

Up Front

say, they want the impossible.

Meanwhile, the families dig their roots deeper into the soil, deeper into the rut that is Givat Hamatos. They say uniformly that nothing could draw them away from Jerusalem, and for now from the hill. "If they try to move us from here by force," says Ben-David, "they'll have to take me out dead."

Mitchell Ginsburg

ILLUSTRATIONS TINA SILVERMAN



Yesterday's Man

On my way by bike from a visit to Berlin's Jewish Museum one evening, an elegantly dressed man waves at me from a street café. I wave back; it's Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, sitting with his aides and bodyguards. A few yards on, I wonder whether Fischer might give me a statement about his predecessor, Walther Rathenau, the Jewish-German foreign minister whose assassination on June 24, 1922, Germany is commemorating these days. I turn back, stop my bike in front of Fischer (the bodyguards don't interfere) and ask him for an interview. He agrees and recalls into my recorder that Rathenau was "a German patriot who embodied the best that German democracy had produced at that time."

That time was during and after World War I. Rathenau, whose father had founded the electric giant AEG, established the raw materials department in the War Ministry of Emperor Wilhelm II and contributed directly to the German war effort. "The fact that despite his contribution he had become an object of anti-Semitic hatred," Fischer went on, "shows the danger the Weimar Republic was in."

On that rainy Saturday morning 80 years ago, nine shots and the explosion of a hand grenade startled Berlin's quiet villa-dotted Grunewald quarter. Rathenau sat in the back of his open limousine, fatally wounded. Historians believe the slaying was intended to provoke a Communist uprising, which would then be crushed, paving the way for a nationalist government. The scheme failed, but the tide had turned.

Ministers wept at a special memorial session of parliament and over a million Germans followed Rathenau's coffin. For many, his death marked the final burial of

what they had seen as a Jewish-German symbiosis. But Rathenau never became Germany's JFK or Martin Luther King. Historian Martin Sabrow, secretary of the Rathenau Society, explains that he is not associated with any one political party or seen as representing any specific period, as he straddled the German Empire and the Weimar Republic.

If Rathenau was not easily pegged, he also did not easily define himself. He was not just a liberal, an industrialist and a philosopher, but also a German who wrestled with being Jewish. In "Hear, Israel!" an essay penned in 1897, six years after he was rejected as an officer for his religion, he writes that East European Jews are: "an Asian horde on German soil"; "an isolated and strange tribe in the midst of German life." "The German is satisfied when he keeps this black people at bay," he declares. Years later, the Nazis cited him with vicious glee. But Rathenau, anti-Zionist and anti-Orthodox though he was, had also added that he would never convert to profit from "the rejection of my ancestors' faith."

Since Rathenau was anything but a radical, the fact Fischer's Green Party has "adopted" him — the foreign minister lay a wreath on his grave — shows how the activists of 1968 have become middle class. The liberal FDP, fighting to erase the anti-Semitic stain incurred by its vice chair, Juergen Moellemann, has also adopted Rathenau. It just named its executive session hall in Berlin after him, and Sabrow spoke to a packed hall filled with well-heeled men and women about the Rathenau legacy in a commemoration event organized by the FDP-affiliated Friedrich Naumann Foundation. The unspoken message was clear: We stand on the side of the victims of anti-Semitism, and are therefore "kosher."

With politicians trying to improve their image by embracing Rathenau, Jews might still have a future in Germany.

Igal Avidan



The Wrong Team

My friend Nurit called at the sour hour of 5:30 in the morning to ask if I would accompany her to the Brazilian restaurant Emperor's, on 46th Street in Manhattan, to watch the semi-final of the soccer World Cup.

We waited in a long line of Brazilians in the humid New York heat. Some 20 min-

utes and \$20 each later, we were let into the restaurant, packed with screaming fans rooting against Turkey. There was not a young Turk in sight. I too rooted for Brazil since it was the favorite team of my late great uncle Bernard.

But with about 10 minutes left and Brazil winning, I found myself hoping for Turkey to score; I'm usually drawn to the underdog.

I grimaced when a Turkish shot went wide. A woman in the crowd noticed, elbowed her friend and whispered in his ear. He whispered to the guy next to him, pointing his finger at me. In a matter of seconds a dozen Brazilians were jeering me. "It's just a game," I yelled. Nurit hid behind me.

At that moment, my mind left midtown Manhattan and meandered to the southern hills of Hebron, to my reserve service of 1996, where I spent a month serving with young draftees in the Arab village of Dahariya. Even then, stones, Molotov cocktails and bullets were the soup du jour in the wild West Bank.

Our military outpost was a lone tall building surrounded by barbed wire on the south side of the suk, overlooking a small soccer stadium. One day, off shift, while sunbathing on the roof in my white undershirt and army pants, I watched a soccer match begin across the street between Dahariya and neighboring Ismayiya. The stadium filled to capacity with about 600 people. I followed the game closely and pretty soon I found myself rooting for Dahariya. For those 30 days I was a Dahariya-ite.

I found some cardboard and black grease and wrote the word Dahariya in Arabic by copying a shop sign. Every time the local team got close to scoring, I jumped up and down waving my sign and chanting "Dahariya, Dahariya." The Arab spectators in the stands looked up at me. After an uneasy moment they smiled.

"What are you doing?" asked soldiers who suddenly came up to the roof to see what all the noise was about.

"I'm cheering for Dahariya," I said.

"Are you crazy?" This isn't a game," they said to me in disgust. "We hate Dahariya."

I tried to explain that possibly through sports we can bridge the political and cultural gap. That in fact this is just a game. They jeered me.

My reverie was interrupted by an uproar and I was back at Emperor's. The final whistle had blown. Brazil had won. In their ecstasy the Brazilian fans had forgotten me. But Nurit didn't. She will never invite me to another soccer game.

Robby Berman