

wartime suppressions that putatively had occurred in protection of the community. From these advocates' perspective, speech must be free in order to benefit society; in those instances when speech demonstrably harms society, it can be abridged. "Clear and present danger" served as their benchmark for the level of harm that justifies suppression.

Rabban points out that First Amendment jurisprudence could have taken a different path. Beginning in the late 19th century, libertarian radicals argued for a broad freedom that would serve individual autonomy rather than the collective good. Under this view, everyone would have the right to speak regardless of viewpoint or impact on society. As Rabban observes, this approach might have provided a sturdier foundation for modern free speech than Chafee's disingenuous history and the Progressives' emphasis on community.

This important study ends by reflecting on the current challenges to free speech from the Left. Rabban urges that we recall the lessons the Progressives learned during World War I: democratic governments do not always act in the public interest, and freedom of speech is an essential check on them. It is a caution we ignore at our peril.

—*Timothy Gleason*

### **THE FOUNDING MYTHS OF ISRAEL.**

By Ze'ev Sternhell. Translated by David Maisel. Princeton Univ. Press. 419 pp. \$29.95

Did the founders of modern Israel set out to create a socialist society? This book, published to coincide with the nation's 50th anniversary, answers the question with an emphatic "no." Sternhell, a political scientist at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, contends that the founders, facing the task of creating a nation out of disparate bands of immigrants, "had no patience for exper-

imentation" with socialism or any other unproven philosophy. When forced to choose between advancing socialist principles and attracting capital, David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, and the other founders invariably picked the latter. Tax rates favored the wealthy, for example, and the quality of schools varied according to neighborhood income. The leaders' pious invocations of socialist principles constituted "a mobilizing myth," the author asserts, "perhaps a convenient alibi that sometimes permitted the movement to avoid grappling with the contradiction between socialism and nationalism."

Sternhell detects similar hypocrisy in



some Israeli leaders of the 1990s. During a protest against the Oslo peace accords in 1995, demonstrators waved signs depicting Yitzhak Rabin as an SS officer. According to the author, speakers at the rally—including Benjamin Netanyahu, now the prime minister—voiced no objections to the hyperbole. "For the Right," Sternhell observes, "Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres were comparable to the worst enemy the Jewish people ever had." One month later, Rabin was assassinated. Israel became, in the author's dispiriting words, "the first democratic state—and from the end of the Second World War until now the only one—in which a political murder achieved its goal."

—*Ami E. Albernaz*

## *Religion & Philosophy*

### **STRIVING TOWARDS BEING:**

*The Letters of Thomas  
Merton and Czeslaw Milosz.*

Edited by Robert Faggen. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 178 pp. \$21

What are friends for? The question is usually posed as though the answer were self-evident: friends offer help in time of need. But literary friendships are different. They leave a record, the quality of which depends on