



Irving Howe: A Life of Passionate Dissent

Gerald Sorin

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A *New York Times* “Books for Summer Reading” selection

Winner of the 2003 National Jewish Book Award for History

By the time he died in 1993 at the age of 73, Irving Howe was one of the twentieth century’s most important public thinkers. Deeply passionate, committed to social reform and secular Jewishness, ardently devoted to fiction and poetry, in love with baseball, music, and ballet, Howe wrote with such eloquence and lived with such conviction that his extraordinary work is now part of the canon of American social thought.

In the first comprehensive biography of Howe’s life, historian Gerald Sorin brings us close to this man who rose from Jewish immigrant poverty in the 1930s to become one of the most provocative intellectuals of our time. Known most widely for his award-winning book *World of Our Fathers*, a rich portrayal of the East European Jewish experience in New York, Howe also won acclaim for his prodigious output of illuminating essays on American culture and as an indefatigable promoter of democratic socialism as can be seen in the pages of *Dissent*, the journal he edited for nearly forty years.

Deeply devoted to the ideal of democratic radicalism and true equality, Howe was constantly engaged in a struggle for decency and basic fairness in the face of social injustice. In the century of Auschwitz, the Gulag, and global inter-ethnic mass murder, it was difficult to sustain political certainties and take pride in one's humanity. To have lived a life of conviction and engagement in that era was a notable achievement. Irving Howe lived such a life and Gerald Sorin has done a masterful job of guiding us through it in all its passion and complexity.

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