

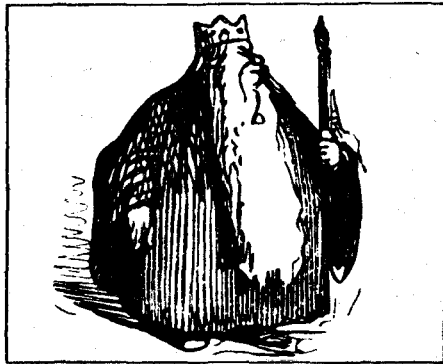
of complexity that put our afternoon Hebrew-School Hebrew to shame. He began to study the Bible. He decided we should study the Talmud, and he recruited me to a class of two that met with Seymour Siegel of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Certainly this immediately marked him with a rather surprising difference from Cohen, Greenberg and Warshow, who could never quite see the point of such enterprises. (I had my doubts too — I suppose even Kristol did — but was willing to go along.)

Second, Kristol was interested in philosophy. Of course, if it had been only the fashionable philogophy of French existentialism — Sartre, Camus — it would not have been at all surprising — that was what everyone was reading. But he got up early in the morning to study German and read Hegel. He discovered obscure existential philosophers who did not figure in the postwar existentialist craze, such as Shestov. What he found in them I do not know, but what was surprising was that no one else — in our world, at least — was reading them or knew of them.

Third, Kristol knew about and was interested in politics, and this also set him off from the rest of us. This may appear outlandish — what did all of us ex-, semi-, and slightly Marxists do but talk about politics? But we talked about a strange politics, one that existed on neither heaven nor earth — or more practically, neither in Russia Europe or America, and Kristol wonder of wonders, was interested in real politics, the politics that took place in Washington, the politics of Democrats and Republicans. How an editor of *Enquiry* (the journal of his groupuscule, now reprinted and available again) developed such an interest. I do not know, but he did. He even discovered articles by Samuel Lubell in the *Saturday Evening Post* (none of us ever would dream of looking at the *Saturday Evening Post*.) and got Lubell to write for *Commentary*. Quite coolly, he had turned his back on the sectarian politics of the left; There was something more interesting and more important going on in Washington. It is my impression that a good part of the New

York intellectual establishment never got around to the stories in newspapers with Washington datelines until 1965 — and even then it was only the Vietnam stories.

The final oddity: Kristol was interested in business and businessmen, in gambling and speculation. Now, of course, everyone is interested in money. But whereas a good number of the rest of us were content, if we had any — and as time went on, we did — to leave our money in the bank



or buy a stock recommended by the non-intellectual brother-in-law, Kristol got interested in money on his own account, and knew things about the money market, business, speculation that was, if known in the rest of the intellectual world, strictly underground information.

Kristol, in short, was a surprise — certainly not part of Harold Rosenberg's "Herd of independent Minds," who couldn't care less in 1945 and 1946 and the next few years about religion, philosophy, politics and money. With all these oddities, it is no surprise he kept on thinking thoughts none of the rest of us had. And in the process, broke down a lot of panes in the hothouse in which we lived. □

Nathan Glazer is professor of education and social structure at Harvard. He is a regular contributor to Commentary and The New York Times Magazine. His books include Beyond the Melting Pot (with Daniel P. Moynihan) and Remembering the Answers: Essays on the American Student Revolt.

brief period when he was editing *The Reporter* (now defunct). The gathering was a little nervous and self-conscious because *The Reporter* and *National Review* had been shooting a little at each other. During the 1950s *The Reporter* was preoccupied with certain themes one does not take to be particularly congruent, looking back. The publisher was an Italian anti-communist liberal who was fascinated by the China lobby and spent several hundred thousand dollars promoting the thesis that Alfred Kohlberg was a ganglion of reactionary activity which somehow stood in the way of a successful Far Eastern policy. This all got mixed up with Senator Joe McCarthy, who was himself through by the time *National Review* began publishing, but whose shadow stuck like a birthmark on anyone who had ever a kind word to say about him (calamitous) or his activities (fatal). Kristol spent those particular years in England, editing *Encounter*, an invaluable monthly which was given to acknowledging the existence of the Soviet Union and correctly identifying its policies and even, on occasion, its apologists, in between issues devoted to the question whether *Lady Chatterley's Lover* should be proscribed, a question that was finally dropped when the editors could not think where to take it after the Warden of All Souls was required to point out to Dame Rebecca West that the gamekeeper was a buggerer.

Anyway, Irving said something mildly pleasant about some of the writers for *National Review*, I returned the compliment for some of the writers for *The Reporter*, and we took to seeing each other, maybe once or twice a year. The visits were always pleasant, and often quite animated. Kristol's habit, I judge, is to work out his ideas orally, to exercise them if you will, perhaps to discover what kind of promise they have before taking them out to Hialeah, where he

almost always comes up with a winner. He is very interesting for all the reasons Messrs. Glazer and Bartley have mentioned, and for many others besides. For one thing, he is unbelievably opinionated in person. I doubt if he has

ever ventured a tentative opinion in the presence of one other human being. But his writings, by contrast, are although firm, the absolute soul of reasonableness, totally devoid of any sign of arrogance or of cocksureness or of an indisposition to understand the other fellow's point of view. He is never rude in person, merely absolutely assured on all matters, except those that involve vulgar prediction: e.g., he would not tell you who the Democratic Party is going to nominate, though he will tell you that it doesn't really make very much difference how dilapidated our defenses become because after all there is no conceivable situation in which an American president would touch the nuclear button.

Kristol: Through the Jeweler's Eye

Re Irving Kristol

William F. Buckley, Jr.

MR. GLAZER PROVIDES us with fascinating biographical details about Irving Kristol, whose mind was tempered in that strange and productive foundry over which the formidable Elliot Cohen presided, and Robert Bartley situates him at the center not so much of a movement as of a consolidation of political and social attitudes, and Mr. Tyrrell is adroit in summoning their attention — our atten-

tion — to the phenomenon of Irving Kristol, who quite simply is writing more sense in the public interest these days than anybody I can think of. It is time he were more greatly celebrated, even if it seems impossible to make him more widely admired. The words I have to contribute to this mini-festschrift are mostly personal, but not I hope uninformative.

I met him first in 1960 during the

The qualities of Kristol's mind are obvious, as also his erudition (who in the hell is Shestov?), but what makes him so phenomenally important it seems to me is a) his cogency; and b) his manner. As regards the latter, there is the sweet reasonableness I speak of. The careful (I think it is that, rather than instinctive) way in which he avoids unnecessarily provoking the other side, avoids raising his argument into a taxonomic level that earns automatic resentment from the reader. (Mr. Kristol goes out of his way to avoid being designated a liberal, or a conservative, or even — so far as I know — a neo-conservative.) Never mind that by the time you are through reading a half dozen of his essays you realize that he has touched on most points, and that there is a concatenation there of positions and attitudes and values that make for a very highly structured whole...it doesn't happen to the reader in such a way as to cause him to guard against cooption.

And then the dazzling sensibleness of what he says, so perfectly suited to how he says it. You read him on the educators, or on the press, or on pornography, or on social goals, and it is simply hard to disagree with him because his thrusts are never ideological: indeed as Mr. Bartley so shrewdly points out, he is there really to rescue empiricism, to bring it back as a dog might retrieve an abandoned ball, to Leo Strauss, gently reminding the master that there is no true disjunction between empiricism and the values of the great tradition, that it is the ideologizers of the data who are the enemy, not just every social scientist. It is a great performance, an invaluable performance, and I join zestfully the parade, as witness that I leave for another occasion the challenging remarks of Robert Bartley. □

William F. Buckley, Jr. is editor of National Review, a rising New York based conservative magazine.

Remembering the Questions

On the Democratic Idea in America

By Irving Kristol
Harper and Row, \$5.00

DURING THIS PAST month there has appeared a torrent of amusingly serious monographs dealing with the trials and triumphs of the inhabitants of New York's literary jungle. The word is that these exemplars of reason and virtue are again at one another's throats. I should have thought that the vicious ways of Mr. Nixon and his cronies down on the Potomac would have inspired the New York intellectuals to redouble their efforts at uplift and to throttle their violent passions. Rather it seems that they have reverted to hissing, spitting, and clawing at one another's purses. Serious disagreements have divided them over their old puzzle of how to transform America into a vast, free-admission Disneyland. Middle age leaves them unlovely and ornery. Many now have to take a back seat to Helen Gurley Brown or to Charles Manson. Their wives are becoming restless. All in all, life in the literary jungle is not so sweet as it was back in the glorious days of the 1960s.

And it is not much better for those of us for whom reading their drivel has become an occupational hazard. After suffering the recent spate of high-toned gossip on the lives and loves of Jason Epstein and the other precious darlings frolicking in the sand and bouncing beach balls over at *The New York Review of Books* one gets the notion that intellectuals cultivate "fine minds" not to enlighten social policy but to satirize enlightenment. That this is not so could never be inferred from

reading their social or political writings. I can recall not one piece of legislation passed in the last five hundred years that was the least influenced by *The New York Review of Books*. Nor can I imagine one that could have or should have been so influenced. Essentially, *The New York Review of Books* plays with itself. It is a sacrament for fourth-rate nobodies pursuing second-rate identities.

Yet there are some expatriates from the literary jungle whose writing does influence legislation and who are more serious. Their interest is in polity and their thinking is responsive to the conditions of government and society. While *The New York Review* maunders decorously of fantasy and moonshine for a bemused audience of frustrated academics on the cow campuses of America, Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary* has led a successful revolt against mindlessness and self-indulgence to reaffirm standards of intellectual achievement and to direct serious inquiry into the conditions of American society. The split has been developing for some time, and a milestone came in 1965 when Manhattan's own Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell began editing *The Public Interest* to help all of us, when we discuss issues of public policy, to know a little better what we are talking about — and preferably in time to make such knowledge effective."

That Irving Kristol is a higher form of New York intellectual, that he is one of the most important social thinkers in America, and that his writing is required reading for both liberals and conservatives who ardently care about the direction and health of their country has been confirmed by the publication of *On the Democratic Idea in America*, a collection of coolheaded, percipient essays on America's political weaknesses and those social problems that have emphasized the reality of that weakness.

In assaying American democracy, Kristol is not tripped up by the conceptual deficiencies of either traditional conservatives or of liberals. He is neither shaken by the possibility of popular government nor entranced by its myths. His political commentary is reminiscent of America's grandest period of political discourse, the creation of the Republic. In the book's key essay, "American Historians and the Democratic Idea," Kristol acknowledges democracy's "problematics" (what Publius called its "mortal diseases") and adumbrates an eminently intelligent conception of popular or democratic government. In other essays dealing with specific social problems, he evinces his awareness that these conditions are but Publius' "mortal diseases" reworked for the peculiar tastes of an American liberal audience. Whether wrought by a mob of dyseptic middle-class students or a mob of colonial yeomen, the "problematics" or the "diseases" are inevitable and they often spring to life as overbearing majorities, inept majorities, foolish majorities, or vulgar majorities. These were Publius' apprehensions and they are Kristol's. They are serious and they are enduring. Most importantly, their consequences are distinctly undemocratic.

Kristol, like Publius in *Federalist* 49,

Great American Series

"What is the great thing in life, my countrymen? Happiness. And there is more happiness in the American village than in any other place on the face of the earth."

Warren Gamaliel Harding

desires a democratic or republican remedy to (these) diseases most incident to republican government." While remaining sober in his defense and in his aspirations for democracy, Kristol believes that unrestrained majorities, if furious enough, can prevail over separation of powers, checks and balances, amending processes, or any other constitutional insulation of minority rights. Inflamed passions will eventually elicit wrong-