

YEAR of the
TRIPHAMMER



AJC in **1968**

Gary Spruch

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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Foreword

Forty years have passed since our country passed through the critical year and turning point of 1968—a year of war, urban and campus unrest, assassinations, social upheaval, and the culmination in many ways of the “counterculture,” whose adherents rebelled against the standards of conventional society and sought to establish new ones.

The decade began with the election of a youthful, charismatic, idealistic president who was cut down at the height of his powers. It was followed by unprecedented legislative progress in the area of civil rights and what was called at the time the “War on Poverty,” part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society” program. It was a program that sought to transform the country through government attention to urban renewal, education, child welfare, medical care, and the seeking of true equality for African American citizens.

There were a range of achievements, some of them enduring. And, yet, many of the most ambitious hopes at the heart of the Great Society were dashed, in part by the vast expenditures and domestic conflict caused by the Vietnam War and the inability of real life to keep up with the starry dreams of an earlier era.

Throughout this period and through this year the American Jewish Committee participated actively and helped to shape events through its dedication to the betterment of society and through its refusal to back away from its unique vision at a time when everything seemed to be falling apart. Even as it aimed to serve as a voice of reason and balance in a time of turmoil, even as it sought the universalistic goal of championing reform programs that benefited all people, AJC, for instance, paid special attention to the needs of Jewish college students and the Jewish poor.

Author Gary Spruch here deftly portrays AJC's activities against the general historical background of the time and provides a vivid portrait of major events and themes of interest to both the general community and the Jewish community. The picture that emerges is that of an organization which, in the words of one of its leaders, combined "moral passion and intellectual discipline" as it confronted the challenges of one of the most momentous years ever in U.S. history.

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Year of the Triphammer: AJC in 1968

It was a year when soaring idealism and the satisfaction of major legislative achievements mixed fiercely with fading hopes for real change. When assassins cut down two beloved dreamers of social action and civic concern. When Communist attacks dashed expectations for victory in Vietnam. When protest and violence rocked inner-city black communities and college campuses across the nation. When, with the launch of Apollo 8, America began the first U.S. mission to orbit the moon. It was a triphammer year, when a range of social and political forces that had been raised and suspended dropped suddenly with a force that will be long remembered.

The despair of 1968 was connected to the disappointment that so often follows in the wake of idealistic visions. Indeed, it was a heady assortment of civic, psychological, and spiritual idealism that characterized the period from President John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 to the tumultuous year of 1968. And all of the various idealisms of the day, each in its own way, sought nothing less than to reach the moon. What was the source of all this unbridled optimism, this unlimited hope for revolutionary progress?

Perhaps the greatest symbol of the start of it all was the charmingly photogenic President Kennedy and his striking wife, Jacqueline. The country had moved from its oldest president at the time, Dwight David Eisenhower, to Kennedy, at 43, its youngest president ever. Not only was Kennedy handsome, witty, and charismatic, he had a flair for oratory, and a rare ability to ignite civic passion and pride.

He boldly asked the nation for sacrifice and involvement in the task of spreading freedom and progress. He asked Americans to ven-

ture with him to a “New Frontier.” And he promised that “the energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it—and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.”

After Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, it was widely publicized that in his White House bedroom he greatly enjoyed listening to the soundtrack from the popular 1960 Broadway play *Camelot*. It was said that his favorite lines were in the last song, which tells the story of how King Arthur knights a young boy. He urges him to pass on the story and great ideals of justice, bravery, and truth that motivated the Knights of the Round Table at the castle and court known as Camelot.

“Don’t let it be forgot,” sings King Arthur, “that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.” In the minds of so many Americans, the Kennedy years became associated with a “brief shining moment” of glorious adventure.

As devastating as Kennedy’s death was to the nation, however, it did not stamp out the hope he had inspired. In fact, his death helped spark a tremendous national push to pursue the ideals he had so brilliantly embodied and to secure the legislative program he had fashioned but largely failed to move through Congress.

The historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, in her 1976 *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, writes that when Johnson succeeded Kennedy, he entertained “gigantic aspirations” and immediately sought to “embark on a mammoth program of social reform.” Kearns Goodwin explains that his ambitions, reflected in his “Great Society” reform agenda, were only encouraged by the uniquely “converging circumstances” of the time. These included, she writes: the shock of Kennedy’s death, the civil rights movement, growing awareness of poverty in America, a diminished threat of all-out confrontation between America and the Soviet Union, and a belief that America’s growing affluence would move inexorably forward.

Johnson’s vision propelled him to wage a “War on Poverty,” promote educational opportunity, and pass a range of important civil rights laws. On many occasions he publicized his idealism and

put forward his proposals for change. In his famed 1964 “Great Society” speech, he announced that “within your lifetime, powerful forces will take us beyond the realm of our experience, almost beyond the bounds of our imagination.”

Speaking in more practical terms, he declared, in a 1965 commencement address at the historically black Howard University, that what he sought was “not just equality as a right and as a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.” He assured his audience that his supreme objective as president was to assist the black community: “Nothing is more freighted with meaning for our own destiny than the revolution of the Negro American.”

He declared that much of the black community was “buried under a blanket of history and circumstance,” and argued that it wouldn’t be enough to lift just one corner. “We must stand on all corners,” said Johnson, “and raise the entire cover if we are to liberate our fellow citizens.” He went further, concluding his address with a pledge to “shatter forever not only the barriers of law and public practice, but the walls which bound the condition of many by the color of his skin.”

By 1968, Johnson had indeed made stunning progress, securing a series of historic reforms, all of them actively supported by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), among them: the 1962 Manpower Development and Training Act; the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act; the 1965 Higher Education Act; the 1966 Model Cities Act; the 1968 Child Health Improvement and Protection Act; and Medicare and Medicaid, established under the Social Security Act of 1965. He also succeeded with vital civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In addition, in 1967 he appointed the famed civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall to serve as the first black American on the Supreme Court.

Of course, as extraordinary as all this government action was, and as helpful as it ultimately proved, it could not possibly live up to the language of Johnson’s rhetoric. Johnson’s promises to the black community, and his expressions of profound concern, had, in

fact, gotten a huge credibility boost when civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., actively campaigned for Johnson's election in 1964 and, upon Johnson's landslide victory, proclaimed that the "forces of good will and progress had triumphed."

King also stood behind Johnson as he signed the 1965 Voting Rights Act into law and called Johnson's speech introducing the bill "one of the most eloquent, unequivocal, and passionate pleas for human rights ever made by a president of the United States." Sadly, by late 1967, King, turning against Johnson's Vietnam policy, would no longer speak to the president, and America's poorest black communities were feeling a bitter disappointment at the pace of change.

A Long Hot Summer

King was a disciple of the great Indian leader Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi, who helped free his nation from British colonial rule through wide-scale nonviolent resistance. King had studied and deeply admired the philosophy of nonviolent resistance, *Satyagraha*, that Gandhi taught and utilized so effectively. But by 1968, some in the black community had moved away from King, with his Gandhian ideals, toward very different heroes. For instance, Stokely Carmichael, a prominent and militant exponent of "Black Power," had been deeply affected by the work of Frantz Fanon.

A psychiatrist from Martinique, Fanon had written *The Wretched of the Earth*, a highly influential 1961 book about the Algerian struggle for independence from France. Fanon's view was that the only psychologically healthy response to the brutality of oppression was direct action, including violent action, against the oppressor. "Only violence pays," he once wrote. The growing frustration in the black community, the increasing influence of ideologies like Fanon's, and the effect of radical groups like the Black Panther Party proved combustible. Soon, there was fire in the streets. In the summer of 1967, there were deadly riots in Newark and even deadlier confrontations in Detroit. There were also violent clashes that year in the streets of Boston, New Haven, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Tampa.

President Johnson responded by appointing a commission to investigate the underlying causes of the violence. Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois was appointed chairman of the eleven-member National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which came to be popularly known as the Kerner Commission. In 1968, the commission released its report, famously announcing: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." The report starkly explained: "What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."

The report, released in February 1968, called for further federal spending but also advised improved practices by urban police forces, a more extensive black presence in newsrooms, a battle against housing discrimination, and a larger national commitment to early-childhood education. The report angered President Johnson and, as would be expected, was attacked by critics on the left and right. Whatever its strengths and weaknesses, as the report's research director Robert Shellow later explained, it helped bring the social equation to the fore and served to "tamp down the demonization of a minority that could have led us to a bitter, intractable conflict."

One month after the report was released, King was assassinated in Memphis, and rioting broke out in more than 100 cities. Writing in AJC's February-March 1968 membership newsletter, AJC Washington representative Hyman Bookbinder expressed the view that drastic steps would be necessary to halt "the continuing polarization of the American community, and ultimately the destruction of basic democratic values." He described AJC's involvement in the Urban Coalition, which brought together business, labor, and government leaders to help address what was then called "the urban crisis," and wrote that "the Coalition can help save America" from a painful fate—"but if it is to do so, every man and woman of influence in the community must lend a hand now."

Bookbinder certainly knew well the subject about which he wrote. He had, in fact, come to AJC after serving as a high-level government official working to implement the Great Society programs. A March 1968 AJC press release quotes Bookbinder on his background and how it only confirmed his belief in the need to push ahead at every level: “I spent almost four years helping to organize and administer the war on poverty, and I know from first hand how many times we had to say ‘no’ for every time we were able to say ‘yes.’”

AJC president Morris Abram, who also served at the time as U.S. representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, in a February 1968 speech, offered the following practical counsel: “We must recognize, as a Harlem youth worker put it in today’s idiom: ‘Brotherhood is not a love game; it is a state of co-existence.’” Abram declared: “If brotherhood is to be meaningful, America needs a national commitment.” What the nation must do, he urged, is to “follow through” with the promise to build a more just America. “With no light at the end of the tunnel,” he said, “you cannot expect co-existence, let alone a cool summer.”

In that same speech, Abram laid out an exceptionally balanced, insightful view of the term “Black Power” and, indeed, of the growing Black Power movement:

Black power—as a first step toward integration—may be a more modern and more relevant term than brotherhood in terms of Negro-white relations today. The concept of black power as community-building—as tool for full entrance into society—is healthy, psychologically and politically, for both Negroes and whites and for society as a whole. It will enable Negroes to act out their group interests in a pattern similar to that of other ethnic and racial groups in America. It will provide more solid substance to the meaning of brotherhood.

In other words, he explained, if black power means the “right” and the “desirability” of the black community organizing and exercising “maximum political and economic pressure,” then it is “surely welcome.” On the other hand, he cautioned, that there was a “destructive aspect” to the movement, one which displayed “dread-

ful glimpses of racism, black separatism, violence, and a mystique of violence.” He warned that in this particular manifestation, Black Power is a concept “alien to our best traditions,” and “rejected by the overwhelming majority of Negroes.”

Abram’s thoughts were echoed by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, father, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., when he addressed AJC’s Annual Meeting in May 1968. He referred to Abram as “one of the finest friends we have had throughout our total struggle,” and in the face of his immense sorrow following his son’s murder, he declared: “I am not bitter. I am not mad. I am not going to get small enough to hate anybody or anything. I am not going to hate the man who took my son’s life. I refuse to do this.”

Following in the Prophetic tradition that so powerfully influenced his son, he then placed blame for the assassination squarely on the shoulders of those who stood on the sidelines, choosing not to lend a hand during his son’s struggle for justice. “Now you don’t belong to that group,” he told the gathering. “You have not been guilty of apathy. You have not been among those who sat and watched Martin Luther King, Jr., die. You supported him, and you’re still doing it.”

“If Judaism Means Anything”

King had been assassinated in April 1968, and, two months later, Robert F. Kennedy, another passionate and outspoken tribune of the poor and disadvantaged, was killed. Amidst his campaign for nomination as the Democratic candidate for president he was gunned down in a Los Angeles hotel by Sirhan Sirhan, who despised Kennedy’s strong support for the State of Israel.

An article in AJC’s June-July 1968 newsletter, “Of Mass Guilt and Violence and Their Alternatives,” discussed the two recent deaths and the “pall of despondency and collective self-reproach, deepened by the minute news coverage of the events,” that so heavily weighed upon the nation. And then a question is put forward: “What alternatives to the paralysis of guilt and doom are open to responsible people?” The answer given, of course, is organized advo-

cacy. “America needs to know far more, not only about violence, but also about its alternatives.” An editorial in the same newsletter considered the Jewish view of how best to respond to the troubling whirl of events.

“If Judaism means anything,” the writer asserted, “it means commitment to justice; and justice is what the racial crisis is all about.” The newsletter detailed aspects of AJC’s “concerted program” to help address the “horrifying realities of urban life: unemployment, rotting tenements, stultifying schools, crime stalking the streets—and rioting.” Efforts across the nation were divided into the following categories: spurring joint action, employment, education, business development, housing, emergency aid, police relations, mass media, legal and welfare, recreation, and government.

In the section on promoting coalitional efforts, the newsletter offers the following examples of AJC action, among others:

AJC people have played crucial roles in prompting the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce to go to work on Negroes’ employment, housing, and health problems, and in involving Dallas businessmen and North Texas State University with each other in community action programs. AJCers are an integral part of “Cleveland Now,” a fund-raising coalition which hopes to obtain \$10 million from business and foundations to match federal and state funds, and of a suburban coalition around Newark that is pulling together hitherto uncoordinated efforts.

In the section on promoting employment opportunities, the newsletter explains that “creating jobs is where AJC’s constituency ... has been most active.” Among the examples given:

Stanley Marcus, an active AJC member who heads Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, wrote to his thousands of suppliers that his store would “look with favor” upon companies taking positive measures toward employing and training minority groups. Eight suppliers felt affronted, but some 700 promised action.

Under business development, the newsletter tells the story of how Lawrence Phillips of AJC’s New York Chapter, working with a group of apparel manufacturers, spearheaded a program that set up

a \$20 million credit pool to enable black merchants to stock new clothing stores in nonwhite areas of New York City. Under housing, the newsletter explained, among other efforts, how in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, AJC joined with Protestant and Catholic groups to sponsor 175 units of quality low-cost housing and how, similarly, AJC’s Los Angeles Chapter co-sponsored a \$2.5 million interfaith housing corporation that was set to build “176 units of moderate-cost integrated housing equipped with a variety of social services.”

The newsletter’s discussion of police relations describes a number of AJC efforts in this arena across the country and mentions a handbook that AJC had recently released on the topic, *The Police on the Urban Frontier*, by Judge George Edwards, a federal appeals court judge who had served earlier as a Detroit police commissioner. The Kerner Commission had singled out police-community relations as a “major—and explosive—source of grievance, tension, and disorder,” and the pioneering handbook, used by police and civic groups across the country, was meant to help bring light to the subject.

AJC launched a nationwide campaign to have its various recommendations carried out on the widest possible scale and also frequently spoke on related issues. For instance, when Miami’s police chief used particularly threatening language in announcing a crack-down on sections of the city’s black community, AJC Miami Chapter president Alfred Boas, in January 1968, declared: “We must deplore methods which call for the unrestrained use of police dogs, shotguns, and stopping and searching of persons who are not actually involved in the commitment of acts of violence.”

As a general rule, public relations endeavors by the police are meant to advance the image and standing of the police. Community relations endeavors, on the other hand, concern actions and the accompanying attitudes and approaches that strengthen and empower the community. Judge Edwards asserts in the handbook that an utter absence, on the part of the police, of a community relations approach has heavily contributed to the “intermittent warfare” between inner-city blacks and the police.

In the inner cities, he writes, much too frequently police "tend to act like an army of occupation," reinforcing the notion that their only aim is to impose "white man's law." He acknowledges that police "are not responsible for solving America's race problems," but insists upon the urgent need for the nation to "reexamine the role of the police in this conflict."

Chief among Judge Edwards's recommendations: "Forbid the use of racial slurs and other 'trigger words' by policemen"; "ban the use of police dogs in core areas of cities"; "identify troublemakers on the police force and transfer them to noncritical jobs"; "promote the development of more effective, less destructive weapons": "press for national and state regulation of firearms"; "maintain steady communications between Negroes and police to insure citizen cooperation in times of trouble"; "organize for day-to-day contact with all sections of the community"; "provide for direct staff investigation of complaints from the public, and for final decisions on such complaints by the highest civilian authority in the police department"; "integrate police forces; actively seek to attract members of minority groups to police careers, and help them qualify."

Edwards emphasizes the idea that improved police-community relations should be, and needs to be, an ongoing concern of the general community. He warns against allowing right-wing extremist groups to gain influence among police officers through the simple use of slogans like "Support Your Local Police." "Order," Edwards stresses, "is everybody's business, and support for it should not be the exclusive prerogative of the most reactionary element in the community." Any hope for sustained order, he insists, depends upon two pillars: intelligently containing violence and, at the same time, "completing the civil rights revolution."

AJC strongly believed in the essential vision of the Great Society and in the Kerner Report's proposition that progress demanded a powerful combination of government and civic action. And AJC took action across the country to do its part. Yet, at the same time, AJC, like many others, saw some deficiencies in the various reform efforts that it felt needed to be addressed.

As Marianne Sanua describes in her award-winning 2007 *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006*, an AJC criticism of the Kerner Report was the way it singled out Jews as "overrepresented in ghetto business." Indeed, a great many Jewish-owned businesses were destroyed during the urban riots of the 1960s, and AJC in many cases worked to provide aid, assistance, and guidance to those affected. But there was a very simple reason why these businesses were located where they were. The reality was, as Sanua explains, that many inner city black neighborhoods had previously been Jewish neighborhoods. Some Jews, in fact, remained in those neighborhoods, and others stayed on as shopkeepers and building owners.

More broadly, other deficiencies in the reform efforts that concerned AJC involved the issue of white ethnic poverty in general and Jewish poverty in particular.

"The Other Jews"

Michael Harrington's *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, published in 1962, has been credited with helping spark the "War on Poverty," an essential component of Johnson's Great Society. This compelling study drew wide attention to the "invisibility" of America's poor, to their "segregation" from the rest of society, and to the painful travails of these "40,000,000 or 50,000,000" citizens that constituted the "other America."

Black poverty, for good reason, was the focus of concern as the "War on Poverty" proceeded. And indeed, seeking to maximize "community involvement," many of the anti-poverty programs were structurally designed to bring assistance to places where the poor were concentrated in significant numbers. As a result, impoverished whites and Jews, particularly elderly Jews, were often left out of the picture. AJC aimed to address this problem.

AJC's February-March 1968 newsletter states forthrightly of the Jewish poor: "Unfortunately for them theirs is the wrong kind of poverty. It doesn't get them the kind of help they need—even if they're as poor as synagogue mice." In the five boroughs of New

York City alone, "there are some 50,000 to 100,000 Jews whose income, by one or another yardstick, puts them among the poor." These facts, along with an account of the needs of the Jewish poor and nature of Jewish poverty, reports the newsletter, were presented at a January 1968 press conference held by Theodore Ellenoff, president of AJC's New York Chapter, and Rabbi Bernard Weinberger, a member of the New York City Council Against Poverty. AJC followed up on the press conference with delegations to the Office of Economic Opportunity and to New York City's human resources administrator.

AJC remained powerfully committed to advocating for the Jewish poor. In 1971, AJC's Commission on Urban Affairs released a report entitled *The Jewish Poor and the War on Poverty*. The report quoted Johnson's 1964 State of the Union address in which he declared of the struggle against poverty: "We shall not rest until that war is won. We cannot afford to lose it." The authors of the report then referred to the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and clarified their goals in presenting the report:

It is now seven years since that Act was passed. It is not the purpose of this study to analyze the effectiveness of this Act in eliminating American poverty. Our concern is with the Jewish poor. In this regard we can say unequivocally that, in spite of the billions of dollars spent in fighting poverty since Public Law 88-452 [the Economic Opportunity Act] came into effect, little of this money has gone to alleviate the plight of the Jewish poor. Indeed, the war against Jewish poverty has not yet begun.

As further follow-up on this issue, AJC published a groundbreaking 1971 study, *The Invisible Jewish Poor*, by Anne Wolfe, a staff professional in AJC's intergroup and social action division. One of the serious problems in discussing the Jewish poor had always been a lack of available demographic data, and Wolfe's study proved an important step in overcoming this hurdle. On the basis of an examination of numerous surveys and statistics gathered over a period of years, Wolfe concluded that there were far more poor Jews than anyone had imagined.

On a less technical and much more personal note, AJC in 1972 published *The Other Jews: Portraits in Poverty*, by Dorothy Rabinowitz. The book won wide praise, including that of Michael Harrington, who wrote that the publication had "the enormous merit of making us see people who had dropped out of sight and mind."

In the introduction to the text, AJC executive vice president Bert Gold discusses the continuing need for Jewish communal organizations to "act as advocates for the poor ... for more and better services for the aged, who comprise such a high proportion of our poor." He also discusses the thorny problem of crime and intergroup violence that "falls so insistently on old, helpless, isolated people."

One of Rabinowitz's eight portraits of poor Jews, in fact, focuses on an elderly Mrs. Rosen (a pseudonym) living in the Lillian Wald Houses in New York City's Lower East Side. It's an area, Rabinowitz writes, "where every other block, it seems, has an abandoned synagogue in it." She explains that Rosen had lived there for twenty years and was now one of the few early residents still living in the complex.

Rabinowitz explains that "this is the neighborhood where Mrs. Rosen began her married life, an eighteen-year-old Polish Jew not long in the country.... It's where her husband worked as a barber, and where he died twenty-eight years ago." Rabinowitz describes how Mrs. Rosen now lives her life in fear: "What promised to be an enclave of hope and self-improvement for black, white, and Puerto Rican, Jew and gentile, has now become an island of terror for everyone."

Mrs. Rosen, in a variety of ways, had been left behind. But she was not alone. An editorial in AJC's February-March 1968 newsletter argued that "poor people who do not live in designated 'poverty areas' or who need different help than the majority in those areas are the losers." This group includes, the editorial continued, not only poor Jews, but also "poor whites from the South, poor Irish, poor Italians, and poor Poles." Indeed, AJC thought it wise to address this problem, both in terms of helping to ease poverty and also in terms of seeking to stem the intergroup tensions that the problem, no doubt, had the potential to aggravate.



Vice President Hubert Humphrey (r.) with AJC Washington, D.C., Representative Hyman Bookbinder.



President Lyndon Johnson hosts a White House meeting on civil rights. Seated second from the left is AJC President Morris Abram.



Senator Robert F. Kennedy, with AJC President Morris Abram (second from left) and others, on the television show *Opinion in the Capitol*.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., receives AJC's American Liberties Medallion at an AJC event in New York. On his right is Vice President Hubert Humphrey, on his left, AJC Executive Board Member Sol Linowitz.

Seeking to better understand and address the issues involved, in June 1968, AJC, among other initiatives, cosponsored a two-day conference that brought together 100 social thinkers and activists interested in the problems of those Americans who were being described at the time as “troubled,” “angry,” and “forgotten.” AJC, in October 1968, also issued a report on the subject, entitled *The Reacting Americans*, that took a close look at “working Americans” and examined the possibility that this group’s “traditional progressivism” could sour into anti-black or other forms of extremist sentiment.

To be sure, it was many of the so-called “troubled Americans” who were attracted, in 1968, to the presidential candidacy of Alabama governor George Wallace. Wallace, in his 1963 inaugural speech as governor, had notoriously declared: “Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever.” But his campaign for the presidency, in fact, steered clear of any nativist, racist, or anti-Semitic appeals. As the presidential nominee of the American Independent Party, Wallace focused on berating urban elites and campus radicals and promised a return to the “old virtues.” His appeal was, as he said, to the “average folk,” those who found themselves disoriented, and often disgruntled, by the changing world around them. In the end, Wallace’s run for the presidency proved the most successful third party candidacy in American history.

Irving Levine, AJC’s director of Education and Urban Planning, when he explained the purpose of AJC’s two-day June 1968 conference on the issue, highlighted the “need to identify the real problems of lower middle class ethnic groups.” He spoke of the serious danger of ignoring white reaction to the increasing empowerment of black communities and white fear of urban violence. To transform negative viewpoints, he insisted, it would be necessary to bring to bear, on the problems of white ethnics, some of the “brilliance” that was directed toward solving the problems of the black poor. Ignoring the issues surrounding white ethnics, he warned, could “harden the lines of polarization between black and white into a reality that could blow the country apart.” Levine’s warning of bedlam to come was hypothetical, but meanwhile another issue was, in fact, actually beginning to tear the country apart.

The Trouble on Tet

Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, is the most important holiday in Vietnam. It was on Tet, in February 1968, that Communist forces launched what came to be known as the “Tet Offensive,” the bloodiest surprise of the Vietnam War. Simultaneously, Saigon, Da Nang, Ben Tre, Quang Tri, Hué, and other major military bases and populations centers throughout South Vietnam came under heavy attack. The U.S. embassy in Saigon, a heavily defended fortress, was not spared. When a Vietcong assault team blew a three-foot hole in the embassy wall, they punctured not only the wall, but the confident belief, held by vast numbers of Americans at the time, that the Communists were nearing defeat, that our South Vietnamese ally could be defended, strengthened, and expected to soon stand on its own.

This confidence, of course, was enthusiastically encouraged by President Johnson and his administration, which had dramatically escalated U.S. involvement in the war. David Halberstam’s pioneering 1972 best-seller *The Best and the Brightest* tells the sad and sordid story of how overly optimistic assessments of American progress in the war kept the public believing that victory was around the corner. In addition to inaccurately assessing the progress in combating the Communist insurgency, President Johnson, his administration, and U.S. military leaders also underestimated the determination and capabilities of the enemy.

Communist leader Ho Chi Minh, affectionately known by his followers as Uncle Ho, had once offered the following military assessment of his own: “You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours. But even at those odds, you will lose and I will win.” Somehow, it was the Tet Offensive that began to convince many Americans that his appraisal of the situation, and not their government’s, may have been the more accurate one.

It’s true that, by the time the four-week-long Tet Offensive was over, the Communists lost many more men than did America and the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam. It is also true that in the midst of the Tet Offensive, the Communists revealed their most

brutal face by, among other atrocities, hunting down and executing nearly 200 South Vietnamese suspected of collaboration. But none of this mattered by then. It was on Tet that the confidence of the broad American public, with regard to Vietnam, began to crumble.

By 1968 there were 550,000 American soldiers in Vietnam. They were dying at the rate of over 1,000 a month. Johnson's popularity had plummeted and he was being bombarded by anti-war protesters chanting, "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" In a March 31 speech, he shocked the nation, announcing that he would not run for reelection: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

The fact was, however, that despite the rapidly growing opposition to the war, the mainstream of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, almost in its entirety, continued to support only a negotiated end to the war. They did not support any kind of unilateral cessation of America's war effort.

At the Democratic Party national convention, held in Chicago, in August 1968, supporters of Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota for the presidential nomination, along with others, pushed for a peace plank in the Democratic platform that called for an "unconditional end" to all bombing of North Vietnam, asked for negotiation of a "mutually phased withdrawal" of all U.S. and North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam, and recommended that the government of South Vietnam negotiate a coalition government with the Communist forces. Along with his supporters, however, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who won the Democratic nomination with a large majority of the ballots, voted the peace plank down.

Meanwhile, thousands of those not in the mainstream of the Democratic Party, or the mainstream of any major party, gathered in the streets, outside the convention center, to voice their opposition to Johnson's war policy and their deep dissatisfaction with American politics and culture in general. Many had sought, and all were denied, permits granting them designated areas in which they

could gather to voice their protest. Some of them came to believe that the best way to make their point would be to provoke confrontation with the police, proving thereby their contention that America had become a "police state."

With Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, and their Yippies (Youth International Party) taking a leading role, the unarmed protesters, who included young people from dozens of anti-war groups, jeered the police, calling them "pigs," "fascists," and other epithets. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley had directed the police to act aggressively against disorder and, sadly, those protesters who sought confrontation all too quickly found their wishes readily, even eagerly, granted. By the time the clashes in the streets were over, hundreds of people had been clubbed and beaten.

The next day, AJC president Arthur Goldberg, who had earlier served as a Supreme Court justice and who succeeded Abram at AJC, denounced the police actions, declaring that AJC "condemns last night's brutality and any brutality in dealing with peaceful demonstrators." One lesson learned from the tragedy, he said, was that "overkill techniques—from capricious denial of meeting permits to massive displays of force—only bring about what they seek to prevent." He called upon presidential nominees Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon, "as well as all other candidates for office," to "pledge that they will not be party to such methods."

Even beyond the precincts of public protest, disagreement in America, over a range of issues, but in particular over the Vietnam War, was becoming ever more rancorous. By then, the question about the war, for most, had become how best to end American involvement, or, as President Richard Nixon later put it, how to achieve "peace with honor." Indeed, within AJC there was intense debate about the war, but there was no consensus on whether the organization should take a public stand on an issue that was viewed as a matter of national security, was not a Jewish issue per se, and was still intensely divisive. There was also concern that should AJC express sharp opposition to the war, it could compromise its ability to encourage American support for Israel.

In the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War, that support, in fact, came under increasing attack. To be sure, Israel's swift and dramatic victory over Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria prompted not only Jewish pride and relief that annihilation had been averted. It also provoked anti-Zionist activism by those elements on the left, empowered by their leading role in opposing the Vietnam War, who saw no difference whatsoever between American support for South Vietnam and American support for Israel.

The rise of an anti-Zionist, and often anti-Semitic, left, and pervasive hostility toward Israel in the Black Power movement, had a dual effect. On the one hand, it galvanized young Jewish leftists who were in sympathy with Zionism. Many were powerfully motivated to make the case that Zionism and socialist idealism very much belonged together. The American Zionist Youth Foundation and Habonim, the Labor Zionist youth movement in North America, for example, for a time found themselves flourishing. On the other hand, leftist anti-Zionism spurred some Jews to reject their long-time association with the left.

Among these, most famously, was Norman Podhoretz, editor-in-chief of *Commentary* magazine. In his 1979 memoir, *Breaking Ranks*, Podhoretz wrote that after Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, "propaganda emanating from both the Arab world and the Soviet Union had literally portrayed the Israelis as the new Nazis, and far from repudiating this breathtaking inversion, certain elements on the radical left in America (and in Europe as well) had cooperated in propagating it." In any case, events in the Middle East in 1967, when combined with strident opposition to the Vietnam War, led in some quarters to fiercely anti-Israel attitudes. Of course, many opponents of the Vietnam War were strongly committed to friendship with Israel.

One of them was Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, an early, outspoken opponent of U.S. involvement in Vietnam who passionately defended Israel. In fact, recently released transcripts of Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings held in May 1967, a few weeks before the Six-Day War broke out, reveal that Morse urgently

warned his colleagues: "We have to make the other free nations understand the relation of freedom in this matter, because if they [Israel and its neighbors] do get into a war, then you have got totalitarianism seeking to drive this country into oblivion."

In April 1968, Morse spoke to AJC leaders about Vietnam, expressing his hope that President Johnson would succeed in "ending a needless and undecisive war." He also spoke of one of the great tragedies of the Vietnam War, how its extraordinary costs necessitated sharp cuts in national spending on Great Society programming. What the country needed, asserted Morse, was to stop the war and devote its energies and resources to "its most urgent problem: the dissension in the cities."

At a December 1969 meeting of AJC's Ad Hoc Committee on Vietnam, Committee Chairman Elmer Winter reported that eighteen out of thirty-one AJC chapters had voted that it was best for AJC not to advise on "the best ways to end involvement" in Vietnam. He summarized the consensus view by explaining that overall there was a feeling that "AJC has no special competence or expertise on the question of when and how peace can be secured." Winter also explained that, within AJC, there was, on all sides, intense "concern over the costliness of the war, not only in human lives and national resources, but in terms of the group tensions and conflicts the war had provoked."

Expressing its concern about the bitterness that increasingly characterized disagreements on the war, AJC, also in December 1969, released a statement on the "Right to Debate." "Our nation is now seeking to end American participation in the Vietnam War," the statement declared. Acknowledging that contention over the issue was likely to continue for some time, the statement urged that all parties to the debate exhibit restraint. "Tragically," many participating in debate on the war, "appear ignorant of—or indifferent to—the long and painful evolution of democratic procedures for the expression of opinion, for the protection of individual rights, and for the maintenance of that framework of order without which our cherished freedom cannot survive."

The statement criticized excesses on each side of the divide, and offered the following counsel: “It is in the American tradition to question and even to protest, but it is not in the American tradition to do so by violent confrontations or by shouting down opposing viewpoints.” In referring to violent confrontations, it’s likely that Winter and those who drafted the statement “On the Right to Debate” had in mind not only the violence that took place outside the Chicago Democratic Convention, but also the violence that rocked Columbia University in April 1968 and the wave of student protests, in 1967 and 1968, at other universities in America and across Europe.

Up Against the Wall at Columbia University

AJC executive vice president Bert Gold addressed AJC’s 1968 Annual Meeting only a month after the chaos at Columbia University. Gold sought to explain why Columbia, and other universities, had become objects of rage by students convinced that their own schools were inimical forces. “It is no accident,” he declared, “that the central institution under revolutionary attack all over the world today is the university. It is an oversimplification to view this as merely a sign of student unrest and the confusion of our times. It is precisely because, in our technotronic society, the university is a major center of power and is becoming increasingly so, that it has become a target of attack.”

Apart from general concern about a growing neglect of undergraduate education in favor of research and graduate education and opposition to a ban on indoor demonstrations, two primary issues sparked the violence at Columbia. The first was a local issue concerning land, power, and control. The second, related to Gold’s insight, was intimately connected to student concern about a “technotronic society” and its war-making proclivities and abilities.

In particular, activist students were incensed that the university was allowing on-campus recruiting by the CIA and by Dow Chemical Company, which produced the deadly chemical napalm, used as a weapon by United States forces in Vietnam. They were also

enraged by the university’s affiliation with the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), a weapons research think tank, and by the membership of Columbia University president Grayson Kirk on the institute’s board of trustees.

The other issue behind the Columbia University uprising was the more local one. It involved the university’s ownership of much land in the neighborhoods surrounding it, in Manhattan’s Morningside Heights. Over the years, the university had purchased more and more properties in the areas surrounding the school. When the school needed to grow, it evicted tenants from these properties and offered them assistance in finding new places to live. Many of these properties were single-room occupancy hotels and a small number of the evicted tenants were black.

When the university sought to build a large new student gym, however, it decided to expand into Morningside Park, bordering Harlem. The university moved the powers that be and gained permission from the city and state to use a portion of the park at a rental fee. Although in negotiation with community leaders the university agreed to include in its building plans some facilities for the neighborhood, the offer was viewed as insufficient. The feeling in the nearby black community was that a privileged and empowered “white” institution, indeed one with few blacks in its student body at that time, was encroaching upon a black community.

Until 1968, Columbia University’s Student Afro-American Society (SAS) had been little concerned with the issue of the gym. The Columbia University chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had not focused on the gym issue either, but rather on issues related to student empowerment, the Vietnam War, and the IDA. Under the leadership of Cicero Wilson, SAS moved in a new direction, building close alliances with community activists intensely committed to stopping the gym. Similarly, under the leadership of the flamboyant Mark Rudd, SDS took up the issue of the gym. It also made a sharp turn toward what Rudd called “confrontation politics,” whereby one, as he said, “puts the enemy up against the wall and forces him to define himself.”

On April 23, four hundred students gathered at the sundial near Low Library for a joint SDS-SAS rally. Wilson, Rudd, and other speakers excited the crowd with strong words of protest. SDS speakers focused on the university's IDA affiliation, while SAS speakers focused on the gym. Soon the issue of the gym took over, and the students, after being blocked from marching into Low Library, headed to the site of the planned gym.

With a Columbia dean present, Rudd announced that the university had fifteen minutes to meet the students' demand with regard to the gym and IDA. When he didn't receive the response he sought, Rudd marched the students back to Low Library and put forward the idea that the situation now demanded hostage-taking. The students walked into Hamilton Hall, seized the building, and took as hostages the dean of Columbia College and two other administrators.

In the next few days, four more Columbia University buildings were seized and occupied by protesters. Frustrated by student demands that they be granted unconditional amnesty for their actions, on April 30, the university called in the police. The students resisted. Amidst scenes of violent pandemonium, one thousand New York City policemen emptied the buildings. By the time it was over, there were more than 700 arrests and nearly 150 injured. Three weeks later, students again seized Hamilton Hall, and again it ended in violence. This time, there were more than 175 arrests and nearly seventy injured.

The eruptions at Columbia, of course, received extraordinary attention. Some of it focused on the role of Jewish students in the unrest, including SDS leader Mark Rudd. Additionally, in general, the role of Jewish student radicals and supportive Jewish faculty members on campuses across the country had been drawing attention. In the wake of the Columbia events of 1968, AJC was concerned about the possibility of a backlash of some sort within Columbia and also interested to understand in what ways, if any, "Jewishness" might be related to student involvement in radical activism.

Seeking to explore these issues, AJC asked a staff research expert, Geraldine Rosenfeld, to conduct interviews at Columbia and prepare a report, for internal AJC use. Rosenfeld spoke at length with five senior faculty members with many years of experience at Columbia. She also held informal conversations with a range of Jewish students and faculty members. All of her interview subjects remained anonymous.

According to Rosenfeld, her most significant finding was that the riots did not affect the confidence Jews felt on campus. Jews at Columbia, she declared, feel "completely at home in the world of the university," and it is "unthinkable that they might ever be excluded on the basis of their religious or ethnic background." Rosenfeld puts the novelty of this in historical context, explaining that for many parents of student radicals, such confidence was extremely hard to fathom. These parents, most of them having attended college in the 1930s, still vividly remembered the exclusionary policies, common at that time, which limited Jewish enrollment in many universities.

One senior faculty member disputed the idea that Jews were conspicuously involved in the campus rebellions. "Let's put it this way," he said, "if there's anything conspicuous about the Jews on campus today, it's that they're not unified in any kind of way and the ones who are silent are the ones who tend to be conservative and that's the majority of them." Another senior faculty member expressed his belief that though Jews, as a group, would not be affected as a result of the riots, with regard to admissions and appointments, the university would indeed exhibit "more general sensitivity on the subject of who we will be letting in."

With regard to the question of whether radicals came from among the most intelligent students on campus, one senior faculty member argued that, in fact, many of the radicals lacked sophistication. As evidence for his view, he argued that it is not particularly astute to buy into the "cliché" that the university had somehow become the ultimate "symbol of the corporation." Responding to a question about the Jewish identity of student rebels, one senior fac-

ulty member offered a rather psychological view. He said that many of the radical Jewish students on campus were, at root, in rebellion against both the lackluster character of their parents' suburban lives and the "shallow, pale" nature of their parents' Jewish commitment. His remarks pointed beyond the political realm, to a more intangible yearning in some of the students he encountered at Columbia.

"The Age of Aquarius"

Jerry Rubin, one of the Yippy leaders who played a key role in the demonstrations outside the Chicago Democratic Convention, had articulated his wish to unite Yippies, and more politically active youth in general, with hippies, those young people whose dreams were primarily focused not on any kind of political revolution at all, but on a cultural revolution, a thoroughgoing transformation of society's beliefs, customs, and values.

What these young people sought, and many believed in fact was beginning to manifest itself, was, in the words of the hit 1968 Broadway musical *Hair*, "the age of Aquarius." The song "Aquarius" in *Hair* spells out the qualities that would characterize such an age: "Harmony and understanding/ Sympathy and trust abounding/ No more falsehoods or derisions/ Golden living dreams of visions/ Mystic crystal revelation/ And the mind's true liberation." Indeed, what was sought was a time when "peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars."

This popular vision of a newly-made world had its intellectual roots in thinkers like Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, and Paul Goodman, all of whom contributed to the notion that the postwar technocratic society had alienated man from his most precious, authentic inner resources. It was not a socialist reorganization of class structures that these writers sought as much as a revolt against a dehumanizing "system." Marcuse's 1964 *One-Dimensional Man*, Brown's 1959 *Life Against Death*, and Goodman's 1960 *Growing Up Absurd* were all extremely influential in the youth movements of the mid-to-late 1960s.

Each book concerns itself with the question of how men and

women can liberate themselves from what was viewed as a repressive, soul-crushing, dehumanized society. A popular button that expressed this point of view read, simply: "I am a human being. Do not fold, spindle, or mutilate." The question, of course, was how, exactly, to free oneself, to transcend the alienation of the technocratic society. One man, Timothy Leary, who had lectured in psychology at Harvard University from 1959 to 1963, had a straightforward answer: "Turn on, tune in, drop out." Among the various implications of his catchphrase, one, certainly, was the suggestion that "dropping acid" would offer invaluable assistance in the liberation process.

Leary was viewed by some as a prophet, and the serious dangers of LSD, the potent hallucinogen lysergic acid diethylamide, were pushed aside. Indeed, for many in what was called the "counterculture," along with bell bottoms, love beads, long hair, and marijuana, came the use of LSD. For some, the "trips" they took on LSD seemed to bring some kind of glimpse into a "liberated consciousness." For many others, the drug brought only paranoia and panic. For a few, it brought tragedy. In any case, a fascination with psychedelics and psychedelia was only an element of the search for "liberation."

At the same time, a variety of other approaches to psychological and spiritual growth were also gaining adherents. In February 1968, the Beatles, at the time the world's most celebrated musical group, stayed in Rishikesh, India, with the Indian spiritual teacher Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, after meeting him in Wales in 1967. The extensive attention the Beatles' visit received served only to highlight the growing interest among the young in spiritual search, in myth, religion, and ritual. As Theodore Roszak put it in his fascinating 1969 *The Making of a Counterculture*: "The dissenting young have indeed got religion. Not the brand of religion Billy Graham or William Buckley would like to see the young crusading for—but religion nonetheless."

To be sure, along with a distancing among many Jewish youth from organized religion, there was a movement among some young

Jews toward the ancient faith and its wisdom teachings. It was in 1968 that Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, known as the “hippy rabbi” or the “dancing rabbi,” opened up his “House of Love and Prayer” in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco, very much the heart of the hippy counterculture. With guitar in hand, Carlebach often mixed storytelling with plaintive and joyful Jewish music. One of Carlebach’s songs, “Lord, Get Me High,” pointed to an alternative to the promises of a chemically-induced nirvana.

The House of Love and Prayer was essentially a hippy Hasidic center. It was Carlebach’s base, and he welcomed into it thousands of young, searching Jews wandering the streets of San Francisco. His easy-going attitude, ecumenical sensibility, Hasidic tales, and impassioned prayers attracted many of those whom he called “holy hippalachs” to various levels of Jewish observance and involvement.

In May 1968, AJC released a major study on the range of attitudes toward Jewish identity among college students. Among its findings was that, while 13 percent of Jewish students reject their ties to Judaism and the Jewish community by their senior year, about half of these return to some kind of affiliation within three years after graduation. In October 1968, AJC sponsored a two-day conference dedicated to understanding the crisis of Jewish identity among younger Jews and finding ways to help them deepen “their sense of identity and commitment to the continuity of Jewish group life in America.”

In addition, AJC held a weekend symposium on Jewish identity, in November 1968, that brought together Jewish student representatives from eleven universities throughout America. An AJC publication, *Jewish College Youths Speak their Mind*, was later released that summarized the range of opinions presented at the symposium. In his foreword to the booklet, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, a professor of Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary, expressed the mood of the conference:

Our young people are bewildered, perplexed about the meaning of being human, about the meaning of being a Jew. They seek direction, affirmation. And they are disturbed at parents who

are spiritually insolvent. Fortunately, the present Jewish generation contains both forces of alienation and appreciation, reverence and hostility, escape and involvement. The pot is boiling over; much is spilled and lost. Yet much of it is still there.

Heschel, elsewhere, had once expressed his hope that drug use, disaffection, and disaffiliation among the young would serve as a wake-up call. In an essay entitled *In Search of Exaltation*, he wrote:

I interpret the young people’s escape to drugs as coming from their driving desire to experience moments of exaltation. In my youth, growing up in a Jewish milieu, there was one thing that we did not have to look for and that was exaltation.... Jewish education may not have trained us in the art of relaxation, but our tradition did teach us something else. If I was rich as a child and as a young man, it was because I was offered numerous moments of exaltation, one after the other, in my home, in the synagogue, among my family and elders. Today, in America, Jews may have learned how to relax, but we have not learned the sources of exaltation.

Speaking at AJC’s 1969 Annual Meeting, the writer Elie Wiesel also addressed the question of Jewish youth and the “rebellion” of youth that characterized the time. He justified the anger many of the young were feeling, saying that his own generation, after the Holocaust, should have rebelled, should have seized the opportunity to demand of the world a “new concept of man’s relation to man.” In our dialogue with the young rebels, he counseled, “we should have a bad conscience because of what we failed to hand on to them,” meaning the failure to pass on a commitment to Jewish tradition, very much including the prophetic tradition of fighting, in the public arena, for justice and human dignity. “From the beginning,” said Wiesel, “it has been the Jews’ mission to give a bad conscience to each other and to the world.”

The Lessons of 1968

In their thoughts on these issues, Heschel, who was intensely involved in the civil rights movement and an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War, and Wiesel, the preeminent voice of conscience

after the Holocaust, both reflected the Jewish prophetic tradition of taking responsibility, of continually taking stock, of repeatedly taking a hard look at one's own behavior and the behavior of one's society.

Reflecting, in June 1968, upon the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., AJC president Morris Abram also echoed this theme when he remarked: "In modern times, the minimum first step for reform requires that society be visibly confronted with its own evils." Abram said of King: "He showed that when American society is forced to look upon its gaping defects ... it can generate the will and the power for reform."

All of this points to the power of, and need for, dissatisfaction if change, reform, and renewal are ever to take place. And idealism, of course, is the fuel that sparks the vision of new realities. As indispensable as idealism is, as dry and hopeless a world without it would be, idealism must be mature in its formulation. Idealism without wisdom can, and so often has, brought with it disaster, authoritarianism, and poor judgment at the very least. In an address at AJC's Annual Meeting in 1968, AJC president Arthur Goldberg discussed the complexities of idealism and the dangers of unconstrained idealism in regard to the student unrest of the time.

A part of the problem, I think, is that young people, because of their inexperience, tend to hold their elders to high standards which the vicissitudes of life make almost unattainable. A wise man once observed that young people should not be trusted with the conduct of public affairs, not because of their vices but because of their virtues. Some of them are still convinced that heaven can be brought down to earth in one heroic effort, and only time can temper their high expectations.

Robert S. Rifkind, who served as AJC president from 1995-1998, during his tenure often described AJC as an organization characterized by its commitment to both "moral passion and intellectual discipline." And, indeed, throughout the tumultuous mid-to-late 1960s and in the extraordinary year of 1968, AJC sought always to bring to the public arena a just, fair, balanced, and tempered idealism.

AJC pursued an idealism that reflected the best in American thought, with its ringing defense of human equality, and the most noble in Jewish tradition, with its uncompromising commitment to the worth and dignity of every individual. As always, AJC stayed clear of overarching ideologies, relying instead on a hopeful and optimistic vision of progress combined with a rational analysis of the challenges and issues at hand. No doubt, one key aspect of AJC's identity—its long tradition of authoritative research—has helped to keep the organization clear-sighted in its vision of an appropriate public philosophy.

Throughout the painful conflicts of 1968, AJC acted very definitely as the human relations organization that it is, pursuing justice, but always with the understanding that justice, in the ultimate sense, cannot be established by the state. It cannot be "administered" into being. As much as it must be supported, encouraged, and assisted by the state, as much we must strive toward its "institutionalization," justice is something that can blossom and thrive only where individuals live together freely and in mutual regard. As Will Herberg explains in his classic 1951 *Judaism and Modern Man*, "one of the most important operative ideas" in Jewish ethics is the merit of going "beyond the letter of the law." "Law and justice are the foundation of social existence," writes Herberg. And yet he cautions: "However advanced the law, however exalted the level of justice, it can never be anything more than relative—relative to the wisdom and insight of men."

As reflected in these pages, AJC, in 1968 and in the years leading to it, consistently and forcefully supported programs and policies meant to bolster equality by leveling the field of opportunity. But AJC also over and over again addressed issues of human relations in general and intergroup relations in particular, believing firmly in the perpetual centrality of these concerns.

In responding to the urban crisis, inner-city riots, and student unrest of 1968, AJC keenly understood the essential role of civil protest in a democratic society. AJC acted with an understanding that, like legislatures, courts of law, and advocacy groups, protest

functions as an institution in a democratic society. Protesters must be heard if society is to avoid becoming an ossified, authoritarian vehicle of one particular point of view. As in the ancient Jewish prophetic tradition, protest must have its place if criticism is to have a chance to penetrate and awaken society's conscience. Of course, protest has its limits, and AJC expressed its strong disapproval of protest that broke the bonds of civility. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., AJC encouraged protest that demanded America live up to the Constitutional principles upon which it was founded.

In responding to the student unrest and search for transcendent meaning among the young, AJC sought also in 1968 to listen to and truly hear the voices of protest and to take seriously and address the concerns raised. Whereas the inner-city blacks who took to the streets during the "long hot summers" of the 1960s were deeply angered by the belief that they were shut out of the larger society and denied its opportunities, the student protesters and "hippies," by-and-large, did not feel and were not, in fact, shut out. Theirs was dissatisfaction less concrete in nature.

Many simply sought greater participation in the democratic process, some sought only to criticize the priorities that society had set, and others sought to express their yearning for deeper truths that had been pushed aside in the rush for more material advancement. AJC was receptive and respectful of their voices, and sought to discern and then endorse and encourage the more fruitful aspects of the hopes and dreams of these energized and idealistic young people.

In his 1960 inaugural address, President John F. Kennedy opened the period of optimism that met its most painful counter-currents in 1968. In that address, he called America to an idealistic vision, yet he included within his summons a wise warning that the path would be difficult, and not without setbacks. He said every generation of Americans is asked to demonstrate, and to manifest through its own efforts, its dedication to America's great democratic ideals. And he declared:

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need—not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but as a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

Through extensive advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., and in state legislatures across the country, intensive involvement in the courts, pioneering initiatives designed to help build bonds of inter-group respect, and a host of programs seeking to bring younger Jews into the world of social action, AJC pursues a range of vital aspirations. Included among them, no doubt, is guarding the great ideals of Israel's ancient prophets, answering the profound and still-urgent summons Kennedy presented in 1960, and heeding the hard-to-learn, but entirely relevant lessons of 1968.



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