



BEGINNINGS

MOMENT has been eighteen months a-borning. Those of us who have lived with it during its gestation inevitably approach its birth much as that of a child: will its fingers and toes be in the proper number, will its first breath be clear, will it be healthy in all respects—and will its parents survive the birth?

Those questions will be answered in due course, and in the only way that matters: *res ipsa loquitur*—the thing speaks for itself. There is, surely, a powerful temptation to initiate this column, and hence the magazine itself, with a set of ringing pronouncements regarding our intentions. But those intentions will either be translated accurately in our pages, in which case stating them becomes superfluous, or they will not, in which case stating them is idle.

Yet Clio, the muse of history, hovers over my shoulder as I write. I try vainly to dismiss her, I plead that I want merely to write as if this were the fiftieth issue of MOMENT, not the first, but she will not leave. I recall a photograph of the first editorial board of *Der Moment*, the Warsaw Yiddish daily whose name we have taken for ourselves. Ten men, impres-

sively bearded, in a Warsaw wood, stiff and serious before the photographer, a picture of our grandfathers. I see even the photographer, smell faintly the powder of his flash.

Der Moment became a mass-circulation newspaper, and lived until it was murdered together with Polish Jewry. Its first crusade was against a boycott of Jewish stores that threatened Jewish safety in Warsaw, and the photo shows a minyan of editors who seem preoccupied, aware of their role not only in journalism but also in history.

As are we. History runs in two directions, future as well as past. We now know things the editors of *Der Moment* did not know, could not have known. The worst possibilities are now memories for us. But the best, the very best possibilities are also now part of our world, we can touch them and know they are not imaginings. We know that in spite of all the actual traumas and in spite of all the horrific predictions, there is a tide running among the Jews that is rich with promise. It is that tide that has given us the courage to create a new magazine, to take for ourselves a new mandate.

We believe that honesty and excellence can, yet, become the ways of our community, and MOMENT is the product of that belief. MOMENT is, above all else, an invitation: an invitation to take Jewish possibilities seriously (but not somberly); an invitation to inquiry, to learning, to literature, to Jewish life

richly conceived. For that reason, no aspect of Jewish life is alien to us. And for that reason, as well, no established verity is outside the scope of our critical concern. The image of the sacred cow is drawn from another religion, not our own.

There is so much more to say—about the evening the idea for MOMENT first happened, about the changes in its conception since that evening, about the men and women who caught the excitement early, and chose to help make the idea a reality, about our hopes that MOMENT will encourage debate, will help raise the quality of the community, will not be “just another magazine.” But Clio has, happily, left me alone now, and I vastly prefer to write for the reader rather than for the doctoral student who fifty years from now will be doing research on the topic “The First Years of MOMENT and How it Helped Shape and Nurture, Protect and Defend Jewish Life and Bring Us to our Present Happy State.”

Writing for the reader, there is this to say: People tailor their aspirations to fit their sense of possibility. We intend and expect that MOMENT will help raise the sense of Jewish possibility, hence also raise Jewish aspirations. Until that happy time when we learn once more that we can, if we will, tailor our possibilities to fit our highest aspirations.

As we like to say here, all the rest is MOMENT.

Leonard Fein

This, the first MOMENT, is an over-size issue, one of two we will be publishing each year. Our second will be published on July 1, and we will begin regular monthly publication on September 1. (MOMENT will appear ten times each year.)

We welcome comment on our articles, and, beginning with our next issue, we will include a “Letters” section.

A word about our sponsorship. MOMENT is an independent magazine. The group of people who have invested in MOMENT is quite diverse, and represents no single ideological position—save, of course, for a commitment to Jewish life. Moreover, the structure of our enterprise guarantees absolute editorial autonomy to the editors—who themselves are not always in agreement about the major issues of Jewish life. We are, in a sense, a journal of opinions, which

means that we do not necessarily agree with the views that appear in our pages. Our criterion for publishing an article of opinion, when we do, is that it deserves to be read, and discussed. And that is because our central purpose is to enrich the life of our community. We eschew labels; others may, if they are so inclined, assign them to us. That, of course, is their right. Ours, and our privilege, is to offer as rich a diet of ideas and information as we can. ★

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