

The LATKE, the HAMANTASH and [M]ORAL CRISIS in the UNIVERSITY

By RICHARD S. LINDZEN

Adapted from an Address

Professor Lindzen, of the Department of the Geophysical Sciences of the University of Chicago, prepared this spoof as part of the Latke-Hamantashen Symposium sponsored in 1968 by the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at the University of Chicago.

Thanks to the stimulus of symposia such as this, the world is becoming increasingly aware of the fundamental and even gripping role of the latke and hamantash in almost every area of human endeavor. Their role in sociology, cosmology, psychology, medicine and solid state physics has, in past symposia, been thoroughly settled. As in other areas, the government has joined in supporting relevant investigation—most notably by the recent establishment of a Bureau of Latke Reclamation in the Department of the Interior. (It was with grant No. 12-1-19-5 LH from this organization that some of the research to be reported was supported.)

It will remain for future symposia to explore the unheralded influence of the latke and hamantash on satellite technology, aerodynamics, cloud seeding, hail

suppression and birth control. At this very moment there are faculty members waiting in fear and trembling for student exposes into Department of Defense-sponsored research on the hamantash in chemical warfare, the latke in biological warfare, and the hamantash as a fragmentation bomb. Due to the S.D.S., promising IDA-sponsored research on the lethal potato-filled hamantash has come to an end (though rumor has it that the Air Force is sponsoring continuation of this work both in the Sinai Desert and at Grossinger's).

Some of you are probably aware of the utter consternation produced at the CIA by the recent Soviet ban on the importation of hamantashen; they discovered secret messages imbedded in the poppy seeds. Thus ended the promising seeds of rebellion

program. All this merely points out the sadness of the fact that Arthur Goldberg's resignation from his position as ambassador to the U.N. prevented him from bringing to fruition his most cherished goal: the creation of a U.N. commission on the peaceful uses of the latke and hamantash (together with a concomitant greps ban treaty). However, all this is for future symposia. For now, I would like to tell of some new results (including paleo-climatological results) on the history of the latke and on the latke in history.

I begin with some comments on the antiquity of latkes. It is well known that the potato was introduced to Europe from America. However, it is commonly held that a proto-latke made from grain and of identical physiological properties has existed since time immemorial when the confluence of olive cultivation and the Iron Age led to the skillet, frying, and heart disease. A linguistic case was made, during an earlier symposium, for the existence of a proto-latke since the early Christian era. However, still earlier evidence is lacking (the fossilized proto-latke with cuneiform inscription has been shown, on the basis of C14 dating, to be a fraud—viz J. Frumpkin Phelps-Smythe, *Journal of Occult Sciences*, 1968). Quite separately, Dr. Louis Cohen confirmed, on the basis of controlled experiments, what many of us have suspected.

Latkes are narcotic depressants.

After ingesting purified essence of latke, "University of Chicago students were no longer worried, frustrated, anguished, etc.: they no longer protested." Prof. Morell Cohen's use of this fact to explain the predominance of theoreticians over experimentalists among Jewish scientists was of considerable personal interest since I had earlier found that 73.2% of Jewish experimentalists had a strong aversion to latkes. It must be added that Cohen's result is limited in its range of validity. A generalization of Cohen's results has shown that latkes produce extreme lethargy in tropical climates, moderate lethargy and mild euphoria in temperate climates, and are actually stimulants in arctic climates.

Interesting in this regard was Levi-Strauss' finding that all structure degenerated into relative cultural meaninglessness for a tribe of Ecuadorian lowland Indians subsisting entirely on latkes. The crucial importance of climate is evident. In studying the climate of the past (i.e. paleoclimatology) we rely on records, variations in tree rings (dendrochronology), intuition and little else. As difficult as the task is, the renowned Chinese dendrochronologist, Aetz Chaim Hee, has succeeded in tracing the Middle East's climate for the last 4,000 years—a task made especially difficult by the prevalence of deserts in the region. It now

appears certain that the sub-tropical climate we now associate with Israel has, with a few notable exceptions, prevailed over the last four millenia, including the four centuries prior to the Common Era. Thus, it goes virtually without saying that the latke must be post-Hasmonean in origin.

If it had been developed earlier, the Maccabees would have been incapable of revolt. So, how, when and why was the latke developed? The sinister, newly-discovered answer follows.

As we know, with Judah Macabee's death, his brothers followed him in ruling and each in turn suffered unnatural death. After the death of Simon in 135 B.C.E., his son John Hyrcanus assumed the office of High Priest and ruler. John was noted for enlarging Israel, employing heathen mercenaries, forcing the conquered Idumeans to accept Judaism, and beginning the estrangement between the people of Israel and the Hasmonean house. The process was continued by John's successors Aristobulus and Alexander Janneus. The latter was succeeded by his mother, Alexandra Salome, who for seven years brought back quiet and comfort. She is consequently considered by some to be the prototype of the post-Biblical Yiddishe mamma.

In any case, we can now, with reasonable certainty, state that it was in the reign of Alexandra

Salome that the Idumean, Antipater, (father of the evil Herod) invented the latke. The evidence for this first began to be acquired 10 years ago, when Prof. Fraig Vida of the Pontifical Academy of Boro Park unearthed some 117,000 items of Pompey's correspondence. Pompey was the Roman emperor contemporary with Antipater. By 1952, Prof. Fraig Vida had gone through about 30,000 letters of which six were from Antipater. All of these substantially ante-dated the death of Alexandra Salome and demonstrated beyond any doubt, collusion between Antipater and Rome.

Mentioned in these letters was "s o m n u s , p l a n u m e t friserum" sleep flat and fried. Until recently it was presumed that this merely referred to another gruesome Eastern torture better left to Robert Graves' literary exploitation. However, only last week Prof. Fraig Vida reached letter 106,473, also from Antipater, which explicitly describes his weapon of subversion: the flat, fried, enervating pancake. Alas, by the time of Alexandra Salome's death the latke had been diffused throughout the population of Israel and with the desired effect. When Alexandra died, her oldest son and natural successor, Hyrcanus, was too languid to assume his throne. His younger brother, Aristobulus, less addicted to latkes, assumed it

instead.

The people of Israel were in favor of getting rid of both brothers. Under normal circumstances one might have expected vigorous internal strife. Instead, under Antipater's subtle influence, the leaders of all factions went to Pompey (then in Syria) asking him to assume control of their country. Thus ended Jewish independence—not to be resumed until our own day. Needless to add, Antipater soon gained administrative control of Israel, and he, in turn, was succeeded by Herod. As Judah Goldin in his history of the Talmudic period so ably put it—"fatigue had simply resigned to terror," to which we can only add, in view of our present knowledge, "how true."

There is an irony in the situation. As the dendrochronologist, Aetz Chaim Hee, notes, during Herod's reign a period of almost 140 years of anomolous, extreme cold began in Israel. We are all familiar with the story of Hillel who almost froze to death when, for lack of funds, he climbed to the skylight of the schoolhouse in order to overhear the discussion within, and was buried by snow. What was once held to be legend, is now seen as excellent corroboration of Hee's findings. In this new climatic era the latke was able to provide the energy which we cannot doubt led to the creation of the Talmud.

However, as the warmth returned, latke lethargy followed and, alas, Masada fell. Jews living in Israel dispersed, and those who were already dispersed, dispersed even further. Eventually many Jews reached Northern Europe. At this point Fackenheim's observation comes to mind: "It is clear that the ordinary Jew, rich and poor, religious and non-religious, had by this early date developed what scholars were not to note for many years to come:" namely, they had developed a gut feeling for the climate factor in latke-lethargis. The consumption of latkes in summer dwindled while during cold and bitter winters latkes became the popular, healthful and satisfying treat they remain today.

Judaism has of course only one significant winter holiday: Hanukkah. It was inevitable, therefore, that the latke would come to be associated with a holiday that celebrates events whose consequences the latke was so tragically important in eliminating.

Having touched upon the profound influence of the latke in past history, I must add that I am confident that it will play important roles in the moral, oral and other crises in the university and elsewhere. What these roles will be, will, of course, depend on the weather.

