

YOU HAD TO BE THERE

GEORGE MOSSE
FINDS HIMSELF
IN HISTORY



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QUOTATIONS FROM GEORGE MOSSE'S WORKS

WAR

Fallen Soldiers, p.65:

War as a communal experience was perhaps the most seductive part of the Myth of the War Experience, enabling men to confront and transcend death, and the idealized common soldier was an indispensable part of this myth, as well as an example of the new man who would redeem the nation.

FASCISM

Nazi Culture, p.xxiv:

In the world that industrialism had produced, the individual was alienated not only from his society, but also from his rational nature. This was the all-encompassing problem, and Sorel as well as Le Bon envisioned the specter of a wild irrationality, which had to be directed by a leader into positive, constructive channels..... Hitler's understanding of this approach enabled him to take the road to power in a nation ravaged by crises and defeat.

Toward the Final Solution, p.xiii:

Racism needed a secular base such as the Enlightenment or modern nationalism in order to overcome the implications of the Christian meaning of baptism and conversion, for the racially inferior must be locked into place and all escape routes closed.

LIBERAL DOCTRINE

Germans & Jews, p. 174:

[Pragmatism] is the shirking of thought dressed up as doctrine.



POPULAR CULTURE

From a 1991 interview with GM by Irene Runge & Uwe Stelbrink, p. 11:

The things that Adorno and Horkheimer wrote about National Socialism can make your hair stand on end. They understood nothing about popular culture.... they considered mass culture a form of oppression and stultification.

LEFT WING INTELLECTUALS

Germans and Jews, p.225

The important search for a new society continues despite past failures and the hitherto insoluble dilemmas that are intrinsic in this attitude to man, the world, and society.

HIMSELF

Confronting History, p.4

"Why then write this book?...The phrase "Life and Times" has been overused in the biographies of the last century, but it must nevertheless be true of a life which encompasses the now-vanished life style of the German Jewish wealthy and established middle class, a sudden exile, a rude political awakening, an immersion in the life—and even to some extent in the politics—of the American Middle West."

Confronting History, p.219

"The issues of the Third Reich were writ large in my consciousness, a part of my personal transformation from the irresponsibility of youth, a past which had to be faced. I had rejected the worlds of my past and had sought to transform myself, but in my anxieties, fears, and restlessness, I was still a child of my century."

YOU HAD TO BE THERE

GEORGE MOSSE FINDS HIMSELF IN HISTORY

GEORGE MOSSE'S LECTURES WERE WILDLY POPULAR WHEN I WAS A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN IN THE EARLY 1960s.



IN 1963,* WHEN I FIRST TOOK A CLASS WITH MOSSE, HE LIKED TO TEASE HIS STUDENTS FROM THE LEFT.

THE MARXISTS SAY THAT ONLY WAR CAN SOLVE CAPITALISM'S PROBLEMS. WELL, WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE END OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION?

WORLD WAR 2!

* 1963: POST-IKE, PRE-BEATLES

BY 1966, WHEN I TOOK MY SECOND MOSSE COURSE, THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT HAD TAKEN OFF, AND MOSSE WAS TEASING US FROM THE RIGHT.

I KNOW ALL YOU STUDENTS ARE LONGING FOR A MASS MOVEMENT.

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE MASS MOVEMENT.

WHEN I WAS A CALLOW YOUTH IN BERLIN, I WENT TO A NAZI RALLY TO JEER AT THE STUPID NAZIS.

HITLER WAS SPEAKING! THE THRILL OF THIS MAN'S CHARISMA, THE THRILL OF THE MASS ENERGY WAS SO GREAT-

BY THE END I AM SCREAMING KILL THE JEWS!

AND I AM JEWISH!

(I RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO TRY AND REPRODUCE PHONETICALLY MOSSE'S UPPER CLASS ANGLO-GERMAN ACCENT- THE BOOMING AUTHORITATIVE VOICE OF AN 18TH CENTURY EVANGELICAL PREACHER- YOU HAD TO BE THERE!)

THE HISTORIAN JOAN WALLACH SCOTT, WHO WORKED FOR MOSSE AS A TEACHING ASSISTANT, RECALLS THAT THE TEASING COULD BE RELENTLESS.

MISS WALLACH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN GRADUATE SCHOOL?

DIDN'T YOU READ MARTIN LUTHER'S ADMONITION TO WOMEN?

KINDER!

KIRCHE!

KUCHE!

"I WOULD GET FURIOUS, BUT QUICKLY I LEARNED TO TEASE BACK, & THAT HAS SERVED ME WELL."

MOSSE ALSO ENJOYED BEING TEASED.

GEORGE! I HAVE SOME GOSSIP!

WHAT? WHAT?

PAY ME A DOLLAR & I'LL TELL YOU.

HMPF!

HERE'S YOUR MONEY. WHAT'S THE GOSSIP?

I FORGET.

TEASING, IRONY, AMBIVALENCE, CONTRARIANCE— ALL CAME NATURALLY TO A MISCHIEVOUS CHILD OF PRIVILEGE WHO GREW UP TO BE A MULTIPLE OUTSIDER—

GEORGE LACHMANN MOSSE

WAS BORN IN 1918 INTO ONE OF GERMANY'S MOST PROMINENT JEWISH FAMILIES. HIS GRANDFATHER RUDOLF MOSSE HAD CREATED EUROPE'S FIRST MODERN AD AGENCY & ONE OF GERMANY'S LEADING NEWSPAPERS, THE

Berliner Tageblatt
und Handels-Zeitung

Ultimatum in Bayern

SOON— A CLEANSING!

LIBERAL, POWERFUL, RICH, & JEWISH, THE MOSSES WERE EVERYTHING THE NAZIS DESPISED.

A JEW IN GERMANY

A GERMAN IN AMERICA

A GAY MAN IN THE STRAIGHT MIDWEST

BUT AT THE BEGINNING OF GEORGE'S LIFE, OPPOSITION TO THE TAGEBLATT CAME NOT FROM THE RIGHT BUT FROM THE LEFT.



DURING THE 1919 REVOLUTION THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE OCCUPIED THE PAPER, HOPING TO SHUT IT DOWN. RUDOLF SENT HIS SON-IN-LAW, GEORGE'S FATHER HANS, TO NEGOTIATE WITH SPARTACIST LEADER ROSA LUXEMBURG.

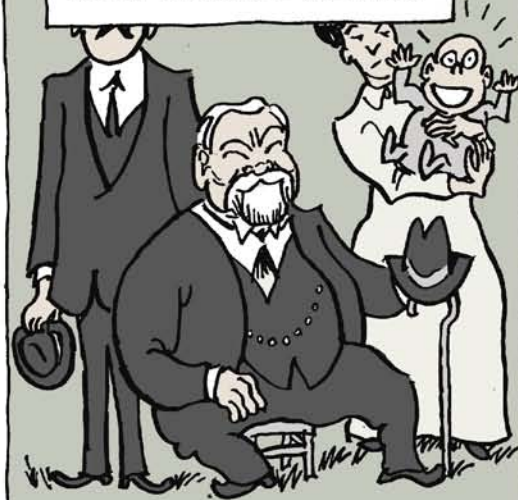
WHILE HANS & ROSA DEBATED THROUGH THE NIGHT, THE PAPER WAS PRINTED & DELIVERED.



HANS MOSSE ALWAYS SAID ROSA LUXEMBURG WAS

THE MOST FASCINATING WOMAN I EVER MET.

WHAT DOES THAT TELL US ABOUT GEORGE'S MOTHER?



HANS / RUDOLF / FELICIA / GEORGE

BEAUTIFUL, INSECURE, TEMPERAMENTAL, & REMOTE, FELICIA MOSSE DISTINGUISHED HERSELF IN GEORGE'S MEMORY CHIEFLY AS THE PERSECUTOR OF THE GOVERNESS "MISS SQUIRE,"



↑
THE MOSSES' "COUNTRY HOUSE" AT SCHENKENDORF

STOP THAT AT ONCE, YOU WICKED GIRL!



SERVANTS WERE CRUCIAL TO THE MOSSES.



BEFORE 1933, MY MOTHER HAD NEVER DRESSED HERSELF.



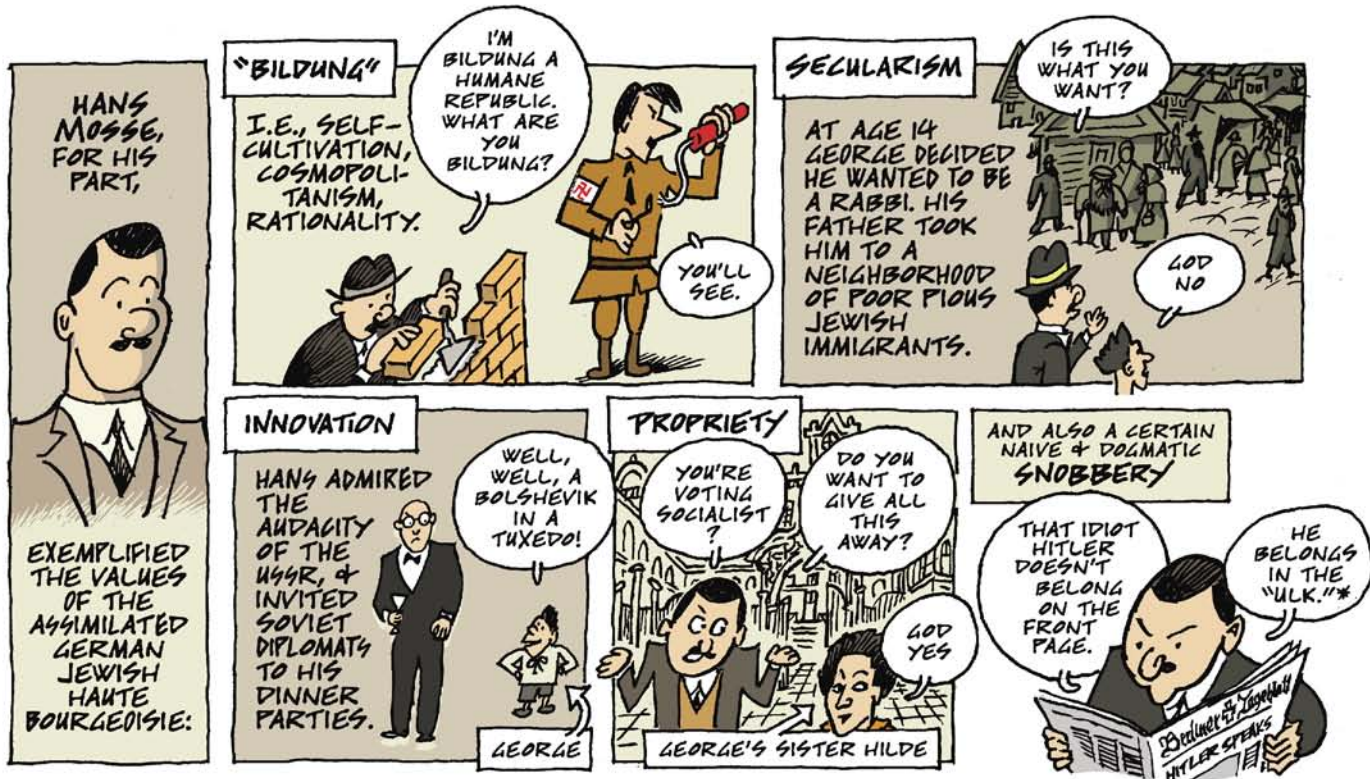
MISS SQUIRE WAS AN IRISH QUAKER FROM BELFAST. WHEN GEORGE VISITED HER LIVELY FAMILY IN 1928, HE EXPERIENCED THE "ANNIE HALL" SPLIT SCREEN, BUT WITH JEWS & CHRISTIANS REVERSED.



HE LATER SAID MISS SQUIRE EXEMPLIFIED THE "BEST QUAKER TRAITS"—

PLAIN SPEECH, INNER FORTITUDE, OPENNESS—WHICH PREDISPOSED GEORGE TO EMBRACE QUAKER EDUCATORS AND THE CHRISTIAN WORKERS MOVEMENT LATER IN LIFE.





* "HE BELONGS IN THE ULK" MEANS HE BELONGS IN THE FUNNY PAGES.

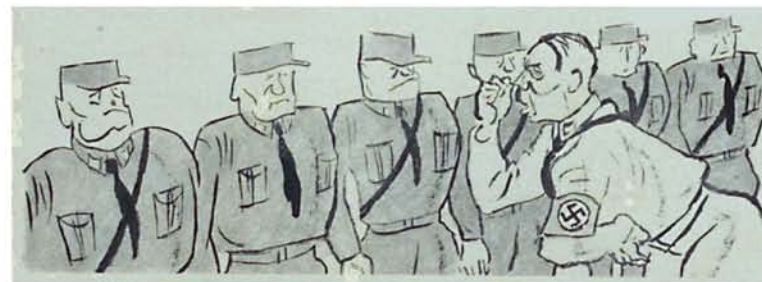
THE "ULK" WAS THE BERLINER TAGEBLATT'S COMICAL/SATIRIC SUPPLEMENT, WHICH ACTUALLY HAD MANY FINE ANTI-MILITARIST & ANTI-NAZI CARTOONS.



MEANWHILE THE NAZI PAPERS WERE PORTRAYING HANS THUSLY:



THE BIG SPENDER: "I DON'T WANT TO BE A PROFITEER. I WILL GIVE THIS TREE'S FRUIT TO WAR VICTIMS."

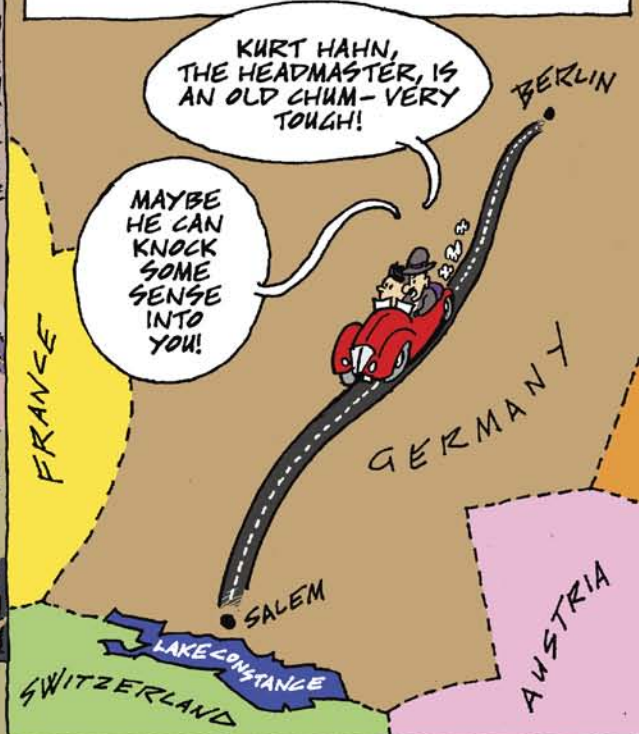


THE LIFE & TIMES & WORK OF GEORGE MOSSE ARE HAUNTED BY THE REALIZATION THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE GERMAN JEWISH WORLD VIEW—NOTHING IN BILDUNG, LIBERALISM, THE HERITAGE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT—THAT COULD COMPREHEND, LET ALONE RESIST, THE JUGGERNAUT OF FASCISM.

AS THE NAZIS' STAR ROSE IN THE EARLY 1930S, THE MOSSES FOUND THEMSELVES INCREASINGLY IN A STATE OF SIEGE.



GEORGE WAS SPARED THE WORST OF THE TERROR, HAVING BEEN SHIPPED OFF IN 1928 TO THE SALEM SCHOOL ON THE SHORE OF LAKE CONSTANCE.



NATURE WORSHIP, PRUSSIAN DISCIPLINE, & ANTI-COSMOPOLITANISM SEEMED TO MARK SALEM AS A NAZI TRAINING GROUND, BUT IN FACT ITS LEADERS OPPOSED THE NAZIS. THE SALEM IDEOLOGY WAS AUTHORITARIAN & NATIONALIST BUT NOT RACIST.

AUTHORITARIANISM ALMOST DOOMED MOSSE, & THEN IT SAVED HIM.



WHEN HIS FAMILY FLED GERMANY IN 1933, THE SCHOOL INSISTED GEORGE STAY TO FINISH HIS EXAMS.



BUT WHEN THE NAZIS DECREED THAT, ON APRIL 1, JEWS WOULD NEED A SPECIAL PERMIT TO LEAVE GERMANY, MOSSE TOOK THE LAST FERRY TO SWITZERLAND ON MARCH 31.



(MOSSE ALWAYS CREDITED THE SCHOOL WITH TEACHING HIM SELF-DISCIPLINE, THOUGH HE ALSO SAID IT TOOK HIM YEARS TO UNLEARN THE ANTI-POLISH & ANTI-FRENCH PREJUDICES HE ACQUIRED THERE.)

EXILE BROKE UP THE FAMILY. HANS & FELICIA WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS & THEIR CHILDREN ATTENDED SCHOOLS IN SWITZERLAND & THE U.K.

HERE'S AN IDEA: KURT HAHN HAD TO LEAVE GERMANY, & NOW HE HAS A NEW SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND.

I'VE HAD ENOUGH CHARACTER-BUILDING, DAD. I'D LIKE TO LEARN SOMETHING.

ON THE ADVICE OF MISS SQUIRE, MOSSE ATTENDED THE QUAKER BOOTHAM SCHOOL IN YORK, WHERE HE DEVoured THE NOVELS OF AUSTEN, DICKENS, & THE BRONTËS, AS WELL AS G.M. TREVELYAN'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

IN 1937 HE WENT TO CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY & GOT TO ATTEND TRAVELYAN'S LECTURES.

AND THEN I WROTE

AND THEN I SAID

HIGHLY DISAPPOINTING!

BUT TREVELYAN DID OFFER HELPFUL ADVICE.

MY FATHER THINKS I SHOULD STUDY IN AMERICA.

SHOULDN'T I STAY IN ENGLAND?

ENGLAND IS FINISHED.

ENGLAND CERTAINLY LOOKED LIKE WEAK TEA AT THIS POINT.

THESE NAZIS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY ROUGH CUSTOMERS.

BUT MAYBE THAT'S WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO FINISH OFF STALIN.

YOU WISH TO TAKE UP HISTORY, MR. MOSSE?

BUT YOU PEOPLE BECOME JOURNALISTS, NOT HISTORIANS!

FOR MOSSE'S GENERATION ANTIFASCISM WAS A SACRED CAUSE, & THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR DREW THE BATTLE LINES: A POPULAR FRONT WITH SOVIET SUPPORT DEFENDING "THE COMMON MAN" AGAINST THE COMBINED FORCES OF EUROPEAN FASCISM, WHILE THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT REMAINED NEUTRAL.

THE DECISION TO RELOCATE WAS MADE FOR HIM, AT ANY RATE, WHEN WORLD WAR 2 BROKE OUT WHILE HE WAS VISITING THE U.S.

IF I GO BACK TO ENGLAND I'LL BE AN ENEMY ALIEN!

ANYWAY, I DON'T THINK EUROPE IS A SAFE PLACE FOR JEWS.

MAYBE I CAN FIND A NICE QUAKER COLLEGE IN THE U.S.

SURE ENOUGH:

I AM HERE.

WE ACCEPT THEE.

AFTER HAVERFORD, MOSSE DID HIS GRADUATE STUDIES AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

HARVARD HAD MANY MARXIST STUDENTS BUT NO COURSES IN MARXISM.

SO MOSSE JOINED A GROUP THAT TRAVELED ACROSS TOWN TO M.I.T., WHERE MATHEMATICIAN DIRK STROUT WAS LEADING A MARXIST STUDY GROUP.

DANIEL BOORSTIN WAS PART OF THIS GROUP, & LATER FINGERED MOSSE TO HUAC* FOR PARTICIPATING IN IT.

* HOUSE UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

WHILE AT HARVARD MOSSE FELL IN LOVE WITH ALLEN, A JEWISH COMMUNIST FROM DETROIT.

THEIR FRIENDSHIP GAVE MOSSE A DIM VIEW OF THE COMMUNISTS, WHOM HE BLAMED FOR RUINING ALLEN'S ACADEMIC CAREER.

(MY MOTHER, GINNY THORKELSON, WORKED IN THE SAME BOOKSTORE. BUT SHE IS LONG GONE, SO I CAN'T ASK HER ABOUT GEORGE & ALLEN.)

WHEN HE VISITED DETROIT ONE SUMMER WHILE ALLEN WAS WORKING AT THE UAW BOOKSTORE, MOSSE WAS APPALLED BY THE CULT-LIKE QUALITY OF PARTY LIFE.

TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA FROM 1944-1955, MOSSE PUBLISHED STUDIES OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION & ENGLISH CONSTITUTIONAL LAW.

IN 1948 HE THREW HIMSELF INTO THE HENRY WALLACE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, WHICH ADDED TO THE DANGER OF HIS BEING RED-BAITED.

BUT THE UNIVERSITY STOOD BY HIM, & HE WEATHERED THE STORM.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN FROM 1955 ON, HE BEGAN TO SHIFT HIS FOCUS TO SUBJECT MATTER MORE CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH HIS PERSONAL HISTORY.

YES!
YES!
MORE OF THAT, PLEASE!

GERMANS
JEW'S
BILDUNG
NATIONALISM
FASCISM
MAJORITY
RACISM

HIS ENCOUNTERS IN THE 1960s WITH THE MADISON NEW LEFT FOCUSED HIM ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS GERMAN-JEWISH IDENTITY WITHIN THIS NEW SET OF CONCERNS.

WE GERMAN JEWS EMBRACED "BILDUNG" IN A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO FIT IN WITH OUR SOCIETY.

NO DRAFT

NO WAR

THAT'S FUNNY- WE DON'T LOOK JEWISH

DESEGREGATE!

THESE CHILDREN OF THE COLD WAR WANT TO USE IT TO CHANGE SOCIETY!

NICE!

BUT MOSSE'S WARMTH FOR THE NEW LEFT HAD ITS LIMITS.

STRIKE!

STRIKE!

ALL CLASSES CANCELLED!

THIS CLASS IS NOT CANCELLED. YOU'RE BEHAVING LIKE NAZI STORM TROOPERS!

WHAT WAS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT MOSSE'S TAKE ON FASCISM AND THE NAZIS?

ORIGINS

NAZI IDEOLOGY, DESPITE ITS ANTI-MODERNISM, LOOKED TO MOSSE LIKE THE CULMINATION OF SEVERAL DISTINCTLY MODERN TRENDS.

THE LONGING FOR A HAPPY & HEALTHY WORLD CAN BE TURNED TO AN END NOT CONTEMPLATED AT THE BEGINNING.

WRITING THIS BOOK [TOWARD THE FINAL SOLUTION] HAS BEEN LIKE WALKING ON A FAULTY ROPE BRIDGE OVER AN ABYSS.



EMPATHY

MOSSE FELT THIS WAS THE HISTORIAN'S FIRST RESPONSIBILITY, AND INSISTED THAT YOU HAD TO LOOK AT FASCISM FROM THE INSIDE OUT TO UNDERSTAND IT.

STARTING POINT: FASCISM OFFERS A SOLUTION TO THE LONELINESS OF INDUSTRIALIZED HUMANITY.

MAN MUST STEP OUT OF HIS WORKSHOP!



HITLER'S RACIST NATIONALISM PROVIDED LITURGY, ADVENTURE, COMMUNITY, AND SPECTACLE IN PLACE OF ALIENATION (LEAVING ALONE MORE TENACIOUS QUALITIES LIKE PRIVATE PROPERTY AND BOURGEOIS POWER).

EMPATHY SUGGESTS BEING ABLE TO HOLD OPPOSING VIEWS SIMULTANEOUSLY. AS A TOURIST IN ISRAEL & THEN AS A LECTURER AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY, MOSSE WAS SURPRISED TO FIND HIS LIFELONG ANTI-NATIONALISM SHAKEN BY THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF THE "JEWISH HOME."

ISRAEL'S STURDY, SELF-CONFIDENT "NEW JEWS," REJECTING THE HUMILIATING INTERNALIZED ANTI-SEMITISM OF EUROPEAN JEWRY, EMBRACE INSTEAD THE SAME OLD TIRED MIDDLE-CLASS IDEALS & STEREOTYPES.

BUT, EVER THE CONTRARIAN:

THE TROUBLE WITH YOU, GEORGE, IS YOU DON'T LOVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE ENOUGH.

HOW CAN ONE LOVE AN ENTIRE PEOPLE, RATHER THAN INDIVIDUALS?

JERUSALEM, WHEN MOSSE FIRST VISITED, FELT LIKE "WEIMAR WITH PALM TREES."

I LIKE IT.

HISTORY TOOK GEORGE MOSSE BY SURPRISE IN THE END.



EVERYBODY OUT!

IN HIS LATER BOOKS HE WAS ABLE TO SPELL OUT THEMES OF SEXUAL POLITICS THAT HAD LONG BEEN CODED IN HIS WORK.

BEST OF ALL HE WAS ABLE TO END LIFE IN AN OPENLY SECURE & LOVING RELATIONSHIP

GOOD JOB!



[illegible]



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