

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING?

DR. STEPHEN STEINLIGHT'S "CONVERSION" TO THE CAUSE OF IMMIGRATION CONTROL

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Dr. Stephen Steinlight's *The Jewish Stake in America's Changing Demography: Reconsidering a Misguided Immigration Policy* (CIS Backgrounder, October 2001) is arguably one of the most important essays published to date by the Washington-based Center for Immigration Studies.

Following release of its publication, CIS hosted a panel discussion at the CUNY Graduate Center on November 14. Here the author "debated" the premise and proposals of his essay with Philip Kasinitz, professor of sociology at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, and Fred Siegel, professor of history at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.

Both the essay and the panel discussion make an important contribution to the ongoing debate on immigration reform but not for the reasons that the author or CIS may have wished.

As director of national affairs at the American Jewish Committee for more than five years, Dr. Steinlight had worked with the National Immigration Forum (an umbrella organization to which the AJC and other Jewish groups belong) to promote Third World immigration into the United States.

In this essay, Dr. Steinlight writes that he has had a "change of heart, of thought" on the subject of immigration. While his "conversion" took years and "came gradually, even reluctantly," he now publicly disassociates himself from his previous position and former colleagues, and claims to support the cause of immigration reform.

The Jewish Stake in America's Changing Demography, however, is neither a learned, nor an eloquent discourse on the need for immigration reform.

Instead, the essay, which advocates fine tuning, not reforming, current immigration policy, is a diatribe characterized by intellectual dishonesty, logical inconsistency, and moral posturing. But it is Dr. Steinlight's religious animosity towards non-Jews that defines this paper.

He writes:

Like thousands of other typical Jewish kids of my generation, I was reared as a Jewish nationalist, even a quasi-separatist... More tacitly and subconsciously, I was taught the superiority of my people to the gentiles who had oppressed us.

We were taught to view non-Jews as untrustworthy outsiders, people from whom sudden gusts of hatred might be anticipated, people less sensitive, intelligent, and moral than ourselves... my nationalist training was to inculcate the belief that the primary division in the world was between “us” and “them.”

Sadly, as demonstrated by this essay, Dr. Steinlight never outgrew this childhood indoctrination in intolerance. Misrepresenting the immigration legislation of the 1920s, he writes of the “evil, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and Red Menace-based Great Pause in the 1920s that trapped hundreds of thousands of Jews in Europe.”

There was no Red Menace? He should read the *Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*.

“[H]undreds of thousands of Jews” were “trapped” in Europe? The immigration laws only applied to southern and eastern Europe. It affected Poland for instance, but not Germany or Austria. Approximately 250,000-300,000 Jews emigrated from Germany between 1919 and 1939. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* estimated that 55,000 went to British mandated Palestine, 63,000 went to the United States, 40,000 to the United Kingdom, 30,000 to France, 25,000 to Belgium, 25,000 to Argentina, 16,000 to the International Settlement in Shanghai, and 5,000 to South Africa.

“Trapped” implies danger. Where was that danger in the 1920s? In Germany, the Nazi Party was comparatively small and powerless, and Hitler was in jail for his failed “beer hall putsch.” In fact, the years 1924-1929 were known as the “Golden Twenties” in Germany. The currency had been stabilized and the country was not only experiencing significant industrial and financial growth but had become a leading cultural center for the rest of Europe — i.e., Max Reinhardt and Bertolt Brecht in the theater, Hans Poelzig and Walter Gropius in architecture, Oskar Kokoschka and Wassily Kandinsky in the arts, Albert Einstein and Max Planck in the sciences.

In Poland, the government “encouraged” Jews to emigrate. Unlike German Jews, Polish Jews were not able to enter the United States. So thousands immigrated to the British mandate of Palestine. By the mid-1930s, Polish Jews represented over 40 percent of all Jewish immigrants. Similarly, many Jews in the Balkans denied admittance to the United States did not remain “trapped” in Europe but also immigrated to Palestine.

In Russia, where arguably most of European Jewry resided, the tsar and his wife and children had been murdered and anti-Semitism, but not anti-Christianism, was made a capital offense in the newly established Soviet Union. By the mid-1920s, Jews in the Soviet Union were physically secure and experiencing a national renaissance in the arts, literature, and politics. Jews held significant power in the party and the government. For example, among the leading Communists were Leon Trotsky (Bronstein), head of the Red Army and briefly chief of Soviet foreign affairs; Yakov Sverdlov (Solomon), executive secretary of the Bolshevik Party and, as chairman of the Central Executive Committee, the official head of the Soviet

government; Grigory Zinoviev (Radomyslsky), head of the Communist International—the Comintern; Karl Radek (Sobelsohn), press commissar; Maxim Litvinov (Wallach), foreign affairs commissar; Lev Kamenev (Rosenfeld); and Moisei Uritsky. Even Lenin was arguably a Jew by the laws of Israel.

In reality, the immigration laws adopted by the United States in the 1920s, which Dr. Steinlight labels as “evil” and “xenophobic,” were adopted according to democratic procedure, conformed to the U.S. Constitution, and reflected the legitimate wishes of the majority population to preserve the historic ethnic composition of the United States.

While he condemns these laws when applied by white, Christian Americans to preserve the historic identity of the United States as a white, European, Christian nation, Dr. Steinlight implicitly approves of such laws when applied by Jews to preserve Israel as both a Jewish state and a Jewish nation.

Dr. Steinlight concludes his misrepresentation of the immigration laws of the 1920s by declaring “...America’s abandonment of the Jews to Nazi annihilation is arguably the greatest moral failure in its history.” The good doctor conveniently omits the fact that from its initial policy of lend lease to its final military intervention it was the United States that was responsible for defeating the Nazis and freeing the Jews at the cost of over one million Americans, overwhelmingly white Christians, dead and wounded.

If he is truly interested in the “abandonment of the Jews to Nazi annihilation,” then Dr. Steinlight should read *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* by Jewish historian Lenni Brenner. The Zionists in Palestine did not want Europe’s Jews and opposed unrestricted Jewish immigration. According to Brenner, “Only young, healthy, qualified and committed Zionists were wanted.”

In 1934, Chaim Weizmann, head of the Jewish delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, president of the World Zionist Organization from 1920-1929 and again from 1935-1946 and the first president of Israel, had restrictions placed on which German Jews would be allowed to immigrate to Palestine. Those to be denied entrance included “former businessmen, commercial travellers, artists, and musicians” and those who were “...over 30, and possess no capital and no specific qualifications.”

According to Israeli scholar Abraham Margalio, the next year Weizmann told the Zionist Executive:

[T]he Zionist movement would have to choose between the immediate rescue of Jews and the establishment of a national project which would ensure lasting redemption for the Jewish people. Under such circumstances, the movement, according to Weizmann, must choose the latter course.

In 1938, after Kristallnacht, the British government proposed admitting thousands of Jewish children from Germany into the United Kingdom. David Ben-Gurion, member of the Zionist Executive since 1920, Secretary General of Histadruth (General Federation of Jewish Labor) in 1921, chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Palestine in 1935, and the first prime minister of Israel, opposed the British plan. He told a meeting of Labor Zionist leaders:

If I knew that it would be possible to save all the children in Germany by bringing them over to England, and only half of them by transporting them to Eretz Yisrael, then I would opt for the second alternative. For we must weigh not only the life of these children, but also the history of the People of Israel.

In his essay, Dr. Steinlight cites the immigration laws of the 1920s to advance his political agenda. For the same reason, he ignores the 1965 immigration law, which established the current system that the good doctor claims he wants to “reform.”

The central thesis of Dr. Steinlight is that the United States is a “propositional” country defined by “abstract principles” and not a historic nation that is white, European, and Christian. He omits reference to the 1965 immigration law because its congressional supporters repeatedly asserted their proposed law would preserve the continued existence of the United States as just that — a historic white, European, and Christian nation.

Congressional and administration supporters of the 1965 immigration act publicly assured the citizens of the United States that the proposed law would: (1) not increase the annual level of immigration, (2) not lower the standards for admission, (3) not redirect immigration away from Europe, and (4) not alter the ethnic/racial composition of the United States.

For example, Senator Robert Kennedy (D-NY) stated, “The new immigration act would not have any significant effect on the ethnic composition of the U.S.”

Senator Hiram Fong (D-HI) affirmed that

[T]he people who have built up America, Anglo-Saxons, and the northern peoples of Europe, are not discriminated against in this bill...the people from that part of the world [Asia-Pacific Triangle] probably will never reach 1 percent of the [U.S.] population... Our cultural pattern will never be changed as far as America is concerned... there is that fundamental adherence to European culture.

Representative Patsy T. Mink (D-HI) intoned “this bill is but a step in the right direction. It is estimated that in the total 5-year period 679,663 of the 828,805 persons entering the United States will come from Europe.”

Representative Emanuel Celler (D-NY), dean of the House, insisted “the effect of the bill would be ‘quite insignificant’ on U.S. population” and “that the bill would not let in ‘great numbers of immigrants from anywhere,’ including Africa and Asia.”

Ignoring this inconvenient history of the 1965 immigration law Dr. Steinlight declares,

We need to rescue it [immigration reform] from the influence of those who understand America not in terms of its abstract constitutional principles, not as embodied in the Bill of Rights, but rather in some Buchananite version of *blut un* [SIC] *boden*. (Italics in original)

It is apparent, however, that it is Dr. Steinlight who does not understand America. This statement reveals the phenomenal extent of his unfamiliarity with American history and the writings of the Founding Fathers.

From the first U.S. census in 1790 to the time of the 1965 immigration act, which created the current immigration system, the overwhelming majority of the population of the United States (89 percent in 1960) was racially white, “ethnically” European, and religiously, whether practicing or culturally, Christian.

Today, as a result of more than 30 years of massive Third World immigration, that percentage has been reduced to approximately 70 percent. But the United States remains demographically a white, European, Christian nation just as Israel is a racially white, “ethnically” European, and religiously Jewish nation.

The fact the United States was established as a white, European, Christian nation was enthusiastically celebrated by the Founding Fathers who passionately opposed altering, let alone abolishing, that reality.

For example, Thomas Paine, arguably the most radical of the American revolutionaries, wrote in *Common Sense*, “Europe...is the parent country of America,” “we claim brotherhood with every European Christian,” and “All Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the globe, are countrymen.”

More famous are the words of John Jay who described the American nation in *The Federalist Papers* as “one united people, a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs.”

Regarding the impact of unassimilable immigrants upon the American nation, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “they will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass.”

Alexander Hamilton, Jefferson’s political rival, agreed writing:

The influx of foreigners must, therefore, tend to produce a heterogeneous compound; to change and corrupt the national spirit; to complicate and confound public opinion; to introduce foreign propensities.

Dr. Steinlight eloquently demands the right to be publicly heard:

[S]top censoring ourselves for fear of offending the entirely imaginary arbiters of civic virtue, and bluntly and *publicly* [Italics in original] pose the same questions we anxiously ponder in private. The community should stop letting the thought police of the more extreme incarnations of multiculturalism squelch it... By liberating ourselves from these inhibitions we will unavoidably profane the altars of some of our own politically correct household gods... But we should ask the hard questions no matter what, recognizing that only straight talk will get us anywhere.

However, he denies that same right to those who disagree with him. As he later declares:

The white “Christian” supremacists who have historically opposed either all immigration or all non-European immigration (Europeans being defined as Nordic or Anglo-Saxon), a position re-asserted by Peter Brimelow [author of *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America’s Immigration Disaster*] *must not be permitted to play a prominent role in the debate over the way America responds to unprecedented demographic change.* (Emphasis added)

Dr. Steinlight seeks not only to censor those views on immigration with which he disagrees but also to effectively disenfranchise the white, European, Christian majority from democratically determining immigration policy.

He continues:

It was recently reported in the *Tennessean* that Buchanan's Reform Party has, unsurprisingly enough, made all-out anti-immigration a central plank of its platform, calling for a 10-year moratorium on all immigration. It must be admitted that this attitude clearly resonates with a majority of Americans. Every time representative samples of Americans are presented this option on opinion surveys of all sorts they support it, though usually it is couched in the context of a five-year moratorium.

Since Dr. Steinlight opposes a moratorium on immigration, his response reveals his idea of "our constitutional principles." He writes:

We are not advocating surrender to the thoughtless mob, but we are advocating the design of policy closer to where the American people actually are with regard to the issue, *at the same time that we morally educate them to extend the parameters of their sense of community.* (Italics added)

To permit the democratic system to function is "surrender[ing] to the thoughtless mob." George Orwell would have been proud. For Dr. Steinlight, "democracy" exists when some groups are recognized as more equal than others and the minority can dictate to the majority. What about morally educating Dr. Steinlight to extend the parameters of his own sense of community?

As the essay makes clear, Dr. Steinlight is not interested in reforming immigration policy to reflect the national interest but only in fine-tuning the existing system for the exclusive benefit of the Jewish community:

It is...in our own best interest to continue to support generous immigration. The day may come when...Jews will once again need a safe haven in the United States. The Jewish community requires this fail-safe...the question is whether it should be open-ended or not.

Dr. Steinlight's criticism of "open-ended" immigration is enlightening. He writes:

We cannot consider the inevitable consequences of current trends — not the least among them *diminished Jewish political power* — with detachment. [Italics in the original] ...the American Jewish community is arguably enjoying the high noon of its political power and influence, a high noon inevitably followed by a slow western decline. ...Jewish legislative representation *may* have already peaked. [Italics in the original] It is unlikely we will ever see many more U.S. Senates with 10 Jewish members. And although had Al Gore been allowed by the Supreme Court to assume office, a Jew would have been one heartbeat away from the presidency, it may be we'll never get that close again.

And he rhetorically asks:

[I]s the emerging new multicultural American nation good for the Jews?...will Jewish sensitivities continue to enjoy extraordinary high levels of deference and will Jewish interests continue to receive special protection?...how long do we actually believe that nearly 80 percent of the entire foreign aid budget of the United States will go to Israel?

For Dr. Steinlight, immigration is to be supported or opposed depending upon whether it is “good for the Jews.” Therefore, if immigration is bad for the majority population but good for the Jews, it should be supported. And conversely, if immigration is good for the majority population but bad for the Jews, it should be opposed.

One result of current immigration policy has been to import massive numbers of Mexican and Muslim immigrants. With many, if not most, of both groups unassimilating and/or unassimilable — the former used by the Mexican government to promote its dream of a “reconquista” of the United States southwest, the latter used to advance the agendas of overseas Islamic fundamentalists — large scale immigration of Mexicans and Muslims raises legitimate questions about American national security, political stability, and social cohesion.

But Dr. Steinlight is only concerned with the adverse impact that such Mexican and Muslim immigration has on Jewish interests and Jewish political power. He laments, “once Jewish ‘safe seats’ in Congress are now held by Latino representatives” and that Latinos “have no historical experience of the Holocaust or knowledge of the persecution of Jews over the ages and see Jews only as the most privileged and powerful of white Americans.” He fears “it is only a matter of time before the electoral power of Latinos, as well as that of others, overwhelms us.”

Those “others” include Muslims. Dr. Steinlight writes that “...the rising Muslim population already represents a serious threat to the interests of the American Jewish community, and the danger will only increase with time.” There is a threat to continued “American support for Israel” since “... at some point in the next 20 years Muslims will outnumber Jews...” and “Muslims with an ‘Islamic agenda’ are [already] growing active politically through a widespread network of national organizations.” And there is a threat to Jewish status. Dr. Steinlight rhetorically asks “Will our status suffer when the Judeo-Christian cultural construct yields, first to a Judeo-Christian-Muslim one, and then to an even more expansive sense of national religious identity?”

Dr. Steinlight boasts:

Unless and until the triumph of campaign finance reform is complete, an extremely unlikely scenario, the great material wealth of the Jewish community will continue to give it significant advantages. We will continue to court and be courted by key figures in Congress. That power is exerted within the political system from the local to national levels through soft money...

But he laments the fact that this won't last.

For perhaps, another generation, an optimistic forecast, the Jewish community is thus in a position where it will be able to divide and conquer and enter into selective coalitions that support our agendas.

The same ethnocentrism was on display during the panel discussion at the CUNY Graduate Center on November 14, 2001. Sadly, Dr. Steinlight's contention that Jewish organizations operate to maximize Jewish political power and advance Jewish agendas, and have actively supported immigration policies detrimental to the majority population because it promotes Jewish interests, was not denied by either Professor Kasinitz or Professor Siegel.

The professors did not repudiate Dr. Steinlight's implied premise that the white, European, Christian majority must be denied the right to determine immigration policy. Nor did Kasinitz or Siegel object to current immigration policy reducing that majority population to a demographic minority.

While both professors generally agreed with much of what Dr. Steinlight wrote, they frequently phrased their comments to address more than just "Jewish interests." For Professor Siegel the serious failings of current immigration policy included the phenomenon of downward economic mobility, the divisiveness of multiculturalism, and the growth of Mexican separatism in the southwest. But he did not offer any clear proposals on what should be done. Professor Kasinitz, on the other hand, maintained there was no need to reduce annual numbers (nearly one million a year). The problems that existed, and he conceded there were serious problems, could be resolved by simply enforcing existing laws, rules, and regulations.

However, Professor Kasinitz did draw attention to one remarkable inconsistency in the essay. While Dr. Steinlight called for "promoting patriotic assimilation" among Third World immigrants, he lamented that "full-throttle assimilation into the American cultural landscape is vitiating whatever remains of our [Jewish] sense of identity." When asked by the professor to explain the contradiction, Dr. Steinlight ignored the question. This established the pattern for how Dr. Steinlight would respond to all critical questions throughout the conference.

Amazingly, Dr. Steinlight's opening remarks consisted of a series of personal attacks on Peter Brimelow, nationally known expert on immigration and author of *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster*, who articulately defends the right of the white, European, Christian majority to set immigration policy. Unable to rebut Brimelow's arguments, Dr. Steinlight engaged in name-calling describing the author of *Alien Nation* as objectionable and a racist promoting a "brutal ethnocentrism." While condemning his opponents as "xenophobes," the good doctor, without appreciation for the irony, disparaged then dismissed Brimelow as a "Brit," a foreigner. Brimelow, who was born in the United Kingdom, is actually a U.S. citizen.

Throughout his presentation and during the “question and answer” period that followed, Dr. Steinlight made accusations without offering evidence to substantiate them. For instance, he claimed Pat Buchanan is an anti-Semite. When challenged by a member of the audience, Lawrence Auster, author of *The Path to National Suicide: An Essay on Immigration and Multiculturalism*, to cite even one quotation to substantiate that charge, Dr. Steinlight could not.

Soon Dr. Steinlight became confused about his own position. First, he asserted people who share Brimelow’s and Buchanan’s belief in a historic American nation that is white, European, and Christian are evil. Later, he maintained such people were only intellectually dishonest because they will not admit that they are engaged in “identity politics.” Pointing out this significant change in terminology, Auster asked Dr. Steinlight which one is it — are those people evil or intellectually dishonest? Becoming flustered and belligerent, Dr. Steinlight refused to clarify his position, and instead took the next question, which was on Islam.

Repeating a central theme of his essay, Dr. Steinlight declared that America is a “propositional” country, not a historic nation. When challenged by another member of the audience, Dr. James Russell, author of *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation*, who maintained there is a historic white, European, Christian America, a visibly upset Dr. Steinlight retorted, “I don’t know the ‘America’ you’re talking about... You don’t know what ‘the founders’ were thinking about.”

At the beginning of the panel discussion, the moderator, Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which had published his essay, asked Dr. Steinlight if Jews can engage in “identity politics” to advance Jewish interests, can’t white, Christian Americans also engage in “identity politics” to advance their group interests?

For one whose essay called for asking “hard questions” and engaging in “straight talk,” Dr. Steinlight would only mumble something about “not all identity politics are created equal.” His Orwellian answer encapsulated a dangerous extremism that extends well beyond the subject of immigration.

Dr. Steinlight uses the need for immigration “reform” as a pretext for advocating what amounts to a censorship of the speech and writings of non-Jews, and their effective disenfranchisement from the political arena. The future America he envisions has more in common with “Oceania,” the totalitarian nightmare of 1984, than the Philadelphia Convention of 1787.

However, the lack of media coverage of the panel discussion, the critical comments from the audience, and the fact that the sponsor of the event, the Center for Immigration Studies, has not put an account of the proceedings on its webpage, suggests Dr. Steinlight has no supporters. His proposals, therefore, have no future.

But his essay does. As an insider’s view of the motives and machinations of the pro-immigration Jewish lobby, it makes an important contribution to American history as well as to the debate over immigration. By acknowledging that Jewish

organizations, like the American Jewish Committee, promote immigration in order to advance Jewish interests and Jewish political power, *The Jewish Stake in America's Changing Demography* has broken a political taboo—not to publicly state that the pro-immigration Jewish lobby has an “ethnocentric” agenda. The valuable, if unintended, consequence of this is to permit a free and open debate on immigration reform that finally advances the national interest and not minority “identity politics.”

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