are engaged, and their social status in this country? The opinion that the range of Jewish occupations in the Diaspora is abnormal is still widespread. Do the new developments connected with automation affect this problem?

What is the difference between the new automated machines and the old machines?

There is no accurate definition of automation: the closest one can come to it is to say that it is not the mechanization of muscle power but the mechanization of mental power; the replacement of the brain and the nervous system by machinery. In many cases the machine's decisions are more reliable than those made by human beings.

Electronic computers are the most common form of the new technology, though not the only one. The rapidity with which they are coming into use can be seen from the fact that since the first computer was put to work some sixteen years ago, five thousand computers were manufactured and are now operating in this