

Editorial

We Jews Cannot Afford Disunity

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

The recent mobilization of Jewish leaders for expressing solidarity with Israel was met with ambivalence in some Jewish quarters.

Clearly, there are some serious differences in geopolitical views both within Israel and in the Diaspora for how to cope constructively with the peace process. But increasingly, I believe with others that rebuilding the Jewish family into a caring community is an overriding issue.

In recent weeks, I have been reading several biographies of Theodor Herzl (in preparation for a book I am writing on "The Vatican, the Jews and Israel.") Herzl is a heroic legend today among all Jews, and for obvious historic reasons.

But it is heartbreaking to read accounts of how Jewish disunity, hostility, egocentric politics impeded the rise of the Jewish state and virtually destroyed Herzl's health.

Everybody had "good" reasons: The assimilationists feared that a Jewish state would create dual loyalties; they wanted only colonies in Palestine. The cultural Zionists wanted to concentrate on Palestine as a "spiritual center" and not on its political realization.

The triumph was that Herzl succeeded finally with his diplomatic genius, despite much opposition from Jewish leadership. To the imperiled masses of Jews in Eastern Europe, Herzl was "the king of the Jews."

When will Jews learn that we are the last people on earth who can afford such internal hostility and alienation from one another; that only our worst enemies profit from Jewish disunity? Somewhere in Jewish life today the central affirmation must become again "love of Jews for one another" and learning to disagree in non-destructive ways.

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A Tour Through Venice, Where the Ghetto Began

By Ruth E. Gruber
(JTA)

Venice gave the world the word — and concept of — the ghetto, and no Jewish tourist in the Canal City should miss a visit to the old Jewish section.

The ancient ghetto area is an easy walk from the train station in the northern part of the city. It was once the Foundry District — "ghetto" in the Venetian dialect — and it was here that in 1516 Venice became the first Italian city to confine Jews to one section of town. It was not until 1797 that Jews were allowed to live in other parts of the city.

Today, the area is slightly off the more fully beaten tourist track, but the characteristic architecture, the beautifully decorated old synagogues and the little Jewish Museum are well worth a few hours' visit.

There are also several shops in the area where one can buy books, Jewish versions of typical Venetian

souvenirs — Mezuzot and kiddush cups made from Murano glass, Star of David pendants in mosaic lace hangings with Jewish designs and the like.

The center of the ghetto is the new Ghetto Square (Ghetto Nuovo), which was the first place in which Jews were confined. Adjacent are the Ghetto Vecchio and Ghetto Nuovissimo, which eventually were also assigned to the Jewish community.

At one time, as many as 5,000 Jews lived in the ghetto. They could circulate freely in the city during the day, but at sunset they were locked inside behind gates which were watched over by guards until dawn.

At the entrance to the Ghetto Nuovo you can still see the remains of the hinges of the gates and windows of the guard house. A stone tablet dating back to 1541 lists regulations for the Jews. The architecture in the ghetto is different from that elsewhere in Venice.

For so many people confined in a relatively small space — only 42,000 square yards — the only way to build homes was to build up, and the many-storied apartment buildings are known as Venetian Skyscrapers.

One of the best ways to visit the ghetto is to start at the Jewish Museum and join one of the guided tours of three of the ghetto's five synagogues.

Tours are given in several languages, including English, and the tour includes visits to the Spanish School, Levantine School and German School synagogues, all dating back to the 16th century and all elaborately decorated.

The guide explains the differences between the various Jewish groups that once lived in Venice, distinguished by their different origins and rites. It is also interesting to note that most of the synagogues in Venice were built on the top floors of already existing buildings.

The great German School Synagogue is on the top floor of the building that now houses the Jewish Museum. The museum's two rooms contain a rich display of ritual art and objects, including finely wrought silver and beautiful ketubot.

There are also important manuscripts and other sacred objects. The museum, too, has an interesting selection of books — many in English — on sale, relating both specifically to the Venice ghetto as well as to Italian and European Jewry.

Today there are only about 500 or so Jews living in Venice.



On Reflection . . . By Ira Gissen, Virginia/North Carolina Director ADL

The Bigot in Baton Rouge

In recent weeks, in meetings at the University of Virginia, Winston-Salem, Roanoke, Charlotte, Richmond, Staunton, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach — regardless of the announced subject, the one topic of concern everywhere was the election of David Duke to the Louisiana State Legislature.

Two questions resonate in every meeting. "Has he reformed?" "Was his election a fluke, or does it have significance?"

The answer to the first question is: "No he hasn't." The second question reminds me of the favorite saying of my best professor in graduate school: "To predict the future is both essential and impossible."

David Duke, through the years, has worked hard to cultivate a seemingly moderate clean-cut image, and to articulate his racism and anti-Semitism with deceptive subtlety.

Duke set out on the racist trail at age 17 as a follower of extreme right-wing groups. While attending Louisiana State University he proclaimed himself the leading campus advocate of white supremacy, founded

the White Youth Alliance and affiliated it with the National Socialist White People's Party of Arlington, Va., formerly the American Nazi Party. On at least one occasion — an anti-leftist demonstration at Tulane University in New Orleans — Duke marched wearing a stormtrooper-style brown shirt and Nazi swastika armband. Like other anti-Semitic hatemongers, he has asserted that the Holocaust is "an historical hoax."

Duke secured his first major public attention during the Klan resurgence of the 1970s in which he and his Louisiana-based Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were instrumental.

He doffed the hooded robe and put on a business suit. He took some of the mumbo-jumbo out of the Klan ritual and nomenclature, calling himself a "national director" rather than a wizard or a dragon. He articulated racism in so slick a manner that journalists would describe it as "rhinestone racism" and "button-down terror." He urged Kluxers to "get out of the cow pasture and into hotel meeting rooms."

Duke skillfully exploited such legitimate issues as affirmative action, busing, and illegal immigration to stir up fears, while television interviewers such as Barbara Walters and Tom Snyder just as skillfully exploited Duke and pushed this colorful nonentity into celebrity status.

David Duke's days as a Klan leader ended abruptly in 1980, when Bill Wilkinson, who had left Duke's organization five years earlier to form the rival "Invisible Empire" Klan, told the press that he had forced Duke's resignation from the KKK by secretly videotaping a meeting at which Duke offered to sell his membership lists for \$35,000. Duke denied the whole incident, but he backed away and established the National Association for the Advance of White People, which he has described as "a white rights lobby organization, a racialist movement, mainly middle class people."

Still preening the dapper, respectable image, Duke explained in a letter to his followers that the message of the KKK and the NAAWP were "essentially the same."

Duke's NAAWP News parallels his efforts to exploit

racial tensions. "Victory in Forsythe County" was the headline after a racist march in that troubled Georgia county in January 1987. A week later, during a civil rights counter-demonstration in the same region, Duke and two other men were arrested (and later convicted) of reckless conduct and illegally blocking a state highway after a confrontation with state law enforcement officers.

Mr. Duke had run afoul of the law previous to this, of course; he had been arrested and convicted for inciting to riot in connection with Klan rallies in 1976 and 1979.

Duke's 1989 legislative victory was not his first foray with politics. In June, 1987, Duke announced that

he would seek the 1988 Democratic nomination for President. His campaign manager was Ralph Forbes, an erstwhile "captain" in George Lincoln Rockwell's Nazi Party who has since become a minister in the anti-Semitic "Identity" church movement. By March of 1988, however, candidate Duke had switched parties and accepted the Presidential nomination of the Populist Party, which had been founded in 1984 to promote the political agenda of the Anti-Jewish Liberty Lobby and its founder, Hitler-admirer Willis Carto. Duke as Populist was on the ballot in 11 states and received 48,267 votes — 1/20th of one percent of those cast.

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