NAKED CAME POLONSKY:

LITTLE BIG JEW

For the first time in the academic year 1970-1971, I got inspired at a York forum, as opposed to 1969-1970, when in my less enlightened stage, I would be inspired regularly by a host of visiting speakers. The occasion was a truly moving and often painfully sensible talk by Rabbi Meir Kahane of the Jewish Defence League. And considering the literary garbage that has been thrown at the Rabbi and his League by our non partisan media, over the League's "harrass the Soviets" policy, I feel obligated to contribute at least a few words to its defence. As an example of the sort of story you can look forward to finding in the press, you should read last week's Time Magazine's handling of the articles both on the League and on the Soviet Jews themselves. They were two of the most blatantly biased reports I have ever read in the usually more subtley biased weekly.

Perhaps the most profound effect the meeting with Kahane had on me, was that for a few brief hours, I felt I was unequivically a Jew, a feeling which has not overly possessed me as of late. So when all the fat cat rabbis and all the "boy do I have a brotherhood meeting for you" Jewish businessmen scorn the Rabbi Kahane for not being very Jewish in his approach, maybe they should take heed that Kahane managed to make their children feel more Jewish in one hour, than they managed to in twenty years, the Bar Mitzvah extravaganza aside. Come on all you out there in Bagel King land, don't bite the hand that feeds you.

There are three million Jews in the Soviet Union, most of whom suffer more than their share under the Soviet regime, and most of whom live with the hope that maybe "Next Year in Jerusalem". If we as young, aware, well educated Jewish students are to be moved to act on behalf of any political or social cause, perhaps it only makes sense that it be the cause of the Soviet Jews which so motivates us. If we walked for Vietnam, starved a day for Biafra, and stormed City Hall for Cambodia, perhaps we could be well put to harrass a Soviet official or two. The STOP THE WAR people will not, and either will the Black People's Movement.

In 1943-44, when Jews were dying by the herds in Auschwitz the Jews asked Franklin Roosevelt to bomb the railway tracks leading up to the camp, but he refused, so the Jews did nothing. Kahane puts the blame for the two million deaths at Auschwitz ultimately on the North American Jews themselves, for not taking to the streets and making the plight of the Jews such a political issue that it could no longer be ignored. Instead the Jews were warned by their leaders to exercize restraint for you never know, you could spark off anti Semitism right here in North America. So if you protest, protest politely.
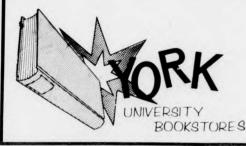
So history repeats itself, does it? The Jewish Defence League has been the brunt of a ferocious attack by the Jewish Community, an attack strangely far more intense than that directed towards the Soviet Union. And the most popular argument used by the Jewish establishment to back up their attack along the lines of "The League is harming the Soviet Jews more than it is helping them". Well, before Rabbi Kahane spoke, we heard for three quarters of an hour a reasonably straightforward account, mixed with touchs of ironic Jewish ghetto wit, of what life is indeed like for the Soviet Jew, straight from the horse's mouth, an ex-Soviet Jew. Here was a Jew who had never even heard of Isreal until 1956, who was trying to make the North American Jewish community understand that their contempt for the Jewish Defence League was most decidely not shared bv their Russian bretheren. Life could not get much worse for the Soviet Jew. And every time a Jew in Russia sees on the front page of the Russian newspapers the Jewish Defence League becried as Zionist Facists, that Russian Jew feels some glimmer of hope that somebody cares. Translate "Zionist Fascist" as "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown".

Rabbi Kahane has so far been, in the cold facts of political realities, a remarkable success. Under the influence of his leadership the harrassment of the Soviet Government officials has had a real effect on Soviet-American relationships, the kind of effect which could force the two superpowers into some sort of deal which would allow more Soviet Jews permission to immigrate to Isreal. And in the long run, a group's success is surely measured in contemporary society on whether or not that group achieves its desired ends.

I must confess that I really do not completely trust Rabbi Kahane. His politics and his ideology tend not to be of the highest moral fibre. And it is not beyond the realm of possibility that The Rabbi is suing the Soviet issue to gain more widespread recognition for his League. Nontheless, the Rabbi is the one man most responsible for bringing the plight of the Soviet Jews from Page 40 to Page 1.

Rabbi Kahane did inspire me. I guess that even with my scant knowledge of Two Thousand Years of quite a remarkable history, and with twenty years of even a Canadian Jewish upbringing, that some spark of Jewishness still rests in me. It took a militant Rabbi from New York to rekindle that spark, and make me realize that I could sit and watch those two thousand years of history go down the drain, and watch three million Soviet Jews lose what ever it is that makes one a Jew.

Let My People Go.