

the American mainstream, but opposition to it.

There is, of course, much truth in each of these conservative positions. Government regulation has an automatic tendency toward overextension. Even while dealing with Communist China, we should remember that its totalitarianism denies the values Western civilization holds dear. Many recent American trends wholly deserve opposition.

These are truths we should not forget, but they do not really seem the truths central to our day. That is why conventional conservatives so often march off into what strikes even many would-be friends as political irrelevancy, with the Goldwater campaign, strident opposition to the China initiatives, the Ashbrook candidacy. Now we even find that the New York Conservative Party has decided to oppose state senator John Marchi, its impeccably civilized standard-bearer against John Lindsay. Somehow there is the doctrinal rigidity one would expect of radicals, not the moderation one would expect of conservatives.

It is the strength of the neo-conservatives, by contrast, that despite their small numbers they have occupied a number of strategic intersections in American life. Politically, for example, they are something of a swing group between the two major parties. Their political outlook is that of establishmentarians looking for an establishment worthy of the name, and without taking any polls, one can guess that among them the most common Presidential preference would be, 1. Henry Jackson, 2. Richard Nixon. They represent an opportunity for the Republicans to break the Democratic strangle-hold on intellectual talent, and if the Republican Party ever figures out how to make use of any such thing it may, in fact, make itself into the sought-after establishment.

Intellectually, the neo-conservative themes are the central issues of our time. The collapse of values. The place of tradition in a time of change. The need not only for outward material progress but for the inner satisfaction of living in what seems to be a proper society. The place of an intellectual elite in a nation where, *The Public Interest* reminds us, only eleven percent of adults have completed four years of college. These are contemporary issues; they are in fact what underlies "the social issue" of political note; and they may very well be the pressing issues of the vaunted post-industrial society.

Finally, in terms of policy as opposed to politics, the neo-conservatives have been able to deal with the realities that confront a relatively disinterested-policy-maker. *The Public Interest* has a circulation of only 10,000, but is perhaps the chief medium of common knowledge within the incredibly small circle where the public interest is weighed in a rigorous way. One finds it the most cited single source when talk-

ing seriously about social policy with policy-oriented White House aides, or assistant secretaries of cabinet departments or assistant directors of the office of management and budget.

The policy relevance is not due to the philosophers of the movement as much as to its social scientists, those initially attuned not to values but to the data that moves policy-makers. There is something of an irony here, since the Straussians have been among the strongest critics of the recent empirical turn in the social sciences. They felt this turn led away from the key question of values. It never occurred to them, it seems, that a truly hard-headed look at reality would lead back to the same questions, that a rigorous empiricism would prove that Aristotle was right.

Yet something like that seems to have happened to produce the melding

of values and data that is represented by Kristol and his friends. The melding has produced an exceptionally strong and valuable outlook, one sensitive to both detail and the broad sweep, one relevant both to important political battlegrounds and to the diffuse hunger of our times, and above all one that resonates to reality.

That is why, when the intellectual history of the 1960s is ultimately written, we may find that the event of most lasting significance was not the advent of a new radicalism but the evolution of a new and newly relevant conservatism. □

Robert L. Bartley is associate editor in charge of day-to-day operations of the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*. This article was adapted by the author from an article in that publication.

A Memoir of the 1940s

Kristol and the New York Intellectual Establishment

Nathan Glazer

I N 1945, I was an assistant editor at *Commentary*, which had started at the beginning of that year, a successor to the *Contemporary Jewish Record*. The intellectual ambience of the *Contemporary Jewish Record* and *Commentary* are not easy to communicate now. They were supported by the American Jewish Committee, the most conservative of the American Jewish defense organizations — and staffed by editors who thought of themselves as radical.

Admittedly, to be radical and anti-Stalinist in 1945 was a rather mild sort of thing. Nevertheless, it was an odd concatenation, and I do not know all the reasons for it. It appears that Louis Oko, the editor of the *Contemporary Jewish Record*, who it appears did represent the American Jewish Committee and its outlook, had hired Isaac Rosenfeld, the young Jewish novelist from Chicago, as his editor. Rosenfeld knew Yiddish, and this seemed some basis for hiring him. This developed a link between the *Contemporary Jewish Record* and the world of Greenwich Village, that is, of the readers of *Partisan Review*, and those who aspired to write for it. Indeed, the first successor to Rosenfeld, who left the job to write, was no less a figure than Clement Greenberg, one of the editors of *Partisan Review*, who included such awesome figures as Philip Rahv, William Phillips, Lionel Trilling and Dwight MacDonald.

Clement Greenberg was left as acting editor of the magazine when Oko died suddenly. He hired me — at least I

had been in student Zionist politics and knew something, if not enough, about that side of things. When Elliot E. Cohen became editor of the newly enlarged magazine, *Commentary* (Cohen too was a friend of the *Partisan Review* circle, but he differed from it in a number of important ways), he inherited Greenberg and me. He appointed Robert Warshaw, the young aspiring film critic, to the magazine. And in 1945 Irving Kristol began to write for it, and shortly thereafter joined it as an editor.

It must have appeared to all concerned that the old succession of those who edited, wrote for, could have written for or hoped to write for *Partisan Review* was being maintained at the editorial offices of *Commentary*. Kristol after all came out of a similar background — a Jewish neighborhood of New York, City College, the Trotskyist youth, then he affiliated with the moderate Schachtamanite minority in the split of 1939, then he affiliated with the small group that split away again from the Schachtamanites, finding even its Marxism rather too much. And so, why not *Commentary*, home of radicals with such or similar careers?

But the fact is, Kristol was very different from the rest of us, and I recall my perpetual surprise at how different he was.

First, Kristol was interested in religion, and even, surprisingly enough, Judaism. He began to study Hebrew — from a grammar published by Oxford University Press, and of a level

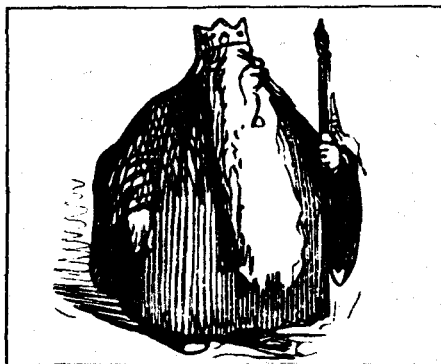
of complexity that put our afternoon Hebrew-School Hebrew to shame. He began to study the Bible. He decided we should study the Talmud, and he recruited me to a class of two that met with Seymour Siegel of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Certainly this immediately marked him with a rather surprising difference from Cohen, Greenberg and Warshow, who could never quite see the point of such enterprises. (I had my doubts too — I suppose even Kristol did — but was willing to go along.)

Second, Kristol was interested in philosophy. Of course, if it had been only the fashionable philology of French existentialism — Sartre, Camus — it would not have been at all surprising — that was what everyone was reading. But he got up early in the morning to study German and read Hegel. He discovered obscure existential philosophers who did not figure in the postwar existentialist craze, such as Shestov. What he found in them I do not know, but what was surprising was that no one else — in our world, at least — was reading them or knew of them.

Third, Kristol knew about and was interested in politics, and this also set him off from the rest of us. This may appear outlandish — what did all of us ex-, semi-, and slightly Marxists do but talk about politics? But we talked about a strange politics, one that existed on neither heaven nor earth — or more practically, neither in Russia Europe or America, and Kristol wonder of wonders, was interested in real politics, the politics that took place in Washington, the politics of Democrats and Republicans. How an editor of *Enquiry* (the journal of his groupuscule, now reprinted and available again) developed such an interest, I do not know, but he did. He even discovered articles by Samuel Lubell in the *Saturday Evening Post* (none of us ever would dream of looking at the *Saturday Evening Post*), and got Lubell to write for *Commentary*. Quite coolly, he had turned his back on the sectarian politics of the left; There was something more interesting and more important going on in Washington. It is my impression that a good part of the New

York intellectual establishment never got around to the stories in newspapers with Washington datelines until 1965 — and even then it was only the Vietnam stories.

The final oddity: Kristol was interested in business and businessmen, in gambling and speculation. Now, of course, everyone is interested in money. But whereas a good number of the rest of us were content, if we had any — and as time went on, we did — to leave our money in the bank



or buy a stock recommended by the non-intellectual brother-in-law, Kristol got interested in money on his own account, and knew things about the money market, business, speculation that was, if known in the rest of the intellectual world, strictly underground information.

Kristol, in short, was a surprise — certainly not part of Harold Rosenberg's 'Herd of independent Minds,' who couldn't care less in 1945 and 1946 and the next few years about religion, philosophy, politics and money. With all these oddities, it is no surprise he kept on thinking thoughts none of the rest of us had. And in the process, broke down a lot of panes in the hothouse in which we lived. □

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brief period when he was editing *The Reporter* (now defunct). The gathering was a little nervous and self-conscious because *The Reporter* and *National Review* had been shooting a little at each other. During the 1950s *The Reporter* was preoccupied with certain themes one does not take to be particularly congruent, looking back. The publisher was an Italian anti-communist liberal who was fascinated by the China lobby and spent several hundred thousand dollars promoting the thesis that Alfred Kohlberg was a ganglion of reactionary activity which somehow stood in the way of a successful Far Eastern policy. This all got mixed up with Senator Joe McCarthy, who was himself through by the time *National Review* began publishing, but whose shadow stuck like a birthmark on anyone who had ever a kind word to say about him (calamitous) or his activities (fatal). Kristol spent those particular years in England, editing *Encounter*, an invaluable monthly which was given to acknowledging the existence of the Soviet Union and correctly identifying its policies and even, on occasion, its apologists, in between issues devoted to the question whether *Lady Chatterley's Lover* should be proscribed, a question that was finally dropped when the editors could not think where to take it after the Warden of All Souls was required to point out to Dame Rebecca West that the gamekeeper was a buggerer.

Anyway, Irving said something mildly pleasant about some of the writers for *National Review*, I returned the compliment for some of the writers for *The Reporter*, and we took to seeing each other, maybe once or twice a year. The visits were always pleasant, and often quite animated. Kristol's habit, I judge, is to work out his ideas orally, to exercise them if you will, perhaps to discover what kind of promise they have before taking them out to Hialeah, where he almost always comes up with a winner. He is very interesting for all the reasons Messrs. Glazer and Bartley have mentioned, and for many others besides. For one thing, he is unbelievably opinionated in person. I doubt if he has ever ventured a tentative opinion in the presence of one other human being. But his writings, by contrast, are although firm, the absolute soul of reasonableness, totally devoid of any sign of arrogance or of cocksureness or of an indisposition to understand the other fellow's point of view. He is never rude in person, merely absolutely assured on all matters, except those that involve vulgar prediction: e.g., he would not tell you who the Democratic Party is going to nominate, though he will tell you that it doesn't really make very much difference how dilapidated our defenses become because after all there is no conceivable situation in which an American president would touch the nuclear button.

Kristol: Through the Jeweler's Eye

Re Irving Kristol

William F. Buckley, Jr.

MR. GLAZER PROVIDES us with fascinating biographical details about Irving Kristol, whose mind was tempered in that strange and productive foundry over which the formidable Elliot Cohen presided, and Robert Bartley situates him at the center not so much of a movement as of a consolidation of political and social attitudes, and Mr. Tyrrell is adroit in summoning their attention — our atten-

tion — to the phenomenon of Irving Kristol, who quite simply is writing more sense in the public interest these days than anybody I can think of. It is time he were more greatly celebrated, even if it seems impossible to make him more widely admired. The words I have to contribute to this mini-festschrift are mostly personal, but not I hope uninteresting.

I met him first in 1960 during the