

Wheen's Karl Marx is neither the laboring man's messiah who founded the revolutionary workers' movement nor the satanic force who unleashed the horrors of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. Having been stripped of this baggage by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of all but a few die-hard communist parties, Marx is now neither prophet nor threat. What is left? A peculiar, frustrated, and generally unhappy 19th-century intellectual, whose outer world was that of a stolid Victorian bourgeois and whose inner world was defined by "paradox, irony, and contradiction."

Later Marxists loved to speak of the "objective" forces that moved history, generally in the direction they wished. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to see the extent to which Marx's own life and thought were dominated by a veritable army of highly subjective prejudices, many of them quite nasty. The French were deceitful, the British obtuse and incapable of rigorous thought, and the Russians primitive and hell-bent on conquest. When provoked, he

could drop anti-Semitic or racist slurs as capably as any good 19th-century European burgher.

And that's just the point. As Marxism recedes into the past, the man who created it stands forth ever more clearly as an emanation of his era. His intellectual concerns, his hopes and fears, and even his private life (which Wheen, without resorting to Freud, describes with considerable sensitivity and skill), were all very much the product of his class, gender, and historical epoch.

Is there anything surprising in that? Certainly not. Nor is Wheen the first to make the observation. But, coming on the heels of the great communist crackup, this biography has a poignancy that earlier works lacked. As we part company with Marxism-Leninism, we also bid farewell to its chief architect, with all his will to power, apocalyptic dreams, petty squabbles, ritual humiliations of opponents, and wretched private life.

—S. Frederick Starr

## Contemporary Affairs

### *THE JEWISH STATE: The Struggle for Israel's Soul.*

By Yoram Hazony. Basic. 433 pp. \$28

For decades, the conflict between Israel and the Arabs—both the Arab states outside its borders and the Palestinians within—dominated the daily lives and consciousness of Israelis. "The Siege" is the label Conor Cruise O'Brien once gave the struggle and the mentality it produced among Israelis. It dictated everything from political discourse to ideology to which brand of car they could buy (for years, Subaru was the only Japanese brand available; other automakers scrupulously honored the Arab League embargo). But now the Siege is lifting, and Israelis find themselves facing turbulent internal issues they have long put off: church versus state, majority rule versus minority rights, and, broadly, what it means to live in a Jewish state.

The last question is at the heart of this book. In Hazony's view, the very concept of a Jewish state is under systematic and relentless assault from the country's own cultural and intellectual establishment. Virtually everywhere he looks—in the classrooms, books, museums, movie theaters, courtrooms, even in the bar-

racks of the country's proud citizen army—he sees materialism, deception, despair, and a loss of Zionist fervor. And he considers the Oslo accord with the Palestinians yet another betrayal of the dream of a Jewish state.

Although Hazony—who heads a Jerusalem think tank and has been an adviser to hard-line former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—holds strong, nationalistic views, he has written not a screed but a thoughtful and provocative historical analysis and critique. The book traces the development of the idea of the state from Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) to his ideological heir, David Ben Gurion (1886–1973), and chronicles their political and ideological battles with other Jewish leaders.

Hazony contends that a small faction of German Jewish intellectuals, led by the philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965), mounted a rear-guard action against classic Labor Zionism from their redoubt at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The intellectuals favored a binational state in which Jewish identity would take a back seat to secular citizenship. Although Buber and his followers were discredited and vanquished by Ben Gurion,

Hazony argues that their anti-Zionist ideology infected the second generation of the Israeli elite, and that this generation has now retreated from the vision and dreams of its forefathers.

To his credit, Hazony doesn't flinch from criticizing the Zionist giants he so admires. He accuses Ben Gurion and his heirs in the Labor Zionist movement of pursuing concrete achievement at the expense of ideas and vision, thereby leaving themselves vulnerable to Buber's intellectual counterattack. He contends that the Jewish settlement movement, which first arose after the triumphant Six Day War in 1967 and grew markedly in size and fervor after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, fell victim to the same syndrome: It built fortress communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip while never adequately articulating a compelling moral basis for doing so.

But Hazony overestimates the impact of a small group of isolated academics and underestimates the benefits of Israel's transformation. Though true believers scorn it as betrayal, the shift away from ideological fervor is nearly inevitable in post-revolutionary societies, few of which can sustain the fire and vision of the revolution's founders. Aspects of Israel's transformation are regrettable: the loss of egalitarianism and sense of community, and the eroding of the nation's distinctive culture and work ethic. But there are gains as well, for Israelis and Palestinians, from living in a mature, prosperous, and bourgeois society striving to make peace with its neighbors and with itself.

—Glenn Frankel

**THE PARADOX OF  
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY:  
*Elites, Special Interests, and the  
Betrayal of Public Trust.***

By John B. Judis. Pantheon. 306 pp.  
\$26

**BOBOS IN PARADISE:  
*The New Upper Class and How  
They Got There.***

By David Brooks. Simon & Schuster.  
284 pp. \$25

Their books are vastly different, and Judis writes for liberal journals while Brooks writes for conservative ones, but both authors make the same complaint: American political life today lacks a public-spirited elite akin to John McCloy, Averell Harriman, and the other pow-

erful figures who served the national interest in World War II and its aftermath.

The absence of a disinterested elite lies at the center of Judis's case. A senior editor at the *New Republic*, Judis criticizes the populist and Marxist view that American democracy is a sham, its strings pulled not by voters or parties or interest groups but by a power elite or ruling class. In fact, he argues, if you look at the periods since 1900 when democracy has expanded, you find active voters, active parties, active interests, and an active (albeit disinterested) elite. In this sense, an elite is crucial to democracy—the paradox of the book's title. Today, though, the disinterested elite has given way to interested elites, represented by organizations such as the Business Roundtable and the Democratic Leadership Council.

For Brooks, a senior editor at the *Weekly Standard*, the absence of a disinterested elite is a corollary. His main point is this: College-educated members of the baby boom generation have fused what used to be contending sets of values, the bohemian and the bourgeois, chiefly by blending the liberationist cultural values of the 1960s with the liberationist economic values of the 1980s. This fusion has created a new and influential stratum, the bourgeois bohemians, or "Bobos": the stockbroker who sounds like a hippie, the hippie who sounds like a stockbroker. Since this fusion gives them such satisfying private and professional lives, Bobos tend to lack the zeal to venture into national public life. "The fear is that America will decline not because it overstretches," writes Brooks, "but because it enervates as its leading citizens decide that the pleasures of an oversized kitchen are more satisfying than the conflicts and challenges of patriotic service."

Daniel Bell famously observed that the corporation wants its employees "to work hard, pursue a career, accept delayed gratification," even as the company's products and advertisements "promote pleasure, instant joy, relaxing, and letting go." One can't do both, Bell maintained—but Bobos pull it off, according to Brooks. They work hard and play hard at the same time by working at play (climbing mountains, hiking the wilds) and playing at work (dressing casually in offices that evoke tree-houses). Brooks doesn't take himself seriously—he describes his method as comic sociology—but his book is just as incisive as Judis's.

A respectful question for both authors: On the