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Remembering Iz

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When I think of Iz, we are 19 years old. It is 1958 or 1959, and we are bound together as partners on the Barnard College debate team. I have no idea how I got there; the logical place for me would have been the school newspaper (I'd been editor of our high school paper). For a girl who had barely been west of the Hudson the debate circuit, even the limited district in which we were located, was deliciously exciting. We traveled to West Point, to Princeton, and as far north as Boston.

And when I think of Iz, it's her confidence that sings to me still. I do not remember what I wore in these adventures, but Iz generally wore stunning tweed jackets, establishing her as a professional. The arcane rules of college debate established—still!—a national debate topic; coin flips decided which team was to argue the positive or the negative position (I'm thinking that Iz always was first to begin, but maybe we took turns). And thanks to Google I can retrieve the exact wording of ours:

RESOLVED: "That the further development of nuclear weapons should be prohibited by international agreement."

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Ah, our innocence. Or maybe my own naivety. For me it was all rhetorical abstraction—positive? Negative? And all teams clung to our bible: Henry Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* published the year before (he was then a 34-year old professor at Harvard). The book's assumption was that tactical nuclear weapons could be controlled, and provide flexibility to our national policy. We took pride in that Iz and I were the rare team who could pronounce "nuclear"; many others said "nuclear." Looking back, I realize that formal debate, with prizes for those who did well, was fine training for our future careers—for me, as a historian; for Iz, for a Ph.D. in political science and then a law degree—training us in buttressing argument with evidence, making logical arguments (especially useful for lawyers), and viewing loaded questions dispassionately.

Alas, although we got together a few times in the 1960s (when she was at Berkeley and I was at Stanford) and then stayed in touch for a few years when she was at Texas—from where she sent me a poster about some progressive ideas that a student, made so angry by its contents, shot up with bullet holes—we lost touch over the years. Thanks to Pat Cain I followed her work at Buffalo a bit.

And now I am saddened by all our lost opportunities. And stunned by the reappearance of the potential for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in our current moment.