

political analysis explaining Israel's tortured relationship with the Palestinians. In the process it never quite fulfills the promise of either option.

Yet as food for further controversial thoughts, the book is well worth reading, reflecting the malaise felt at midlife by many members of Mr. Benvenisti's "lost generation," the children of the founding fathers. Raised on a diet of utopian socialism, they believed that they were the elite born to build a new form of humanitarian society. But they have discovered painfully that the third generation of Israelis, many of them children of post-independence emigrants from Arab countries, neither understand their values nor find them relevant.

Benvenisti describes the passionate search for rootedness in Palestine, undertaken by the secular socialist generation of his parents, summed up by the near worship of "moledet" or homeland. It was expressed in his generation by a passion to till the soil and to possess it through archeology, nature conservations, and emphasis on exploring the outdoors with the Bible as a guidebook.

But this secular passion for the homeland provided no adequate guidelines in 1967, when a whole new area of biblical Palestine came under Israeli control. The old ideology that revered "moledet" but saw it as the ground where a just society would be created was taken over by a new generation whose vision was to settle Greater Israel. And this generation's pioneers, who dress like and profess the idealism of the socialist pioneers 40 years earlier, are driven not by secular humanism, but by a religious conviction that settling greater Israel is a preordained milestone on the route to messianic redemption.

Benvenisti's passion and his pain in relating these changes and others wrought by occupation come most alive in the all too few instances when he lets the reader share his personal experiences. The most moving is the story of his Arab neighbor, coworker, and close personal friend, Mohammed, who was arrested on "preposterous" charges of contact with the Palestine

Liberation Organization. The arrest apparently was meant as a warning to Mohammed, who managed a neighborhood sports club, to stay out of communal activities that could be infiltrated by the PLO. Its effect—besides breaking Mohammed psychologically and losing him his job—was to rub into Benvenisti's soul the bitter truth that under occupation, even in the case of friends, the occupier holds the power and the occupied are at the mercy of alien forces.

It's unfortunate that Mohammed, labeled "the elusive hero" of Benvenisti's narrative, gets only four pages. Such a story graphically illustrates the heart of Benvenisti's political analysis, that occupation threatens to turn Israel into a "herrenvolk democracy" where the minority (Arabs) is disenfranchised and deprived of basic civil rights.

Benvenisti has often been castigated by Israeli and American Jewish liberals, as well as by Palestinians, for his thesis that the clock has struck midnight and occupation is practically irreversible. He makes a convincing case in his final chapter, although the argument is complex and the novice reader might easily get lost.

His basic point is that there are three realities of the mid-eighties: the bulk of the Israeli Jewish populace (aided by past Arab intransigence) now perceives Israeli control of the whole of Mandate Palestine as a given. Those Palestinians who seek a two-state compromise are neither strong nor united enough to change this in the foreseeable future. And, given the collapse of OPEC and oil prices, no deus ex machina, like the United States, will rescue Israeli liberals or Palestinian moderates from this impasse.

Thus, says Benvenisti, the choice for Israel now is whether to have a democratic or a semi-democratic state within all Mandate Palestine. The Likud party, a member of the coalition, is comfortable with the vision of "herrenvolk democracy." To opt for real democracy raises the nerve-racking prospect of a binational state, a concept that has a record of failure elsewhere, and

which neither Palestinians nor liberal Israelis want. The pain that filters through the most jargon of Benvenisti's pages reflects the fear of having to sit by helplessly while the Israel his generation fought to build fades before his eyes.

—Trudy Rubin

**Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor.** Paul Kleppner. *Northern Illinois University Press, \$26.00.* In 1955, Richard Daley, just elected mayor, reneged on his promise to resign as head of the Cook County Democratic Party. While earlier mayors had to appease neighborhood committeemen (who ran their wards like fiefdoms and cared little about citywide problems), Daley sought and gained control of all the levers of political and governmental power—candidate selection, endorsements, patronage, and the like.

Chicago blacks were a part of the machine until the mid-1960s. They didn't have much choice: black citizens needed the machine for public employment, and black candidates relied on the machine for their political survival.

This uneasy alliance ended in the 1960s when race was pushed to the top of the political agenda—and blacks saw an indifferent Daley turn hostile. Kleppner gives it scant attention, but surely a signal event came in 1966 during Martin Luther King's Poor People's Campaign. With the major civil rights legislation behind him, King settled in the Chicago tenements to draw attention to that city's slum conditions. When he tested Illinois's open-housing laws, whites greeted him with rocks and fists. For many Chicago blacks this was proof that they had it as bad as their Mississippi brethren. Two years later the mayor, confronted by rioting on the night of King's death, issued "shoot-to-kill" orders to Chicago police.

Black political fortunes began to rise in 1975 when Daley's death set off a feud within the machine. By the 1983 election, the rift among machine politicians had widened so much that half of the party backed Jane Byrne and the rest sided with prodigal son Illinois Attorney

General Richard Daley Jr. This split plus a mobilized black electorate allowed Harold Washington to win the mayoral nomination.

It is hard to forget Harold Washington's campaign. Everywhere he went, Washington drew throngs of placard-waving youths shouting "Nigger Go Home!" Leaflets trailed him; one asked Chicagoans whether they wanted to see Richard Pryor appointed fire commissioner. Another depicted a newly elected Washington putting basketball hoops on the Picasso in Daley Plaza.

When it comes to explaining why whites were so hostile, Kleppner shrugs and surmises that Chicago middle-class whites are really Klansmen in disguise. But Washington was a threatening candidate for reasons besides race. True, there were many who voted against Washington simply because he was black, but after eight years of Byrne and Michael Bilandic, what many Chicagoans wanted was stability, a return to the efficient municipal services they had known under Daley. Vowing to crush the machine, Washington promised Chicagoans no such security.

Nothing justifies the venom that seethed from white Chicago. But it seems possible that a different black candidate, one who simply campaigned for better services and who promised to cut blacks in rather than cut the system out, would have garnered a larger share of the white vote and soothed racial tensions.

The sad truth is that when it comes to voting for blacks, white voters often need coddling—the kind that Washington, who at times intimated that violence might follow his electoral defeat, refused to provide.

—Matthew Cooper

**The Handmaid's Tale.** Margaret Atwood. *Houghton Mifflin*, \$16.95. Are gains in women's rights cumulative or cyclical? Much as one wants to believe in a slow, steady, dependable progression, the evidence makes it hard to be too confident. Women, after all, were doing pretty well with the vote, visibility, and a measure of "lib-

eration" well into the Roaring Twenties, only to see that status crumble along with the economic fortunes of the country. They achieved what seemed like solid respect and independence along with men's jobs during World War II, only to disappear once the war was over into the long eclipse of fifties domesticity. The current bonanza (in relative terms) of equity seems fairly solid too, but for those who expect it to exhibit real staying power, here is Margaret Atwood's sixth and most politically sharp-edged novel to remind us that it could all vanish tomorrow.

Feminism has been the main philosophical influence on a raft of novelists in the last generation or so. As happens with any political movement, many of the novels produced have been position papers. Atwood, by contrast, is a mature artist, and *The Handmaid's Tale*, though more politically explicit than most of her previous work, is by no means doctrinaire. ("I have never written a trapped housewife novel," she told an interviewer in

1983.) In its picture of a Bible-based, viciously anti-feminist dictatorship in this country circa 1990, *The Handmaid's Tale* does explore the eventual implications of current attitudes among religious fundamentalists, certain feminists, and well-meaning but essentially uncaring males. Its main thrust, though, is less philosophical and in the end more grippingly persuasive—to explore not just *why* women in the Republic of Gilead are so utterly oppressed but, vividly and rending, how that oppression feels.

Atwood's effectiveness in this regard, her delicacy of imagination and grimness of detail, shows the influence of her many years of involvement in Amnesty International and human rights issues. The main emotion we get from Offred, the disconsolate narrator, is numb shock. Offred still lives in the same town, passes the same buildings and crosses the same streets, as she did before "they shot the president and machine-gunned the Congress and the army declared a state of emergency. . . . They said it would

# CHEMICAL WARFARE



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