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New Years 1981

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

The ceremonies which mark the passing of the old year and the beginning of the new are observed in Occidental countries by elaborate parties, usually excessive drinking, and generally orgiastic behavior. All that noisy behavior and pagan-like self-indulgence tends to obscure the fact, particularly to the most doctrinaire atheist, how authentically "sacred" human nature and society are at their deepest levels of meaning.

New Year's Day reflects the awareness that one cycle of living is finished, and a new one marked by rejoicing and hope is beginning. It is nothing, other than a collective rite of passage.

According to leading anthropologist A. A. Hootart and Clause Levi - Strauss, all rites of passages - birth, puberty, marriage, death, and the New Year itself - were rituals which enabled individuals and social groups to be raised above the material decay and death of the past and to be elevated to new states of being. Rituals, including New Year's rituals are "a nonmachine technology" for renovating nature, for renewing life's power for the coming year.

Archaic societies were religious priesthoods, with each person having a role to play in renewing the universe. By contributing a dance, a chant, some shared food, even the humblest person was a cosmic creator.

Well, secularized people have lost the cosmic connections, and all we have left is competition for status and power in a bureaucratic society. So we hope you enjoyed New Year's Eve. It is at least a memory of our cosmic heroism of once long ago.

Behind The Scenes

At The United Nations

By David Horowitz

A World-Union Press Feature

**Kurt Waldheim
Opens His Heart**

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- Kurt Waldheim, who will wind up his second term as Secretary-General at the end of this year and who, many believe, may accept the burdensome office for another five years, last week took the rare occasion to escape from his heavy duties to join correspondents in their year-end cocktail reception held in the relaxing atmosphere of the UN Correspondents Associations Club.

The occasion also marked Dr. Waldheim's 62nd birthday, and long-time correspondent Kay Rainey Gray had prepared a specially-

baked birthday cake. Introduced by this writers predecessor, Zbigniew Boniecki as president of the UN Correspondents Association, Waldheim, in one of his rare moods and in a real heimish spirit, opened his heart and recounted the multiple problems facing the World Organization, its virtues as well as its woes. It was a realistic appraisal. Appearing completely at home with the correspondents, he did not hide his pleasure in being in their company.

At one of the relaxing moments, he heartily congratulated this writer on his election as president of the UN Correspondents Association for the year 1981.

"The Secretary - General of the United Nations occupies a post that is at the same time one of the world's most important and least understood," Thus declared the publishers of The Free Press who last year brought out Waldheim's 262 - page volume entitled "Building the Future Order -- the Search for Peace in an Interdependent World."

"Unlike a national leader, he has no political constituency to which he can address dramatic public appeals," they explained. "He commands no armies nor can he give orders to Presidents, Chairmen or Prime Ministers. He is the chief servant of an organization of 154 sovereign States, each with its own priorities and each with a right to expect that he will take its point of view into account in anything he does or says about some of the most difficult and troubling issues of our day."

Perhaps one of the best and most penetrating interviews ever made with the Secretary - General appeared in this month's issue of the Book Digest Magazine. The interview, conducted by editor-in-chief Martin I. Gross, discloses many hitherto unknown facts. For example, as regards his role in Austria during the Nazi period, Gross posed this question:

"What happened to you in Austria during World War II?"

"My whole family was persecuted by the Nazis," Waldheim replied. "My father was put in prison by them for political reasons. My whole family tried to defend Austria's independence as a small sovereign state."

"In 1938?" - "Yes, in 1938. My father was very outspoken, and he made his positions very clear in public speeches. When the Nazis came, they put him in prison and persecuted the whole family. The Gestapo came every few days to inquire what we were doing, and every step of ours was carefully watched. It was a very bad experience. Then, one day, my brother and I were drafted into the German army. That was in 1939. The war had broken out. After one year, I was wounded on the Eastern front. I was released to resume my studies at Vienna University, where I met my wife. In all, I had luck during those disastrous circumstances."

Editor Gross turned to the issue of the Middle East and asked: "There has been talk in the General Assembly of trying to expel Israel. Do you think there is a serious threat of this happening?" "No," Waldheim retorted. "It has been discussed, but it will not happen."

"As Secretary - General, do you get dis-

couraged to see the world in its present condition?" the erudite editor of the very readable and interesting Book Digest asked, to which the successor of U Thant Dag Hammarskjold and Trygve Lie responded:

"I am not at all discouraged. On the contrary I feel that more than ever we need the United Nations. This Organization is, among other things, a safety - valve. Nations in conflict can come here to use this forum to explain their position to let steam off. And finally to accept mediation and negotiations."

In a column, penned by this writer some time ago, entitled "UN -- a Sort of an International Reformatory," your correspondent stated that "there is a need of a world body such as the UN formulated on the noble Charter principles -- especially in this uncertain atomic age in which the threat of the Hydrogen bomb hangs heavily over mankind. With all its shortcomings, one must bear in mind that the UN, born out of the Holocaust of World War II, is in its infancy. What really is 35 years when viewed in the long bloody history of millenniums of conflicts among nations. We have here, in effect a 'baby still in its diapers.' To sum up," this writer concluded, "the UN 'baby' must be given a chance to grow into a healthy body."

And Kurt Waldheim must not be envied his difficult 'midwife' job.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- The number of Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union in 1980 totaled 24,471, a 58 percent decline from the reported 51,320 who emigrated in 1979, according to the Nations Conference on Soviet Jewry. The number for December was 889.

King of One Liners



HENNY YOUNGMAN
...Man of Many Talents.

I SAID TO MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, "MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE."
LAST WEEK SHE SOLD IT.

