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Impulses for Europe

Tradition and Modernity in East European Jewry

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Cover: Mark Rothko (1903–1970): No. 12. 1949. Oil on canvas (171,5 x 108,1 cm)
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Mark Rothko was born on 25 September 1903 as Marcus Rothkowitz to a Jewish family in the then Russian town of Dvinsk (today Daugavpils, Latvia). In 1913, his family left Russia for the the United States, where he grew up to become one of the most famous painters of the 20th century.

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Das Lager schreiben

Varlam Šalamov und die Aufarbeitung des Gulag

Depicting the Camps in Words: Varlam Shalamov and Reassessments of the Gulag System
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Impulses for the Present

Anyone who talks about Jewish life and the Jewish heritage cannot ignore Eastern Europe. The East European Jews are a paragon of frontier crossings, transnationalism, and the transfer of religion, tradition, language, and culture. From the 18th century onwards, most of the world's Jewish population lived in Eastern Europe. Between 1870 and the First World War, some 3.5 million Jewish emigrants left their homelands, predominantly the Russian Empire and Habsburg-ruled Galicia. This emigration was the starting point for the founding of new Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, South Africa, Argentina, and Palestine. The majority of American Jews are descended from Eastern European Jewry. In Israel, this is the case for more than half of the Jewish population. Some 80 per cent of Jews living in the world today have roots in Eastern Europe.

Despite this mass emigration, Eastern Europe remained the centre of Jewish life. Before the Second World War, Poland was home to the largest Jewish community in Europe. The lives of 3.5 million Jewish Poles were closely intertwined with those of their non-Jewish neighbours in the areas of economics, society, and culture. In the Soviet census of 1939, over 3 million people classified themselves as being of "Jewish nationality". Lithuania was at the time a lively centre of religious and secular Jewish culture. This rich Jewish culture in Eastern Europe was almost completely wiped out in the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis and their accomplices. To this day, the Holocaust continues to shape our view of Jewish history. In Germany, East European Jews were for decades seen only as "dead Jews". François Guesnet has formulated this perspective in the strongest of terms. He argues that this way of looking at history implicitly amounts to a continuation of the totalitarian perspective of the German master race. All that is perceived, he writes, is the genocide, and this ignores the individual lives, hopes, and aspirations that were extinguished.

It is precisely this deficit that volume at hand seeks to correct by drawing attention to the Jewish heritage in Europe's present. The history of the East European Jews is not the history of an exotic, isolated minority. Jews and non-Jews influenced one another's lives. East European Jewish history is inextricably intertwined with the history of Europe, but it is not a closed chapter of that history. The thoughts and actions of East European Jews continue to affect the world around us. They provide impulses for music, art, philosophy, political thought, and international law. This thought is sometimes extremely relevant to contemporary conditions. For example, Simon Dubnov's reflections on diaspora nationalism from the early 20th century have insights to offer multicultural societies today.

This volume deals with more than heritage. It challenges widespread topoi and clichés about East European Jews. It asks what place the Jews have in national memory cultures. Despite resistance, there is a growing willingness to integrate Jewish life and the impact it had into national memory cultures in Eastern Europe as well. And finally, the country studies to be found here address the Jews still living in Eastern Europe and the signs of Jewish life's renaissance.

Manfred Sapper, Volker Weichsel, Anna Lipphardt

A Different View of Europe's Jewish History

This volume represents a joint project between OSTEUROPA and the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future (*Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft"*). The foundation was established in 2000 on the initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany and German industry and commerce, in order to make payments to former forced labourers and other victims of the National-Socialist dictatorship. At the same time, the foundation was given the task of promoting a discussion of history that addresses both the present and the future.

This task acquires a special dimension with regard to Jewish history. By murdering the Jews of Europe, the Nazis also sought to eradicate Jewish history and culture. This policy of annihilation continues to cast a shadow on the present. A recent study of German school textbooks found the depictions of German-Jewish history "deficient, unbalanced, and therefore distorted".¹ This history has been reduced to the Shoah. Pupils learn almost nothing about the previous 1,700 years of Jewish life in Germany and its influence on German politics, culture, and society. Similar shortcomings can be found in historical accounts written for a general readership and in exhibitions. As important as it is that a general humanistic education includes the history of the break with civilisation that was the Shoah, it is just as vital that Jewish history be conveyed as an integral part of German history. This is the idea behind the foundation's Leo Baeck Project.

The volume at hand encourages the adoption of a similar approach with regard to European history. These analyses of the various impulses that the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe lent the development of European politics, science, and culture seek to promote transnational perspectives on history and to shed a critical light on conventional categories of majority and minority societies in Europe.

This presents us with a particular challenge. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the study of Jewish history was for a long time reduced to a juxtaposition of victims and perpetrators. In East Central and Eastern Europe, the need for national self-assertion that quickly manifested itself after 1989 left little room for multiethnic perspectives. More recent developments, however, are pointing in a new direction. In Germany and the neighbouring countries in the east, university chairs, museums, memorials, and other institutions that deal with Jewish topics in their national and European contexts have come into being. The contributions in this volume discuss whether these developments signify a change of perspective accompanying the revival of Jewish life, or involve a romanticisation of Jewish culture that is removed from reality.

Gabriele Freitag, Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future

¹ Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte im Unterricht. Orientierungshilfe für Lehrplan und Schulbucharbeit sowie Lehrerbildung und Lehrerfortbildung (Frankfurt am Main 2003), p. v.

Antony Polonsky

Fragile Coexistence, Tragic Acceptance

The Politics and History of the East European Jews

Eastern Europe's Jews have their own history. In the 18th and 19th centuries, repression and reform forced the Jews to assimilate to their surroundings. However, attempts to integrate failed repeatedly and led to ideological divisions among the Jews. As Zionists, integrationists, and socialists, they pursued different paths to social and legal equality. Most East European Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. After the Second World War, some of the survivors tried to shape Communist societies – unsuccessfully. Antisemitism and pogroms forced them to emigrate.

On the eve of the Second World War, Poland's borders embraced the largest Jewish community in Europe. With nearly 3.5 million Jews, Polish Jewry maintained its position as one of the main centres of the Jewish world. The second largest Jewish community in Europe (and third in the world) was that of the Soviet Union, where over 3 million people had declared themselves to be of "Jewish nationality" during the 1939 census. It, too, was a major source of Jewish creativity, although much of the specific Socialist cultural autonomy granted the Jews in the 1920s had been whittled away by Stalin in the 1930s. At this time, Lithuania, with over 150,000 Jews, also remained a vital centre of Jewish culture, both religious and secular.

All three of these communities were derived from the Jewish community of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795). In the mid-18th century, the lands of this vast state were home to a Jewish community whose population had reached more than three-quarters of a million, at least one-third of the Jews in the world at the time. This community prospered as a result of a "marriage of convenience" with the Polish nobility (*szlachta*), which dominated the pre-partition Commonwealth and enabled the Jews, despite outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence such as those that had accompanied the crisis of the Polish state in the mid-17th century, to flourish economically and spiritually. Jews were allowed to practice a wide range of trades, crafts, and skills and very frequently managed the estates of the nobility. As craftsmen – carpenters, cobblers, blacksmiths, tailors, tar manufacturer, wheelwrights – they were indispensable to the rural economy in the villages and small towns (*shtetlekh*). Their position was unique in Europe. Jewish religious and intellectual life also experienced a very rich development. The schools of Talmudic study (*yeshivot*) in Poland served as models

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for the rest of Europe, while Polish masters of Jewish religious law (*halakha*) exerted tremendous influence on the religious life of Jews throughout the world. It was in Poland that the study of Jewish mysticism (*kabbalah*) was transformed from the domain of a small aristocratic elite into a mass movement, and it was in the Polish lands that Hasidism, the last mass religious movement to establish itself in the Jewish world, emerged and flourished.

As early as the mid-17th century, the situation of the Jews began to deteriorate, as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth itself went into decline. Nonetheless, the community managed to maintain itself and even expanded in the 18th century. Towards the end of the century, the Jews came under increasing pressure, first from the Polish reformers – who gained in influence after the first partition of Poland-Lithuania in 1772 – and then from Austria, Russia, and Prussia – which completed the partitioning of the Commonwealth in 1795 – to transform themselves from a community that was bound by a shared faith and way of life and transcended national borders into citizens of the country where they lived. Elsewhere in Europe, the Jews were also subjected to similar pressures, which proved relatively successful in the western and central parts of the continent. In the course of the 19th century, the Jews were transformed into Englishman, Frenchman, and Germans “of the Hebrew faith”. However, due to the size of the Jewish population on the Polish lands, resistance to this transformation, and the rise of anti-Jewish sentiment, the Polish and Jewish “assimilationists” had by the late 19th century largely failed in their efforts to turn the Jews of Poland into “Poles of the Mosaic faith”. Only in Prussian Poland, where a civil society had been established by the reforms of the early 19th century, did the Jewish population undergo such a transformation.

However, here, as in the other territories ruled by Prussia, the Jews adhered to German rather than Polish culture. A minority of Polish Jews – both in Galicia (Austrian Poland) and in the Kingdom of Poland (whose autonomy within Russia was established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and effectively abolished with the Uprising of 1863) – accepted the assimilationist dream, linked as it was with political liberalism, and integrated into Polish society. In the parts of Poland-Lithuania directly absorbed into the tsarist empire – the Pale of Settlement, to which the vast majority of Jews from the Commonwealth were confined – the *maskilic* elite, the adherents of the Jewish enlightenment, favoured Russification over Polonisation. Here, too, however, the greater part of the community remained Yiddish-speaking and adhered to a traditional Jewish way of life.

Starting in 1881, the Jews’ situation within the Russian Empire began to worsen severely. This was partly the result of the tsarist government’s growing disillusionment with its policies for transforming the Jews into what it considered useful subjects. This deterioration was also caused by the growth of revolutionary activity and the social tensions that this engendered. Under these new conditions, the goal of integrating and transforming the Jewish community through education and Russification became increasingly discredited among Jews. Ethnicity instead of religion now was seen by many as the hallmark of Jewish identity, while others came to view Socialism and its promise of a new and equitable world as the “solution” to the “Jewish question”. This “new Jewish politics” spread from the eastern half of the Pale of settlement to the Kingdom of Poland and to Galicia, where integrationist policies, though

more successful than in Russia, had also encountered considerable resistance and were now increasingly being called into question by both Jews and non-Jews. The new Jewish politics even had an impact in Prussian Poland, the one area of former Poland-Lithuania where integration had seemed successful.

Politics and History of the Jews until 1914

The failure of integration was responsible for the deep divisions that characterised Jewish political life in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In a 1907 story entitled “Samooborona” [Self-defence], the Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill describes a Russian-ruled Polish shtetl with the ironic name Milovka (agreeable). A young man named David Ben Amram arrives to organise the local Jews against the anti-Jewish violence sweeping the Russian Empire. He is unable to accomplish his mission given the deep ideological divisions that have developed even in this remote backwater.

The Jews are split between integrationists and assimilationists (of which there were several varieties), religious Jews (likewise divided into Hasidic and Misnagdic [anti-Hasidic] groups), several varieties of Zionists (Socialist Zionists, Zionist Zionists, cultural Zionists, religious Zionists), Sejmists (parliamentarians), territorialists (those seeking a territory for the Jews), Socialist territorialists, and members of the General Jewish Workers’ Alliance, best known as the Bund. The idealistic organiser is brought to the brink of despair:

He had a nightmare vision of bristling sects and pullulating factions, each with its Councils, Federations, Funds, Conferences, Party-days, Agenda, Referats, Press-Organs, each differentiating itself with meticulous subtlety from all the other Parties, each defining with casuistic minuteness its relation to every contemporary problem, each equipped with inexhaustible polyglot orators speechifying through tumultuous nights.¹

What was the general character of the political groupings that emerged from the failure of integration?

The Integrationists

The integrationists remained a significant force in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth both inside and outside the tsarist empire. In those areas directly incorporated into Russia, the integrationists sought to transform autocracy in alliance with other political groups, above all the Constitutional Democrats (whose leadership included a significant number of Jews), and so secure legal equality for the Jews. In the Kingdom of Poland, the assimilationists, in alliance with the Orthodox, continued to control the Warsaw community (kehila) and propagated their views through the weekly *Izraelita*. Their influence declined in the aftermath of the Revolu-

¹ Israel Zangwill, “Samo-oborona”, *Ghetto Comedies* (New York 1907), pp. 429–487. I am indebted to Ezra Mendelsohn’s *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York 1993) for this reference.

tion of 1905 and the rise of Polish integral nationalism, particularly after the bitter conflicts in Warsaw that accompanied the election to the Fourth Duma in 1912. In Galicia, the alliance between the Jewish integrationists and Polish politicians seeking more autonomy within Austria lasted until 1914, although, after the introduction of universal male suffrage in the elections to the Austrian Reichsrat, this alliance was challenged increasingly both by Polish integral nationalists and populists as well as Ukrainian nationalists. In Prussian Poland as well, the integrationists came under increasing pressure from their Zionist opponents.

Zionists

The integrationists were now challenged by new political forces in Austria, Prussia, or Russia, especially in the Pale of Settlement. The late 19th century saw the emergence and increasing dominance of autonomist concepts of Jewish self-identification, in particular Zionism and Jewish autonomism. It is perhaps not surprising that nationalism should have had a major impact on Jewish life at this time. It is the dominant political movement of our times. After all, the world is today divided into nation-states. All of the empires built on other principles have collapsed. As Theodore Weeks has pointed out:

Whereas in 1800 most Europeans derived their sense of identity from local, religious, and social categories (i.e., village X, Catholic, peasant), by 1914 nationality as a principle of self-definition had in most places overwhelmed these old defining characteristics. The combined effects of industrialization, railroads, state educational systems, military service, and simply a higher degree of personal mobility created a situation where large numbers of Europeans came to regard themselves primarily in ethnic and national terms.²

This inevitably affected the tsarist empire, where Russian hegemony was also increasingly challenged by national movements. The 1890s saw a revival of Polish nationalism and the crystallisation of a Lithuanian and Ukrainian national consciousness in the eastern territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Other nationalities within the empire, such as the Finns, the Armenians, the Georgians, and various Moslem groups, became much more self-conscious and assertive as well. In recent years, there has been considerable debate over the nature of nationalism. Nationalist ideologues, such as Johann Fichte (1762–1814) and Johann Herder (1744–1803), stressed the timeless and primordial character of national identity. In fact, it is clear that nationalism is, above all, a product of 19th-century political changes – the waning of supranational ideologies and the growing importance of popular sovereignty. What has marked the debate about the character of nationalism has been a difference of emphasis. On the one hand, there are those, like Benedict Anderson, who see nationalism as a wholly new phenomenon and the nation as an “imagined community” emerging in response to the development of modern communications and new

² Theodore R. Weeks, “Assimilation, Nationalism, Modernization, Antisemitism: Notes on Polish Jewish Relations, 1855–1905”, in Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca 2005), pp. 20–38, here p. 20.

political conditions. This position is challenged by people like Anthony Smith, who accept the modern character of nationalism as a political movement, but emphasise the extent to which the national idea in different areas was built on an older core of ethnic self-consciousness, what Smith calls the “ethnic”.³

In the case of the Jews, it is clear that within the traditional Jewish identity, there were many elements, above all the call for the return to Zion and the constant emphasis on Jewish life in the land of Israel (Erets Yisrael), that provided nationalist ideologues with a firm foundation on which to build a modern national identity. Indeed, one of the reasons why the national idea proved rather more successful than its Socialist rivals among the Jews of Eastern Europe was because it harmonised so well with the traditional Jewish view of the world.

In the emergence of the Jewish national movement, one can distinguish three different components, which were often combined. There were those who became nationalists because of the persistence of antisemitism and what they perceived as the impossibility of Jewish integration. Then there were those who became nationalists because they believed integration was being bought at too high a price. Assimilation, in their opinion, would lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people or, at best, to the loss of all that was authentically Jewish. And finally, there were those who attempted to fuse nationalism with another ideology, either with Socialism or with some form of Jewish religious identity.

Among those who became Zionists because of their belief in the incurable Judeophobia of the Christian world were Leon Pinsker (1821–1891), a former integrationist and veteran of the Crimean War, and Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), a repentant maskil. Other people who fall into this category are Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, and Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the founder of Revision Zionism. Jabotinsky, a native of Odessa, distinguished between the “antisemitism of people” and the “antisemitism of things”. The former was the result of prejudice and could be minimised; the latter was the consequence of the inevitable economic conflict caused by the competition between the Jewish middlemen and the rising middle class of nations such as the Poles and Ukrainians and could not be avoided. He rejected liberalism as an illusion:

It is a wise philosopher who said, “Man is a wolf to man.” ... Stupid is the person who believes in his neighbour, good and loving as that neighbour may be; stupid is the person who relies on justice. Justice exists only for those whose fists and stubbornness make it possible for them to realize it.⁴

³ For Benedict Anderson’s views, see *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1983); for those of Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford 1987); idem., *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH, 2000); idem., *Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History* (Malden, MA, 2001). Some other important contributions to the debate are E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca 1983) and E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge 1990).

⁴ Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York 1981), p. 164.

Among those who saw assimilation and the loss of the Jewish national substance as the principal dangers facing the Jewish people was Asher Ginsberg (1856–1927), who wrote under the pen-name *Ahad ha'am* (One of the People). Ginsberg, educated at a yeshiva and a Jewish high school, was the most brilliant Hebrew essayist of his generation. He was convinced that before large scale colonisation of Palestine could be successful, the Jewish people would have to be transformed and permeated by the national idea. He saw this idea in elevated terms: “We must propagate the national idea and convert it into a lofty moral ideal.”⁵ Similar views were held by Eliezer Ben Yehuda (1858–1922), the architect of the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language (who in his youth had been close to the Russian revolutionary *narodniki*), and by the younger German Zionist, Martin Buber (1878–1965).

Finally, there were those who combined Zionism with Socialism or with religion. Of the Zionist Socialists, the most important were Nahman Syrkin (1867–1924), Ber Borochov (1881–1927), and Aharon David Gordon (1865–1922). Gordon was influenced by the *narodniki* and the Slavophiles and settled in Palestine in 1903. He believed that the Jews were unhealthy, because they had lost their connection with the land. For them to become a nation again, they needed to transform themselves into farmers in the ancient homeland.⁶

Among those who sought to combine Zionism with religion were Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines (1839–1915) and Ze'ev Jawitz (1847–1912). Reines, who was born in Karolin in Belarus, studied at the Volozhin yeshivah in before holding the post of rabbi in Šaukėnai, Švenčionys, and Lida. While in Lida, he tried to found a modern yeshiva where secular subjects would be studied. His first attempt in 1891 was frustrated by Orthodox opposition, but after 1905, he succeeded in creating a thriving institution. He was one of the first supporters of the movement *Hibat Tsiyon* (Hovevei Zion) and was immediately attracted to Herzl's political Zionism, participating in the first Zionist congresses.⁷

The emergence of Jewish nationalism was a phenomenon that took place on a wider stage than the tsarist empire. Indeed, one of its strengths was that it brought together Jews from all areas of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who still retained strong links with their Jewish heritage, and acculturated Jews from Central Europe, who were concerned both by the disruptive effect that the crisis of Russian Jewry would have on the position of the more integrated Jews of Central and Western Europe, and by the unnecessary and humiliating compromises that had been made in pursuit of the goal of integration into their societies. The evolution of the Zionist movement owed much to the interaction between these two groups, and its development was encouraged by the movement to Central Europe of East European Zionists, among them ideologists like Perets Smolenskin, who established himself in Vienna, and the later generation of Russian-Jewish university students who were compelled to study in the west because of restrictions in Russia.

⁵ Simon Dubnow, *A History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, pp. 3 and 49. On *Ahad ha-am*, see the biography by S. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (London 1993).

⁶ On Gordon, see Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, pp. 150–172, and Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York 1969).

⁷ S. Rabinowitz, ed., *Kneset yisrael*, 1 (1887).

The Socialists

A significant minority within the Jewish community was attracted to Socialism in its various forms and the vision it offered of a new world in which the old divisions of Jew and gentile would be subsumed by the creation of a new Socialist humanity. The emergence of Socialist movements across Europe was the product of two developments: the progress of industrialisation, particularly in Western and Central Europe, which created a class of industrial workers, and the success of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in articulating an ideology for this working class movement, “scientific Socialism”, which they claimed, unlike earlier utopian versions, identified the forces underlying the development of society and therefore ensured the ultimate triumph of their ideas.⁸

From its inception, the Socialist movement was plagued by deep divisions. In constitutional states, a rift developed between the advocates of revolutionary change and those who sought to achieve their goals gradually, by parliamentary means. This issue was to split the movement during the First World War. The key question in this dispute was whether the capitalist system was capable of being reformed.

The tsarist empire was an autocracy, and even after the Revolution of 1905, Socialist activity of all types was savagely repressed. Here, the divisions within the Socialist movement were of a different type. They centred on a number of issues. One was tactical: Did one need a small tightly-knit party of conspirators to struggle against the tsarist regime, or should one favour mass agitation as a means of promoting change? The first form of organisation was favoured by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and, in a different way, by the Polish Socialist Józef Piłsudski until his break with Socialism in 1908. A party based on mass agitation was favoured by the Mensheviks and the majority of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS).⁹

A second source of division was the role of the peasantry in the revolution. In Western and Central Europe, the Socialist movement had been suspicious of peasants, who had been used to suppress the 1848 revolution and were the mainstay of conservatism in a number of countries.¹⁰ However, in the Russian Empire, the impoverished and land-hungry peasantry, which had been emancipated only in 1861, was a potentially revolutionary force by the end of the 19th century. The Social Revolutionaries, the direct descendants of the *narodniki* of the 1860s and 1870s, saw themselves as the spokesmen for this radical anti-government force. The Mensheviks, who were the most western of the Russian Socialist groups, shared the western suspicion of the peasantry.¹¹ Lenin and the Bolsheviks, for their part, saw the peasantry as a force that could be instrumentalised. The peasants’ revolutionary sentiments could be exploited,

⁸ On this, see Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge 1968); David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (New York 1978).

⁹ Anna Żarnowska, *Geneza rozłamu w Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej 1904–1906* (Warsaw 1965); Robert Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca 1995).

¹⁰ Lewis Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (Oxford 1992).

¹¹ Leopold Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* (Cambridge 1987); Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Cambridge 1967).

but the revolution would remain under the control the small tightly-knit group of professional revolutionaries.¹²

A third issue dividing the various Socialist parties was the problem of the non-Russian nationalities within the tsarist realm, a problem that was becoming increasingly pressing. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw this problem in instrumental terms as well – the national sentiments of different groups could be exploited, but their aim was world revolution.¹³ The working class had no fatherland. With the advent of the Socialist millennium, nations would be abolished, although some form of national autonomy could be granted to groups with a common territory, language, economy, and culture.¹⁴ The counterpart of the Bolsheviks in the Polish lands was the Social Democracy of the Congress Kingdom and Lithuania (SDKPiL), a title deliberately chosen by its founders to stress that the party did not seek support outside the tsarist empire. Its leaders, some of Jewish origin, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Jogiches, others ethnically Polish, like Julian Marchlewski, argued that the different lands of the partitioned Commonwealth were now integrated into the economies of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia.¹⁵ To seek Polish independence would hamper the revolutionary struggle. The SDKPiL should therefore ally itself with revolutionary Socialist groups in Russia, above all the Bolsheviks.¹⁶ The SDKPiL was opposed by the PPS, which saw itself as a party of Poles throughout the old Commonwealth, although it was divided on how to achieve Socialism and Polish independence.

Socialist ideology had a strong appeal for Jews, both the growing Jewish artisan class and the smaller proletariat as well as the more radical sections of the Jewish intelligentsia. By 1898, there were nearly half a million Jewish artisans in the Pale, 194,000 employed in the textile industry and 58,000 in food production.¹⁷ There were also about 50,000 Jews employed in medium- and large-scale factories.¹⁸

There were a number of reasons why the Socialist idea appealed to Jews. First, it seemed a way of breaking out of Jewish isolation and integrating into society as a whole. With this in mind, Jews had begun to involve themselves in the revolutionary movement in the 1860s. Jews were a significant minority in the Russian revolutionary movement *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will), particularly its later incarnations. Thus, in the 1880s, five out of its seven top leaders were Jewish (Abram Bath, Boris Orzhikh, Natan Bogoraz, Zakharii Kogan, Khaim Lev Shternberg). Between 1885 and 1890, they made up between one-fifth and one-third of the movement's membership in the south and southwest.¹⁹ Other Jewish leftists, including Arkadii Kremer, Lidia Akselrod, Leon Jogiches, and Tsemakh Kopelson, joined the growing Social Democratic

¹² Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (New York 2002); Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: A New Biography* (New York 2006).

¹³ Robert Blobaum, *Feliks Dzierżyński and the SDKPiL: A Study of the Origins of Polish Communism* (Boulder, CO, 1984).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals*.

¹⁶ Blobaum, *Feliks Dzierżyński*.

¹⁷ For these figures, see E. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggles in the Pale* (Cambridge 1970), Chapter 1; *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis naseleniia Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897 god* (Moscow 1899–1905).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ E. Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth Century Russia* (Cambridge 1995), p. 46.

movement.²⁰ Socialism seemed a road to integration in the larger society at a time when the integration of the Jews no longer seemed to be an achievable goal under the existing political system in East-Central Europe. As Ezra Mendelsohn has written of conditions in the Pale of Settlement:

intellectuals [who] were no longer able to identify with the old Jewish culture nor free to become assimilated into Russian life ... could at least identify with “the people”, the peasant, or the proletariat.²¹

Many Jews were attracted to the Socialist idea consciously or unconsciously, because it represented a secularised version of the age-old Jewish longing for the messiah. Indeed, the messianic impulse, which was only one element in traditional Judaism, became in its new secular form the dominant passion that motivated many Jewish Socialists.²² Many were also driven to the Socialist movement by the abject poverty of the Jewish proletariat.

Jews were to be found in all the major Socialist movements within the Russian Empire, the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries, the PPS, the SDKPiL. In addition, there was a specifically Jewish Socialist party, the General Jewish Workers’ Alliance (usually called the Bund), which was founded in September 1897 in Vilnius. Because of the connecting railway line to both St. Petersburg and Warsaw, the presence of a teachers’ institute that had replaced the rabbinical seminary in 1874, and the poverty of the artisan population, this city became a major centre of Socialist agitation. Throughout its history, the Bund had difficulty in finding the right balance between its general Socialist objectives and its specifically Jewish goals. It joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party shortly after its founding as an autonomous group. At its third conference, held in 1899, it rejected a resolution calling for national equality for the Jews on the grounds that emphasis on national differences would undermine the solidarity of the working class. At its fourth conference, in May 1901, it accepted a resolution that within the tsarist empire:

the various nationalities should become a federation of nationalities with full national autonomy for each, regardless of the territory it occupies ... The concept of “nationality” should also apply to the Jewish people.²³

The Bund’s growing interest in national cultural autonomy, partly dictated by the disadvantage of its illegal status in conflicts with its rivals on the Jewish street led to clashes with the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, from which the Bund seceded in 1903.

²⁰ For more information about the involvement of Jews in revolutionary activities, see E. Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth Century Russia*; N.M. Naimark, *Terrorists and Social Democrats: The Russian Revolutionary Movement under Alexander III* (Cambridge, MA, and London 1983), pp. 92-95 and 202-211; N. Levin, *While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements 1871-1917* (New York 1977); L. Schapiro, “The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement”, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 44 (1961), pp. 148-67.

²¹ Mendelsohn, *Class Struggles*, p. 29.

²² W. Herberg, “Socialism, Zionism and the Messianic Passion”, *Midstream*, 2, 3 (Summer 1956), pp. 64–69, here p. 68.

²³ As quoted in J.S. Hertz, “The Bund’s Nationality Program and Its Critics in the Russian, Polish and Austrian Socialist Movements”, *YIVO Annual*, 14 (1969), p. 57.

Nonetheless, the Bund continued to stress its leftist credentials, giving priority to the revolutionary struggle over efforts to improve the immediate situation of Jewish workers. In 1905, during the height of revolutionary agitation, the Bund finally came out in favour of Jewish “national-cultural autonomy”, with Yiddish as the language of education, and called for the recognition of the right of Jews to use Yiddish in public life.²⁴

One movement, the Po’alei Tsiyon (Poalei Zion), attempted to combine Socialism with Jewish nationalism. Founded in 1900, it soon began to compete effectively with the Bund. Partly because of its use of national slogans that resounded on the Jewish street and partly because of its stress on the need to strive for practical goals rather than revolution, it attracted those sceptical of Bundist maximalism.²⁵

Along with the development of these new ideologies, the emergence of Yiddish as a literary language and the development of modern Hebrew took place. Faced with the challenge of secularisation and the attraction of these new movements, Orthodox Jews (a term that only came into use at this time) also began to organise themselves politically. The first political party that attempted to defend the position of religiously observant Jews, the Mahzikei hadas (The Upholders of Faith), emerged in Galicia in the 1870s. It was followed by the emergence in the years before 1914 of similar groups in the Kingdom of Poland and the rest of the tsarist empire.

Between the World Wars

The First World War fundamentally transformed the situation of Jews in Eastern Europe. It led to revolution and civil war in the tsarist empire and the ultimate triumph of the Bolsheviks. In Soviet Russia and, after 1922, the Soviet Union, a revolutionary Socialist regime attempted to “solve” the Jewish problem, by fostering both a radical form of integration and, at least in the 1920s, the emergence of a specifically Socialist form of Jewish cultural life. The Jews, according to Bolshevik theory, were not a nation. A nation, wrote Stalin in his famous study *Marxism and the national question*, should have four characteristics: a common territory, a common language, a common economic system, and a common culture.²⁶ As Stalin himself put it, “The demand of national autonomy for Russian Jews is something of a curiosity – proposing autonomy for a people without a future and whose very existence has still to be proved.”²⁷

²⁴ On the Bund, see H. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford, CA, 1972); Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle*; Y. Peled, *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale. The Political Economy of Jewish Workers’ Nationalism in late Imperial Russia* (London 1989); J. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia* (Madison, WI, 2004).

²⁵ On Po’alei tsiyon (Poalei Zion), see B. Borochov, *Nationalism and the Class Struggle: A Marxian Approach to the Jewish Problem* (Westport, CT, 1937, reprinted 1972); M. Mintz, “Ber Borokhov”, *Studies in Zionism*, 5 (April 1982), pp. 33-53; Zvi Yitzhak Abramovitch, “The Poale Zion Movement in Russia, its History and Development”, in H.F. Infield, ed., *Essays in Jewish Sociology Labour and Co-operation, In Memory of Dr. Noah Barou 1889-1955* (London and New York 1961), pp. 63-72.

²⁶ Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge 1988), p. 50. Stalin’s study was first published in 1913 in the journal *Prosveshchenie*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Clearly, the long-term fate of the Jews was to be integrated into the nations among whom they lived and ultimately, especially during the Stalinist period, into the emerging Soviet nation. The Bolsheviks clearly recognised that the Jews possessed some proto-national characteristics. Therefore, in order to facilitate their integration into the new Socialist world, a specific Socialist Jewish identity, expressed through a secularised version of Yiddish, could be tolerated for a period. Some Jews, and even some senior Bolsheviks, such as Mikhail Kalinin, thought this could become permanent.²⁸ After Stalin's "second revolution", however, most aspects of this cultural autonomy were done away with.

Integration was fostered by the unequivocal condemnation and persecution of anti-semitism and by the abolition of all tsarist restrictions on Jews. Inter-marriage, which had been rare before 1917 and had usually required conversion, now became much more frequent.²⁹ The economic restructuring of the Jewish population, one of the principal goals of Soviet policy, proceeded relatively slowly in the 1920s, but was accelerated by the industrialisation drive of the 1930s. These developments transformed the economic and social situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union. In the words of Benjamin Pinkus:

To sum up, the economic situation of the Jews at the end of the 1930s was considerably better than in the 1920s. They occupied influential positions both in the economy and in institutions of higher learning, research, art and culture, that is to say, in the socio-economic elite of the Soviet Union. The level of education among the Jews, with 72 percent literacy, already the highest among the Soviet nationalities in 1929 (apart from the Latvians who constituted a small minority in the Soviet Union), had risen still further by 1939. The proportion of the working population, which included women – a sign of modernization – rose among the Jews from about 40 percent in 1926 to 47 percent in 1939. The social structure we have outlined, with a stratum of 40 percent of functionaries and intelligentsia and a high percentage of Jewish students, is proof that by the end of the 1930s the Jewish population had become an advanced modern society.³⁰

The situation was different in the states that emerged after the collapse of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German empires. In the Polish and Lithuanian nation-states the divisions within Jewish political life were perpetuated. The peacemakers at Versailles were determined to safeguard the rights of the national minorities in these states, and these guarantees were not only inserted into the respective Polish and Lithuanian constitutions, but were guaranteed by the allied and associated powers in the peace settlement. Versailles also gave international sanction to the November 1917 Balfour Declaration, which stated London's support for a "National Home for the Jewish people"; the League of Nations, another product of the peace talks, adopted a mandate for the British administration of Palestine that reflected the declaration's content. The Jewish delegations at Versailles had been an uneasy mix of old-style integrationists, such as Lucien Wolf and Louis Marshall, and proponents of the new politics. But the final settlement

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89–97.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 98.

seemed to fulfil the dreams of those who thought in terms of Jews as a people, both in underpinning Zionist aspirations and in establishing conditions for the creation of a system of non-territorial national autonomy in Eastern Europe.

Striving for Autonomy in Lithuania

The autonomists pinned their highest hopes for the creation of such a system on Lithuania. According to Leo Motzkin, who represented the Zionist Organisation at the Second Jewish National Assembly in Lithuania in Kaunas on 14 February 1922, “Fifteen million Jews are watching your experiment in the struggle for national rights”.³¹ In response, Dr. Max Soloveitchik, minister for Jewish affairs in the Lithuanian government, declared: “Lithuania is the source from which will flow ideas that will form the basis for new forms of Jewish life.”³²

Lithuanian Jewry – with its very specific character, derived from the regional strength of the Jewish Enlightenment (*haskalah*) and Zionism, the lack of acculturation, and the vigour of Misnagdic and Musar traditions – seemed the ideal vehicle for the establishment of a system of Jewish autonomy. This seemed to be in the interests both of Jews and Lithuanians. The two groups had cooperated before the war in elections to the Duma, and Lithuanians had hoped that Jews would support their claims to Vil’na (Vilnius). There seemed to be no fundamental economic conflict between the emerging Lithuanian intelligentsia and the Jews. Lithuanian nationalists were more comfortable with specifically Jewish cultural manifestations than with Jewish acculturation to Russian, Polish, or German culture. Given the mixed character of the area, Jewish national autonomy would also make the state more attractive to Belarusians and Germans who might be incorporated into it.³³

By the mid-1920s, it was clear that the system, which had been launched with such high hopes, was collapsing. In May 1926, a new, leftist government came to power and made important concessions to national minorities. This and the general dissatisfaction with the functioning of the democratic system led to a coup led by right-wing nationalist Antanas Smetona in December 1926. The political system in Lithuania became increasingly autocratic and no longer had any place for Jewish, or any other kind of autonomy, although the highly developed Jewish systems of private schools and cooperative banks survived.

The reasons for the collapse of the autonomous experiment in Lithuania are clear. The two sides had unrealistic expectations of each other. Lithuanians believed that Jews would aid them in acquiring Vilnius and Memel and in attracting Belarusians to a multinational Lithuania. They had much less need of Jews in the fairly homogeneous Lithuania that actually emerged, while it soon became clear that Jewish support would not be a significant factor in acquiring Vilnius. For their part, the Jews took far too seriously

³¹ “Proceedings of the Second Congress on the Jewish Communities and the Jewish National Assembly. Stenographic Reports”, *Yidishe shtime* (February 1922), quoted in Samuel Gringauz, “Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania (1918–1925)”, *Jewish Social Studies*, 14, 3 (July 1952), pp. 225–246. See also Sarunas Liekis, “Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania”, *Brandeis University, Ph.D. Thesis*, 1997; idem, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925* (Vilnius 2003).

³² Gringauz, “Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania”.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*; Liekis, “Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania”; in idem, *A State within a State*.

assurances made by the leading Lithuanian politicians whose commitment to Jewish autonomy was always dependent on their larger goals. Other reasons for the failure of the experiment were that it fell prey to conflicts between the Lithuanian parties, and that the degree of consensus necessary for the experiment's success was absent within the Jewish community. It may also be that there is an inherent contradiction between the basic principles of the liberal state and guarantees of special collective rights.³⁴

Trench Warfare in Poland

The attempt to establish Jewish autonomy in Lithuania explains some of the otherwise puzzling features of interwar Jewish politics in Poland and illustrates some of what one might describe as the “discontent” with the new Jewish politics. The bitter dispute between the Zionists from the former Austrian lands, led by Leon Reich, and those from the area formerly ruled by Russia, led by Yitzhak Gruenbaum, has to be understood in the context of what seemed like the successful achievement of Jewish national autonomy in Lithuania. Gruenbaum, coming from an area where ethnic antagonisms had become quite pronounced, stressed the need for a vigorous and uncompromising defence of Jewish national rights, especially because they had been guaranteed by the Polish Minority Treaty and Poland's Constitution.³⁵ Jews, in his view, would find a reasonable place for themselves only when Poland had been transformed from a nation-state into one of nationalities, where the various ethnic groups enjoyed a wide measure of autonomy.³⁶

This view of the Polish situation lay behind Gruenbaum's advocacy of a united front of the minorities – Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, and Belarusians – which led to the establishment of the Bloc of National Minorities in the November 1922 elections. This policy could only have been pursued by someone who had unrealistic goals and no practical experience in politics: It bitterly antagonised Poles, already hostile to the Jews because of their support for Lithuanian claims to Vilna and their neutrality in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in eastern Galicia. Moreover, the Jews' objectives were quite different from those of the other minorities with whom they sought an alliance. While the Jews wanted only the implementation of rights that they had been guaranteed, the Germans were openly revisionist, and the Slavic minorities wanted at least territorial autonomy, at most secession.

Reich, a native of Galicia, where the Austrian constitutional regime had somewhat softened ethnic tensions, rejected Gruenbaum's maximalism and favoured a direct approach to the Polish authorities. This resulted in a May 1925 agreement with Prime Minister Władysław Grabski, by which the Jewish side pledged allegiance to the Polish state in return for the alleviation of their principal grievances. This soon collapsed amid a welter of accusations and counter-accusations of bad faith by the parties involved: Foreign Minister Aleksander Skrzyński and the Jewish Parliamentary Club. Yet after the May 1926 coup returned Józef Piłsudski to power, Reich and his associates, who

³⁴ Liekis discusses these issues comprehensively in *ibid.*

³⁵ On this see Itzhak Grunbaum, *Milhamot hayehudim bepolin* (Jerusalem 1946); Shlomo Netzer, *Ma'avak yehudei Polin al zekhuyotehem le-ezrahiyut vehalumiyyut (1918–1922)* (Tel Aviv 1980).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

dominated the Jewish Parliamentary Club, still hoped to establish lines of communication with the government. They were generally satisfied with the government's behaviour in the 1920s and, although uneasy about the impact of the economic crisis, still regarded the government as far better than the alternatives, whether to the right or the left.³⁷ They felt particularly justified in this view by the actions of the government in August 1929, when the National Democrats attempted to exploit the allegedly Jewish profanation of a Corpus Christi procession in Lwów (L'viv) to launch a campaign of anti-Jewish disturbances. Prime Minister Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski, who later gained notoriety by urging an anti-Jewish economic boycott in April 1936, acted firmly and swiftly to restore order and stop the attacks on the Jews.

The main Orthodox political organisation, Agudas Yisroel, in accordance with its understanding of the talmudic principle of "the law of the state is law" (*dina de malkhuta dina*) had quickly established friendly relations with the Piłsudski regime after May 1926.³⁸ It had been rewarded by a decree in 1927 extending and reorganising the autonomous Jewish communities (*kehilot*), which were now granted wide powers in religious matters, including the maintenance of rabbis, synagogues, baths (*mikva'ot*), religious schools, and ritual slaughter (*shekhita*). Some welfare for poor members of the community was also to be provided. Agudas Yisroel, in return, supported the government in the elections of March 1928 and November 1930. In 1928, one of its leaders, Elias Kirszbraun, was even elected on the list of the Non-Party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government.

All these groups found their political positions drastically undermined by the increasingly antisemitic stance of the government and the other national minorities, particularly the Germans and Ukrainians, after 1935. Gruenbaum moved to Palestine in 1929. For his followers, the idea of transforming Poland into a state of nationalities was now a pipedream. The attempt by Reich (who died in 1929) to find a *modus vivendi* with the Polish authorities that would reconcile Polish national interests and Jewish group rights had also clearly failed. In addition, the hope of large-scale emigration to the Middle East was now a chimera, which also undermined the position of the more moderate Zionist groupings. The position of Agudas Yisroel was also crumbling. It had continued to regard the government as sympathetic in the early 1930s. Thus, it came as a particularly cruel blow, when, in April 1936, the government introduced a law effectively banning ritual slaughter. The move was justified on hygienic and humanitarian grounds, but it was clear to all that its main objectives were to make life difficult for Jews and to ruin those Jewish slaughterers who also sold meat to Christians.³⁹

In these circumstances, the Bund came to occupy the centre of Jewish politics in Poland. Its links with the PPS seemed to tie it to a group that had a real chance of taking

³⁷ On this, see Antony Polonsky, "A Failed Pogrom: The Demonstrations following the Corpus Christi Procession in Lwów in June 1929", in Ezra Mendelsohn, et al., eds., *Jews in Interwar Poland* (Ardendale 1990), pp. 109–125.

³⁸ On Agudas Yisroel, see Ezra Mendelsohn, "The Politics of Agudas Israel in Inter-War Poland", *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, 2 (1972), pp. 47–60; G. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition. Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem 1996).

³⁹ The issue of *shekhita* has given rise to a vast literature which is well reviewed in Emanuel Meltzer, *Ma'avak medini be-malkodet, Yehudey Polin 1935–1939* (Tel Aviv 1982), pp. 97–110. This appeared in English as idem, *No Way Out. The Politics of Polish Jewry 1935–1939* (Cincinnati 1997).

power and was more sympathetic to Jewish aspirations than most political movements in Poland. This situation also explains the support for radical Zionist groups, above all the Revisionists, and for radical leftist movements, primarily the Communists. These are all examples of the politics of desperation. The politics of the possible had been abjured because it did not exist. Under pressure from the persistence of the economic crisis and antisemites emboldened by observing the Nazis' success in disenfranchising and expropriating one of the best-integrated, prosperous Jewish communities in Europe, the government decided to adopt a policy of encouraging the emigration of a large part of Polish Jewry. Just how desperate the situation was is illustrated in the comment of Jerzy Tomaszewski, a cautious historian of the period. After pointing out that mass emigration was not at this time a feasible possibility for dealing with the "Jewish question", he comes to the following conclusion:

A lasting solution for the social and economic problems of the Jews thus had to be sought in Poland, in close association with the whole range of problems faced by the country. It is difficult today to reach a conclusion concerning the chances of finding such a solution, because the outbreak of the war led to a break in the normal evolution of the country. If one takes into account the situation that prevailed at the end of the 1930s, the prospects for lasting solutions must seem doubtful.⁴⁰

One cannot say whether Tomaszewski's judgement, which echoed Jabotinsky's view in the 1930s that the Jews had no future in Poland, or anywhere else in Eastern Europe, is correct. Earlier dire predictions of a "Polish-Jewish war", frequently uttered on the eve of 1914, had proved misplaced (an even earlier "Polish-Jewish war" in 1859 had in fact been followed by a Polish-Jewish rapprochement that preceded the Uprising of 1863). Under German occupation during the First World War, Polish-Jewish tensions had abated. On the eve of the Nazi occupation, Polish-Jewish relations were certainly envenomed. But it is only from hindsight that we know that the bulk of Polish Jewry was doomed in 1939. It could equally be argued that the bark of Polish antisemitism was rather worse than its bite, and that had the Polish regime returned to some form of liberal democracy, as seemed possible in 1938-1939, a new Polish-Jewish modus vivendi would again been possible.

After the Shoah

More than 90 percent of Polish Jewry perished in the Holocaust. Only in the Baltic states was the percentage of Jewish casualties higher.⁴¹ The 5 million Jews of the Soviet Union as of June 1941 can be divided into the 2 million incorporated into the country in 1939-40, and the 3 million who were there before the war. Of the 2 million Jews acquired in the annexation of eastern Poland, the Baltics, and parts of Romania,

⁴⁰ Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Niepodległa Rzeczpospolita", in Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze Dzieje Żydów w Polsce* (Warsaw 1993), p. 215.

⁴¹ Józef Adelson, "W Polsce zwanej Ludową", in Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze Dzieje Żydów w Polsce* (Warsaw 1993), p. 379; Christoph Dieckmann and Saulius Sužiedėlis, *The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews during Summer and Fall of 1941* (Vilnius 2006).

1.5 million were killed, with the rest being deported or fleeing into the Soviet interior. Of the 3 million original Jewish inhabitants, 1 million were killed.⁴²

The war affected the various political orientations of Polish Jewry in different ways. The Orthodox had the greatest difficulty in recovering from the trauma of the war. They figured disproportionately among those murdered since they were for the most part unacculturated and easily identifiable. Many found the tragic fate of the Jews difficult to reconcile with their belief in the benevolent God of Israel, although they subsequently overcame this crisis of faith and successfully rebuilt their communities, particularly in Israel and North America. The postwar Polish regime was most unsympathetic to their concerns, while most Orthodox survivors, after their experience with Soviet rule, were eager to flee Soviet-style Socialisms as soon as possible.

The groups that did recover on Polish soil were the integrationists, the Zionists, the Bundists, the Communists, and, in smaller numbers, the Social Democrats. In the immediate postwar period, the relationship between these different groups was somewhat complex. The Communists and the Bund found themselves in a bitter conflict for control of the Jewish street. At the same time, the Polish Workers' Party was also willing to work together with the Zionists to facilitate Jewish emigration, much to the annoyance of the Bund. Indeed, at this time, Soviet policy, which was already clamping down on the manifestations of Jewish identity that had been permitted between 1941 and 1945, also favoured the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, partly because this would weaken the British, and partly because Moscow hoped that this state would adopt a pro-Soviet foreign policy.

Among the integrationists, those who saw themselves as Poles, whether they emphasised or, as was often the case, rejected their Jewish origins, the same divisions can be observed as in Polish society as a whole, with some individuals welcoming the political transformations that followed the war and others totally rejecting Communism. Both Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski, who spent the war abroad and had previously shown little sympathy for Communism, now saw little alternative to it in Poland.⁴³ Writers of Jewish origin were also prominent in the Forge (*Kuźnica*), a group of writers who hoped to restructure Polish cultural life under the new political conditions, by drawing on the traditions of the Polish Enlightenment and avoiding as much as possible the extreme versions of Marxism and Socialist Realism. Among the principal Jewish members of the *Kuźnica* group were the literary critic Jan Kott, Adam Ważyk, Kazimierz Brandys, Paweł Hertz, Seweryn Pollak, Mieczysław Jastruń, and Adolf Rudnicki. The most significant figure in the group was probably Adam Ważyk (1905-1982). For close to ten years, to use the words of the critic Artur Sandauer:

[Ważyk] was the official artistic authority. He wrote dramas that were immediately produced and inevitably failed; film scripts that were immediately shot and met a similar fate; he excoriated [Cyprian] Norwid for his petty-

⁴² For these figures, see Yitzhak Arad, "The Destruction of the Jews in German-occupied Territories of the Soviet Union", in Joshua Rubinstein, Ilya Altman, eds., *The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-occupied Soviet Territories* (Bloomington 2008), pp. XIII–XVII.

⁴³ On this see Marci Shore, "The Spring that Passed: The Pikador Poets' Return to Jewishness", *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 22, *Social and Cultural Boundaries in Pre-Modern Poland*, forthcoming November 2009.

noble ideology and the producers of Coca-Cola for serving atomic death. He delivered a programmatic lecture at the Fifth Conference of the Association of Polish Writers and carried over Stalin's linguistic theses to the methodology of literary studies.⁴⁴

Although he later repented for his Stalinist past and made an important contribution to the thaw in Poland before 1956, many in the Stalinist period saw him as the official face of Communist culture.

It is clear that, like the history of Poland itself, the history of Polish Jewry took yet another radical turn with the Communist seizure of power. The central fact in the history of the Jews in postwar Poland is that the disputes between the aforementioned groups were not resolved by the normal give and take of the democratic process. By early 1947, a monopoly of power in the hands of the Polish Workers' Party had been established and was consolidated by its subsequent absorption of the PPS. The authorities now proceeded, under the close supervision of the Kremlin, to impose its own "solution" of the "Jewish question", which involved the suppression of all groups not under direct Communist control.

At the same time, from 1944 on, there ensued several waves of emigration on the part of those whose memories of the war made it difficult to live on Polish soil, those who feared anti-Jewish violence or were unwilling to live under a Communist government. The first such wave intensified after the Kielce pogrom, to be followed by a second wave in 1956–1958, and a third after 1968. At its height, the postwar Polish-Jewish community numbered perhaps 300,000. Although fear of the future and anti-Jewish violence pervaded this community, so did hopes for a brighter future. For many, like the majority of the Polish population, it was hoped that this future could be achieved in Poland. Events were to decide otherwise. Today, nearly 20 years after the end of Communism and considerable and admirable effort to revive Jewish life in Poland, there are perhaps 5,000 Jews in the various Jewish communal organisations and maybe another 25,000 linked in some way with Jewish life.

It is tempting to speculate how different the postwar history of Poland would have been had a sizeable Jewish community – and a community of 300,000 is such a community – remained. The failure to create a viable postwar community was the result of a number of factors: the difficulty of living in the cemetery where the Nazis had murdered the overwhelming majority of the prewar community, the persistence of anti-semitism and anti-Jewish violence, and the character of the postwar Communist regime, which was clearly distasteful to the majority of Jewish survivors. It may be that this failure was inevitable, given all the difficulties the community faced. Nevertheless, it makes a sad epilogue to the tragic Jewish fate during the war and constitutes a posthumous victory for Hitler.

In the Soviet Union, the war years were very complex: On the one hand, the Jews were very aware of the popular hostility felt towards them and the sympathy among large parts of the population for what the Nazis were doing to the Jews.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Stalin's need to mobilise whatever support he could for the Soviet war effort led

⁴⁴ Artur Sandauer, *O sytuacji pisarza polskiego pochodzenia żydowskiego w XX wieku (Rzecz, którą nie ja powinienem był napisać)* (Warsaw 1982), p. 50.

⁴⁵ See Rubinstein, Altman, *The Unknown Black Book*.

to the relaxation of policies that constrained Jewish life and saw the emergence of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The postwar years were much more difficult. Stalin persecuted Soviet Yiddish authors and had many of them executed. Only Stalin's death may have prevented the mass deportations of Jews to the Jewish autonomous oblast (Birobidzhan) or somewhere else in the far east. The worst features of Stalin's Jewish policies were mitigated under successors, but there was no return to the cultural flourishing of the 1920s. Anti-Zionism became a staple feature of Soviet ideology. Jews increasingly felt that they were second-class citizens as a result of the vicious attacks on Israel that accompanied the Six-Day War (1967). This was what led to the movement among Soviet Jews to emigrate. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union nearly 1.5 million Jews have left the Soviet successor states.⁴⁶ At the same time, the end of Communism has seen a rebirth of Jewish life in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic states, and Belarus.

Outlook

The end of Communism has led to a revival of interest in the Jewish past both among Jews and non-Jews in the east and in the wider scholarly community. It has also led to a series of debates between Poles and Jews, Poles and Lithuanians, Jews and Ukrainians, and even Jews and Russians on the controversial aspects of this past. This is part of a general process of coming to terms with many neglected and taboo aspects of the history of the region. It has only really begun since the end of the Communism. For too long, relations between Jews and their neighbours in this area and Jewish topics have been the subject of much mythologising. The first stage of approaching such issues has to be from a moral point of view, a settling of long-overdue accounts. The wider implications for all of the countries of Europe, particularly for those in the northeast of the continent, are what make the debate over Polish responsibility for the massacre of the Jews of Jedwabne in July 1941 so significant.⁴⁷

Because of the profound and serious character of this debate, one can hope that in the case of Polish-Jewish relations we are now starting to enter a second stage, where apologies and apologetics will increasingly be replaced by careful and detailed research and reliable and nuanced first-hand testimony. This second stage is also beginning in Ukraine and Lithuania. It should be possible to move beyond strongly-held, competing and incompatible narratives of the past and reach some consensus that will be acceptable to all people of good will and will bring about a degree of normalisation in our understanding of the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe. Some have questioned whether normalisation is a desirable or realisable goal. The past is too close and too painful for that. Perhaps our aim should be to strive for a "tragic acceptance" of those events that have united and, so often, divided the peoples of Eastern Europe in the past century. That, at least, is owed to the millions of victims of the totalitarian systems of the last century.

⁴⁶ See the table on page 200 in Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe since 1945* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).

⁴⁷ See on this, the contribution by Katrin Steffen in this volume, pp. 199–217.

Dietrich Beyrau

Disasters and Social Advancement

Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe

Since emancipation, the history of Europe's Jews has been written in two ways: as the advance from the periphery towards the centre of society and as a series of disasters. This applies to Eastern Europe in particular. At the start of the 19th century, over 80 per cent of Ashkenazi Jews lived there. Their emancipation led to a break with tradition, emigration, acculturation, and multiple concepts of identity. Antisemitism and pogroms were their constant companion. Nationalist forces in East Central Europe saw the Jewish population as a disruptive element in their efforts to build nation-states. Dynamism and opportunities for advancement made Soviet Moscow a "new Jerusalem" for urban Jews. The break with civilisation that was the Holocaust hit the Jews of Eastern Europe particularly hard. Today only about 4 per cent of the world's Jews live in this area.

The history of European Jewry since Emancipation at the end of the 18th century has been written two ways: as a sequence of disasters culminating in the Holocaust and as an unprecedented advancement of a despised minority to the heights of society. Consequently, the 20th century has been declared in a most ambiguous way the "Jewish century".¹

This simultaneity of disasters and social advancement can only be plausibly described in the dimensions of the interaction, transfer, repulsion or attraction between increasingly differentiated milieus and their surroundings. This also applies if one takes a bird's-eye view, the approach chosen here, to describe and to analyse the history of Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe.

In the last two centuries, a transformation of Judaism has taken place. This was captured in concepts such as emancipation, modernisation, acculturation, assimilation, and nationalisation. In the 19th century, emancipation could mean escape, voluntary or forced, from Jewish tradition just as well as its reconstruction and the reshaping of

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¹ Léon Poliakov, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus*, 1–8 (Worms 1977–1988); Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton 2004).

Jewish identity.² The direction these movements took was not predetermined. As a rule, they were tied to migration, first urbanisation, then metropolitanisation, and not least of all “emigration”, mostly westwards, even as far as America.³ France, Great Britain, and Germany as well as Romania, Hungary, and Congress Poland (a semi-autonomous administrative entity made up of Russia’s westernmost provinces) all proved willing to accept migrants from the eastern lands of the Pale of Settlement, the provinces to which Russia’s Jews were largely confined.

At the start of the 19th century, 80–85 per cent of Ashkenazi Jews still lived in Central and Eastern Europe; by the start of the 20th century, the number was merely 50 per cent. Ten per cent lived in Western Europe and over 25 per cent had already migrated to the United States. Starting in 1916–1917, in the middle of the First World War, a new wave of migration – initially more or less forced – also got underway into the Russian interior, which had for the most part previously been off limits to Jews.

Almost all of the Jews of East Central Europe were annihilated in the Holocaust. Today, only some 4 per cent of the world’s Jews still live there. In addition, since the mid-1980s, approximately 500,000 Soviet citizens, most of them Jews, have immigrated to the United States, while another million has left for Israel. The vast majority of the world’s Jewish population – 12 million of 14 million people – is concentrated in the United States, Israel, or Western Europe.

The East-West Divide in Emancipation during the 19th Century

Well into the 18th century, Ashkenazi Jewry between Strasbourg and Minsk was made up of a diaspora community “mediated by religion and text”.⁴ In the course of the 19th century, this community fell apart due to the rise of national movements and the creation of nation-states as well as the various new definitions of the Jewish diaspora throughout Europe.

Through emancipation, acculturation, and even assimilation, Jews in the late 18th century began to orient themselves towards the political culture of the states and empires in which they lived. In the west, they tended to be influenced by republican and liberal ideals; in the east, by the second half of the 19th century, the tendency was more to nationalist Zionism or revolutionary Socialism. Despite occasional setbacks, such as the Dreyfus Affair in France (1894), the integration of the Jews in Western Europe took place earlier and proceeded more smoothly than in Central Europe, where there were periodic anti-Jewish disturbances.

² Trude Maurer, “Plädoyer für eine vergleichende Erforschung der jüdischen Geschichte Deutschlands und Osteuropas”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 2 (2001), pp. 303–321; Christoph Schmidt, “Zur Typologie jüdischer Integration in West und Ost”, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 3 (2003), pp. 140–153.

³ Lloyd P. Gartner, “The Great Jewish Migration – Its East European Background”, *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 27 (1998), pp. 107–133; Christoph Schmidt, “Zur Neubewertung der jüdischen Emigration aus Osteuropa in die USA vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg”, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 1 (2005), pp. 128–137.

⁴ Dan Diner: „Geschichte der Juden. Paradigma einer europäischen Historie“, in Gerald Strouzh et al., eds., *Annäherungen an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna 2003), pp. 85–103, p. 85.

Starting in 1880, pogroms repeatedly broke out in Eastern Europe. Jews in the Russian Empire and in Romania were subject to legal discrimination. A stubborn popular Judeophobia and antisemitic press campaigns fed rumours of Jewish ritual murders, which continued to circulate in Central and Eastern Europe at the start of the 20th century – in some places even after the Second World War. Occasionally, alleged cases of ritual murder went to court, for example, in Tiszaeszlár, Hungary (1882–1883), Polná, Moravia, (1899–1900), and in Kiev (1911–1913). On such occasions, one could see whether obscurant or enlightened views dominated among the general public.⁵

The intensity of the Judeophobia in Europe is all but impossible to measure, for the scale of the violence against Jews is not in and of itself a reliable indicator. Both before and after 1914, outbreaks of violence seemed to be contingent primarily upon the presence and authority of the state order. In the Russian Empire and Romania, where state institutions were weak, pogroms occurred more often than in countries with a strong sense of state order, such as in the Habsburg Empire or the German Empire, where violence was limited to disturbances, as was frequently the case in Prague.⁶

The attention given such excesses should not eclipse the fact that in the first half of the 19th century Jews were granted equal rights almost everywhere in Central Europe, even in Congress Poland. The Russian Empire seemed to follow this development with some reluctance. Concepts of “enlightenment”, “improvement”, and “productivisation” of the Jews were pursued by Berlin and Vienna as well as – *more moscovitico* – by St. Petersburg.⁷

In 1827, the military recruitment of Jews was introduced in Russia. Jewish colonies were established in rural areas. Jewish proponents of the Enlightenment took part in reforming the religious schools (*heder*). State-monitored rabbinical seminaries were established. This was accompanied by the displacement of the Jews from village communities and a revocation of their right to sell alcoholic beverages. Ultimately, in the course of the first half of the 19th century, the Jews were evacuated from the borderlands of the Russian Empire so as to stop smuggling, which was considered a Jewish trade. All of these measures were implemented in Congress Poland more radically and more swiftly than in the other parts of Russia.

If one takes official equal rights as the criterion of Jewish advancement, then this was largely concluded in Western Europe during or shortly after the Napoleonic era. In Central Europe, including Congress Poland, this was achieved in the 1860s. Only the

⁵ Andrew Handler, *Blood Label at Tiszaeszlár* (Boulder 1980); Albert Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Antisemitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank)* (Cambridge, MA, 1991); Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of Community. Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley 2000), pp. 199–209; Johannes T. Gross, *Ritualmordbeschuldigungen im Kaiserreich (1871–1914)* (Berlin 2002).

⁶ Christoph Stölzl, *Kafkas böses Böhmen. Zur Sozialgeschichte eines Prager Juden* (Munich 1975); Kieval, *Languages of Community*, pp. 166–167, 184–197, and 210; Stefan Rohrbacher, *Gewalt und Biedermeier: Antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Vormärz und Revolution (1815–1848/49)* (Frankfurt/Main 1993); Michael I. Aronson, *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia* (Pittsburgh 1990); John Klier, Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms. Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge 1992).

⁷ These catchwords influenced policy guidelines from the Jewish Enlightenment to the advent of modern Zionism. “Enlightenment” consisted of liberation from Jewish tradition. “Improvement” stood for overcoming bad habits associated with commerce and usury and obtaining professional qualification. “Productivisation” entailed moving Jews from the allegedly unproductive fields of wholesale and retail trade into agriculture and handcrafts.

Russian Revolution of 1917 produced a general equality of all citizens, including the Jews, throughout the former realm of the Tsar. Whereas a man of Jewish origin, such as Benjamin Disraeli, could become prime minister of England in the 1860s, it was not until after the First World War that Jews occupied high office in Central and Eastern Europe. Such different personalities as Walther Rathenau and Leon Trotsky are perhaps the most famous examples. However, the east-west divide in business and commerce as well as academia and science was bound to have been less clear.

In Russia, the establishment of the Pale of Settlement from Courland (today a part of Latvia) to Ukraine at the outset of the 19th century ran counter to European trends as well as the principle of “convergence”. This restriction on the freedom of movement aimed to keep the Jews out of the Russian interior. After the Crimean War (1853–1856), the barriers between the interior and the western parts of the empire became more permeable for craftsmen, skilled workers, and educated persons.⁸

This was accompanied by Jewish youth’s euphoric turn towards Russian culture, which was experienced as “illumination” and liberation. *Vis-à-vis* modern Russian culture, also in its oppositional and revolutionary manifestations, Jewish rituals and Jewish rabbinical teachings appeared provincial and hopelessly old-fashioned. No other non-Russian ethnic group so eagerly embraced Russian culture as Jewish pupils and students, who hungered for education. Quite ironically, this took place in Polish cities and in regions where the majority of the population in the countryside was what we today call Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Lithuanian.⁹

However, with the onset of Russification in the western provinces in the 1880s, no other group was rebuffed like the Jews – educated and uneducated alike. This was seen in the pogroms in the first half of 1880s and the “provisional rules” in 1882. These actions and subsequent decrees, such as the introduction of numerus clausus for Jews at institutions of higher learning in 1887, conveyed a dramatic shift in official policy. Where there had previously been a successive dismantling of class barriers for the Jews, discriminatory measures were now being introduced, which struck the very segment of the Jewish population that was especially mobile, ambitious, and willing to integrate.¹⁰ The new regulations may well have corresponded to antisemitic currents and demands as they existed in other European countries, but nowhere was discrimination enforced by law and so little undertaken against pogroms and other excesses as in the tsarist empire.

This stood in sharp contrast to developments in the Habsburg monarchy. Especially in Hungary, Jews – often ennobled ones – working as bankers, entrepreneurs, estate

⁸ Matthias Rest, *Die russische Judengesetzgebung von der ersten Teilung bis zum “Polozhenie dlia evreev” (1804)* (Wiesbaden 1975); Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicolas and the Jews. The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia 1983); John Doyle Klier, *Russia Gathers her Jews. The Origins of the Jewish Question in Russia 1772–1825* (DeKalb 1986); Verena Dohrn, *Jüdische Eliten im Russischen Reich. Aufklärung und Integration im 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Weimar 2008).

⁹ Leonid Grossman, ed., *Die Beichte eines Juden an Dostojewski* (Munich 1927); Benjamin Nathan, *Beyond the Pale. The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley et al. 2002).

¹⁰ Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *Antisemitismus als reaktionäre Utopie* (Hamburg 1978); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews 1862–1917* (London, New York 1981); John Doyle Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question 1855–1881* (Cambridge 1995).

managers, or tenant farmers made up a constitutive part of the elite alongside the aristocracy, the military, and the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. Unlike in Cisleithania (the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary), this coalition of elites managed to hold its own until 1918 and to defend itself against democratisation.¹¹ A partly plebeian, partly bourgeois antisemitism – as existed among the Czechs, German Austrians, and Poles – simply found no comparable level of broad support in Hungary before 1918. This was to change dramatically after 1918.

Poland, the western part of the Russian Empire, and Romania were different from Western Europe inasmuch as these lands, even after 1900, were home to a mass of impoverished Jews, a part of whom was also still living pretty much according to tradition.¹² It was only the differing pace of development in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe that eventually created the distinction between a “western Jewry” and an “eastern Jewry”. Jews and non-Jews from the west often associate this term with a sometimes romanticised, sometimes detested world of poverty, tradition, and “fanaticism”, but also a pious and unspoiled essence, whose loss could be bemoaned in the west.¹³

Well into the middle of the 19th century, the slow social transformation of the relatively densely settled Jews of Eastern Europe led to continuous confrontations between milieus that clung to Hasidic and orthodox traditions and the proponents of the Enlightenment, who sought to attain their goals with the help of state authorities. The confrontations over assimilation, territorialism, cultural autonomy, Zionism, or confessionalisation (Jews as Russians or Poles of the “Mosaic faith”), which ensued after the middle of the 19th century, show that no agreement could be found on what it exactly meant to be Jewish. Should Jewishness be conserved, transformed, or overcome through assimilation? Among rather conservative Jews, tradition had become “traditionalistic”, while religion was increasingly understood as folklore or as a culture to be preserved in fragments.

It was initially the economically successful Jews – some of whom had come from the west – who were most enthusiastic about the Enlightenment and sought to reform Jewish values and rituals. By the second generation, they fully embraced the secular educational opportunities of the respective national high cultures. Often, they converted.¹⁴ These were the groups – in Warsaw, Budapest, Lemberg, and St. Petersburg – that financed the construction of imposing synagogues in which organs were built, cantors appointed, and sermons delivered. At first, services in such synagogues were

¹¹ Wolfdieter Bihl, “Das Judentum Ungarns. 1780–1914”, in *Studia Judaica Austriaca III: Studien zum ungarischen Judentum* (Eisenstadt 1976), pp. 17–39; William O. McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary* (Boulder 1986); Rolf Fischer, *Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn 1867–1939* (Munich 1989).

¹² Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., *The Golden Tradition* (New York 1967); Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with the People. The Jewish Little Town of Eastern Europe* (New York 1953).

¹³ Sander L. Gilman, *Jüdischer Selbsthaß. Antisemitismus und die verborgene Sprache der Juden* (Frankfurt am Main 1993), pp. 190–210; Trude Maurer, “Die Wahrnehmung der Ostjuden in Deutschland 1910–1933”, in *LBI Information. Nachrichten aus den Leo-Baeck-Instituten in Jerusalem, London, New York und den Arbeitsgemeinschaften des LBI in Deutschland*, 7 (1997), pp. 308–326. See in addition the contribution by Stephen Aschheim in this volume, pp. 61–74.

¹⁴ Verena Dohrn, “Jüdische Aufklärung und staatliche Akkulturationspolitik im Zarenreich. Zur Historiographie des Transformationsprozesses von der Haskala zum prosvescenié. Ein Forschungsbericht”, *Judaica. Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums*, 60 (2004), pp. 53–70.

often held in German, the language of the Jewish Enlightenment, later mostly in the respective national languages or in Hebrew.¹⁵ Perhaps the most enduring struggle raged in Hungary between the Neologe (reform) movement and orthodox Jews. There, no later than the 1850s, a minority of Jews had risen to form a new liberal cartel of elites, whereas a large part of the community remained orthodox.¹⁶ In Warsaw, the central synagogue was called the “German shul”, a term that captured the elitist and “alien” stamp on the community that worshipped there.

In the Russian Empire, Jewish youth studied at domestic universities or went abroad, mainly to the German Empire, where they soon encountered forms of modern anti-semitism.¹⁷ Since the 1860s, radical opposition movements had begun to emerge from among university students as a whole – not just Jewish ones. Like many young Russians and Ukrainians, several generations of young Jews experienced the break with their culture of origin as something elemental; sometimes, it was also the result of a conscious act. They distanced themselves from traditional forms of religious practice and despised the existing regime, which they held responsible for all of society’s shortcomings.

While state offices remained closed to Jews, educated milieus, including the radical counter-culture, appeared to be comparatively open. They found themselves still in a precarious phase of formation, in which Jews and non-Jews were involved in the same way. At this point, they were competing with the old elites and thus found themselves in latent or open opposition to the regime. Therefore, from the viewpoint of leading Petersburg circles, opposition, terror and Jews were almost identical.

Social-statistical data show that the percentage of Jews in the revolutionary movements and the leading bodies of revolutionary parties was indeed high, that did not make them Jewish organisations. The norms of the radical intelligentsia and revolutionary counter-culture – asceticism, moral rigor, belief in dogma, and militancy to the point of readiness for violence – were characteristic of Jews as well as non-Jews.¹⁸ The young Jewish revolutionaries, however, were not representative of Russia’s Jewish middle-class. Only the General Jewish Labour Union, better known as the Bund, had been able to gain a mass following of plebeian supporters since the 1890s. With that, parts of the Jewish lower classes were also mobilised and thus entered the world of modern politics.¹⁹

As bankers, businessmen, wholesalers, and retailers, Jews were at the same time leading representatives of capitalism, especially in the western parts of the Russian Empire. From time immemorial, the Jews had served as intermediaries between the aristocracy and the world of the peasants and built up extensive trade networks. As in the doomed Polish “nobles’ commonwealth”, the Jews had formed an ethno-religious commercial “class” or strata of intermediaries in the western parts of the Russian Empire – as well as in Congress Poland, Galicia, Romania, and in part Hungary.

¹⁵ Alexander Guterman, “The Origins of the Great Synagogue”, in Tlomackie Street, W. Bartoszewski, A. Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw* (Oxford 1991), pp. 181–211.

¹⁶ Walter Pietsch, *Zwischen Reform und Orthodoxie. Der Eintritt des ungarischen Judentums in die moderne Welt* (Berlin 1999).

¹⁷ Peter Hartmut Rüdiger, ed., *Schnorrer, Verschwörer. Bombenwerfer? Studenten aus dem russischen Reich an deutschen Hochschulen vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt/Main 2001).

¹⁸ Anna Geifman, *Thou shalt kill. Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894–1917* (Princeton 1993); Erich Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth Century Russia* (Cambridge 1995).

¹⁹ Henry J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from its Origins to 1905* (Stanford 1972).

Jews and Antisemitism in the New States of East Central Europe

In the First and Second World Wars, the areas of dense Jewish settlement in Poland and the former Pale of Settlement as well as Bukovina became a giant battlefield for German (including Austro-Hungarian) and Russian or Soviet offensives and retreats, which inflicted enormous destruction on the region's inhabitants, towns, and villages. The Russian Revolution and in the Polish-Russian War of 1920, effectively a continuation of the First World War, with their numerous pogroms against the Jewish inhabitants resulted in a below-average growth in the Jewish population in the eastern half of the new Polish Republic and in the western parts of the Soviet Union.²⁰

German occupation policy in the First World War was harsh and exploitive. Some among the occupation authorities held racist, antisemitic prejudices.²¹ From this point of view, the First World War seems like a dress rehearsal for the Second World War, but in comparison with Russian policy in the western border lands of the tsarist empire after 1914, German occupation seemed amicable to the Jews. Official policy defined Judaism as a confession and thus supported the development of community life and the role of the rabbi. In turn, Russian nationalists and Polish National Democrats, who mistrusted the Jews as representatives of "Germanism", made reference to this policy in anti-Jewish propaganda. They saw only unreliability and treason in the Jews' position between armies, nationalities, and political parties.²²

The sometimes violent expressions of Judeophobia in Eastern Europe after the war arose from many sources. Nowhere was it so clearly influenced by ideological and racist concepts as in Germany. The Judeophobia of Catholic circles, including the clergy, resented the Jews as the alleged representatives of moral decay and materialism, by which they understood as a rule Liberalism, Socialism, or even Communism. For them, Jews stood to a certain extent for all of the evils of modernity.²³ In many points, their prejudices overlapped with those of nationalist circles, which cultivated the stereotypes of *żydokomuna*, or "Judeo-Communism", and "folksfront", an alleged popular front of Socialist and Communist parties. As in Germany, the Jews were considered agents of Bolshevism.²⁴ The prominence of Communist and Bolshevik

²⁰ Jurij Larin, *Evrei i antisemitizm v SSSR* (Leningrad 1929), pp. 55–56; Werner Beneke, *Die Ostgebiete der zweiten polnischen Republik* (Cologne 1999), pp. 27–40.

²¹ Steven E. Aschheim, "Eastern Jews, German Jews and Germany's Ostpolitik in the First World War", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 28 (1983), pp. 351–365; Trude Maurer, "Medizinapolizei und Antisemitismus. Die deutsche Politik der Grenzsperrung gegen Ostjuden im Ersten Weltkrieg", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Europas*, 33 (1985), pp. 205–230.

²² Konrad Zielinski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej* (Lublin 2005).

²³ Ronald Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism. Poland 1933–1939* (Chur and Berlin 1993); Ute Caumans, *Die polnischen Jesuiten, der Przeglad Powszechny und der polnische Katholizismus in der zweiten Republik. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der katholischen Presse Polens zwischen den Weltkriegen (1918–1939)* (Dortmund 1996); Viktoria Pollmann, *Untermieter im christlichen Haus. Die Kirche und die jüdische Frage in Poland anhand der Bistumspressen der Metropolis Krakau 1926–1939* (Wiesbaden 2001).

²⁴ George L. Mosse, Bela Vargo, eds., *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe* (Jerusalem 1974); Ezra Mendelsohn, *Jews in East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington 1983); Mariana Hausleitner, Monika Katz, eds., *Juden und Antisemitismus im östlichen Europa* (Wiesbaden 1995); Jörg Hoensch u.a., eds., *Judenemanzipation – Antisemitismus – Verfolgung in Deutschland, Österreich-Ungarn, den böhmischen Ländern und in der Slowakei* (Essen 1999).

activists of Jewish origin seemed to lend this catchword a certain amount of credibility in various areas of unrest, from Petrograd to Poland, from Budapest to Munich.

In Hungary, as in Germany, defeat in the First World War and revolution opened the door to a violent hatred of Jews. In the course of the “White Terror” of the counter-revolution in 1919 in Hungary, excesses occurred against Jews in general as the alleged sympathizers of Bela Kun, the leader of the short lived Hungarian Soviet Republic. Persons of Jewish, largely bourgeois origin had in fact dominated the Communist leadership.²⁵ But, as in Russia, they were hardly representative of all the Jews, since the large majority belonged to the middle class and were for that very reason seldom inclined to revolution. Moreover, among Hungary’s bourgeois Jews and Jewish bankers, there were more than a few who helped co-finance Miklós Horthy’s counter-revolution against Kun.²⁶

If, before 1918, the Jews had been welcome in the Kingdom of Hungary as the people who, due to their often demonstrative assimilation, secured the Magyar majority against the Romanians, Germans, and Slovaks, after 1919, they were seen as scapegoats and irksome competitors. In 1920, numerus clausus was formally introduced at institutes of higher learning. The result was a considerable *brain drain*.

In Poland, the National Democrats had considered the Jews a disturbing factor in the process of nation-building even before 1914, because Jews dominated in the promising mid-field of retail and wholesale trade. After the First World War, Poland was considered “overpopulated”. This “problem” was to be resolved by the emigration of the Jews and the promotion of the Poles into their positions. “Overpopulation” was also a theme of German “research on the east” (*Ostforschung*), which went along with the antisemitic turn contained within this demographic analysis.²⁷

Like the majority of the urban and rural population, the Jewish minorities in the new or expanded states of East Central Europe suffered from the lack of jobs, limits on emigration (which the United States had imposed at the start of the 1920s), the disruption of trade relations, the new shape of national markets, domestic political crises, and ultimately the global economic crisis. In addition, there was also the nationalisation or state control of numerous economic sectors, which usually entailed the displacement of Jews. For ambitious Jews, there were various kinds of informal discrimination such as “Jewish benches” at universities and similar forms of harassment.²⁸

However, even if the Jews of Poland, Hungary, and Romania were under a great deal of pressure by the end of the 1930s, many of the remaining pluralistic societies of East Central Europe provided them with a variety of cultural, even political opportunities that had an effect on everyday life. The density of Jewish settlement in certain

²⁵ Patai calls them “ex-Jews”. Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary* (Detroit 1980), p. 464.

²⁶ McCagg, *Jewish Nobles*, pp. 16 and 41.

²⁷ Patai, *The Jews*, pp. 358–364; Götz Aly, “*Endlösung*”. *Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main 1995); Jan M. Piskorski, “Deutsche Ostforschung und polnische Westforschung”, *Berliner Jahrbuch für Osteuropäische Geschichte*, 1/1996, pp. 379–389.

²⁸ L. Motzkin, *La campagne antisémite en Pologne* (Paris 1932); Jacob Letschinsky, *Der wirtschaftliche Zusammenbruch der Juden in Deutschland und Polen* (Geneva and Paris 1936); William W. Hagen, “Before the ‘Final Solution’: Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 68 (1996), pp. 351–381.

quarters of large cities or in small market towns also often led to antisemitic, but largely unsystematic state measures, which only indirectly affected Jews.²⁹

Communist “Jerusalem”? Jews as Victims and Perpetrators

The cultural and political life of the Jews in post-revolutionary Russia cannot easily be reduced to a common denominator. From the First World War to the Polish-Russian War of 1920, many of the Jews in the western territories suffered a series of reprisals and pogroms. Another part of the Jews in these territories and in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic experienced an unprecedented social advancement in the years that followed. In party work, administration, education, and culture, persons of Jewish origin were “overproportionately” represented in Russia and the western Soviet republics. Better educated Jews profited from the expansion of government agencies and sometimes assumed posts abandoned by members of the former propertied and educated strata. To some extent, urban Jews acted as a sort of ersatz-intelligentsia in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁰ For many Jews, Moscow became the “new Jerusalem”. The Soviet Union also enjoyed great popularity among eastern Jewish emigrants in the United States.³¹

For contemporaries, the strong presence of Jews (alongside Poles and Latvians) first in the Cheka (*Chrezvychainaia Komissiiia*) and then in the GPU (*Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*), the party’s coercive apparatus, was conspicuous and scandalous. Especially in Ukraine, in some respects a centre of counter-revolution within the revolution, Jews must have dominated in the Cheka and GPU. They represented the city and the “proletarian” Russian centre, which, with slogans of class struggle and a great deal of violence, had extracted from Ukraine’s rural population all that could be extracted during the Civil War.³²

²⁹ Aleksander Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej* (Paris 1961); Israel Gutman et al., eds., *The Jews Between the Two World Wars* (Hannover and London 1989); Klaus Peter Friedrich, “Juden und jüdisch-polnische Beziehungen in der Zweiten Polnischen Republik (1918–1939)”, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 4 (1997), pp. 535–560; Gertrud Pickhan, “Übersetzung, Interkulturalität, Kontakte. Themen der osteuropäisch-jüdischen Geschichte”, *OSTEUROPA* 3/2008, pp. 117–124.

³⁰ Arthur Ruppin, *Die soziale Struktur der Juden*, 1–2 (Berlin 1930–1932); Dietrich Beyrau, “Aus der Subalternität in die Sphären der Macht. Die Juden im Zarenreich und in Sowjet-russland (1860–1930)”, in Jörg Baberowski, ed., *Krieg, Revolution und Gewalt im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 2006), pp. 60–93, 82–83; Oleg V. Budnickij, *Rossiiskie evrei mezhdru krasnymi i belymi (1917–1920)* (Moscow 2006), pp. 140–150.

³¹ Gabriele Freitag, *Nächstes Jahr in Moskau! Die Zuwanderung von Juden in die sowjetische Metropole 1917–1932* (Göttingen 2004); Tony Michels, *A Fire in their Hearts. Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA, and London 2005).

³² Iu. Shapoval et al., eds., *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraine. Osoby, fakty, dokumenty* (Kiev 1997).

The Myth of the Political Commissar

The political commissar in the command staffs of the Red Army was to become an emblematic figure of “Judeo-Bolshevism”. Introduced by the Bolsheviks as a controlling authority within the military, the commissars and their subordinates among the troops, the “political leaders” (*politruki*), had the task of overseeing non-Bolshevik or even anti-Bolshevik officers, disciplining unwilling soldiers, and “enlightening” the disgruntled population close to the front, i.e., agitating and motivating the peasants, or simply forcing them, to make deliveries and to provide aid. Ultimately, they were to set in motion the “class struggle” in the countryside.

Among contemporaries, the figures of the political commissar and the political leader evoked completely different associations and almost mythical notions. There was the elitist self-portrait of the political commissar as the “soul” of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, the educator of the “unconscious” proletarian masses. The flip side was reflected in the popular stigmatising equation of Jews and Communists: “Beat the Jews, chase away the commissars, save the revolution!”³³ A new order of above and below took the place of the old hierarchy of master and servant: “The Jews were already annoying beforehand. Now, they want to sit on our backs.”³⁴

The counter-revolutionary myth of the identity between Jews and Bolsheviks seemed to find confirmation in the many Jewish actors, starting with Trotsky and hardly ending with Bela Kun or Rozaliia Zemliachka. After the Bolshevik conquest of the Crimea, Kun and Zemliachka had to answer for a massacre of “white” officers and refugees that turned the Crimea into an “all-Russian mass grave”.³⁵

The mythical demonisation of the (Jewish) political commissars ultimately fed into the “Commissar Order”, which was issued by the High Command of the German Armed Forces on 6 June 1941. This order stipulated that in the coming war with the Soviet Union political commissars were not to be treated as prisoners of war, but to be shot.³⁶

Soviet Options: Phase-Out or Transformation

The share of persons of Jewish origin among the commissars or political leaders cannot be determined with any certainty. The scant statistical data on national origin available generally suggest a picture similar to that of other occupational groups located within or affiliated with the party, the coercive apparatus, and the councils: The share of Jews was above average for the general population, perhaps above average for the urban population as well. This may be true especially for Ukraine and Belarus.

³³ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship* (Ithaca and London 1990), p. 82; Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, pp. 175–201.

³⁴ S.A. Pavliuchenkov, *Voennyi kommunizm v Rossii. Vlast’ i massy* (Moscow 1997), p. 256.

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 220–225; Vladimir Buldakov, *Krasnaia smuta. Priroda i posledstviia revoliutsionnogo nasiliia* (Moscow 1997), p. 242.

³⁶ The office of the political commissar as reintroduced in 1937 had little to do with the generation that had imposed a political straitjacket on the Red Army during the Civil War, see Felix Römer, *Der Kommissarbefehl. “Sind sofort mit der Waffe zu erledigen”. Die Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen an der Ostfront 1941/42* (Paderborn 2008).

Jews were more strongly represented in the leadership than among the rank and file, with whom the population and the members of the Red Army had to deal with as a rule. In the spirit of revolutionary internationalism, the questionnaires filled out during the Civil War and the 1920s inquired about class origin rather than nationality. As Trotsky put it, due to the antisemitism of the revolution's enemies and the plebeian hatred of Jews within the party, Jewish origin was not a taboo, but was instead – aside from the occasional anti-antisemitism campaigns – a non-topic.³⁷ Given the hostile environment, the party, with its soon to be standardised norms and code of conduct, became “fortress” and “home” for the social climbers of all nationalities, including Jews. Other ties lost their significance, for example, ethnic origin.

In their missionary zeal, their belief in the “enlightenment” and education of the peasants and soldiers, their devotedness to doctrine, and their political absolutism, one can glimpse a kind of mental transfer of notions of the sacred. However, this was true for non-Jewish groups as well. Socialism as a vision and revolution as a struggle had taken on an absorbent function similar to that of nationalism among the middle classes of West and Central Europe.

The strongest movement of the eastern Jewish youth ... is called Socialism, revolution. It negates the nationhood of the Jews, leads away from it, consciously and defiantly so; it leads astray from each special existence to the common form of Russian man.³⁸

Seen within this context, the Soviet Union created an eastern variation of assimilation, that of the ex-Jew or the non-Jewish Jew. Revolution – instead of baptism, as in the 19th century – was the ticket to European culture.³⁹

Leninist and Stalinist nationality theory had originally defined the Jews as a “caste”, which would disappear during the transition to Socialism. But after 1920, Bolshevik policy picked up on the tradition of the Bund, which had seen the Jewish proletariat as the core of a secular Jewish nationality and had sought to make their little respected “jargon”, Yiddish, the national language of the Jews. Jewish culture in the Soviet Union had to orient itself strictly along the lines of secularism and cut all of its ties to religion and the Hebrew language, which was central to Judaism as a faith as well as the Zionist movement.⁴⁰

In the Soviet Union, those Jews who succeeded in achieving prominence were those who found their “home” in the party or in Russian culture, those who did not know what to do with their Jewishness and were reminded of their Jewish origin only by others, if at all. Trotsky is the most prominent example.

³⁷ V.P. Danilov, “Trotskii zashchishchaetsia”, *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, 5 (1990), pp. 32–43; Matthias Vetter, *Antisemiten und Bolschewiki. Zum Verhältnis von Sowjetsystem und Judenfeindschaft 1917–1939* (Berlin 1995), pp. 171–212.

³⁸ Arnold Zweig, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz. Zu fünfzig Steinzeichnungen von Hermann Struck* (Berlin 1920), pp. 74–75.

³⁹ Isaac Deutscher, *Die ungelöste Judenfrage. Zur Dialektik von Antisemitismus und Zionismus* (Berlin 1977), p. 31.

⁴⁰ Gennady Estrakh, *Soviet Yiddish. Language Planning and Linguistic Development* (Oxford 1999); Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher. Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Bloomington 2006).

The fact that Jews in major cities and industrial areas were interested in sending their children to Russian schools confirms the irresistible pressure towards acculturation and participation in the Russian “lead culture”, even in those places where Bolsheviks of Jewish origin attempted to make Yiddish the national language of the Jews and to establish a Yiddish-influenced national culture. The trend towards acculturation proved to be irresistible, perhaps unavoidable, even in those places, such as Poland, where there existed a special consciousness among the Jews that was more distinctly influenced by ethnicity and confession than in the Soviet Union.⁴¹

As an urban population group that been previously discriminated against, a sizeable part of the Jewish population proved comparatively receptive to the offers Soviet policies extended them: By distancing themselves from Jewish tradition, by reducing national content to folklore (or submitting to a change of national identity), by being receptive to Soviet internationalism, and not least of all, by using opportunities for social advancement and education available to them, they anticipated the behaviour patterns that would be practiced by other urban population groups and scattered nationalities after the Second World War.

In the Soviet Union of the 1920s, there was also an aspect of Jewish existence that was hardly any different from the one in Poland, Romania, or Lithuania. Because Jews were traditionally active in commercial sectors, “anti-capitalist” policy during the Civil War and anti-commercial ideas and practices within the party during the phase of the New Economic Policy (NEP) had an impact on a considerable part of Jewish merchants, businessmen, and craftsmen. Many were able to save themselves in cooperatives; but independent craftsmen, merchants, and businessmen were considered “capitalists” and a part of the “bourgeoisie”, no matter how unimportant their “capital” might have been. They were accordingly subjected to discrimination and harassed.⁴²

In the western Soviet republics, the Jews thus represented the largest part of the formally disadvantaged groups, the *lishentsy* (the disfranchised), as well as the unemployed. On the other hand, in the big cities, the “NEP-men” (*nepmany*) with their nouveau-riche and fortune-hunting airs were irritatingly visible. They were the object of envy, hate, and public stigmatisation. That a large part of the NEP-men were Jews in turn served to confirm traditional prejudices. The rather alien term *nepman* even had a Jewish connotation to it. The rhetoric of the class struggle and the propaganda of the anti-religious campaigns were capable of conveying anti-Jewish prejudices – even if unintentionally.⁴³ That such inclinations were not limited only to the “backward” bourgeois and petit-bourgeois milieus, as Bolshevik theory would like to have one believe, is seen in the massive anti-Jewish, quite conventional reservations against Trotsky as a potential party leader after Lenin’s death.⁴⁴

On the eve of the Holocaust, there was a growing share of persons of Jewish origin in Eastern Europe, especially in the Russian Federation, without any communal, religious, or even folkloric connection to Judaism. Whether one should describe them as

⁴¹ Miriam Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939* (New York 1950).

⁴² Alan M. Ball, *Russia’s Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921–1929* (Berkeley 1987), pp. 28–41, 68–80.

⁴³ Ball, *Russia’s Last Capitalists*, pp. 99–108; Robert Weinberg, “Demonizing Judaism in the Soviet Union During the 1920s”, *Slavic Review*, 67, 1 (2006), pp. 120–153.

⁴⁴ L. Koseleva, N. Teptsov, eds., *Smert’ Lenina i narodnaia molva v spetsdoneseniikh OGUP, Neizvestnaia Rossiia. XX vek*, 4 (Moscow 1993), pp. 9–24.

Jews is a question of perspective. In his famous work from 1945, Sartre was inclined to define being a Jew as a label and a prejudice of the antisemites: “Far from experience producing his idea of the Jew, it was the latter which explained his experience. If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him.”⁴⁵ Sartre’s view was largely determined by the fact that Jews in France, and in Germany until 1933, were so acculturated, even assimilated that – as Stanisław Lec wrote – it required the “divining nose” of the antisemite to detect one.⁴⁶

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a sometimes strange, morally and politically charged debate arose concerning the Jews’ share of guilt in Communist crimes. Such a debate adheres to a worldview defined exclusively by ethnicity and normally fails to grasp the complexity of processes, if it is not outright antisemitic.⁴⁷

The Holocaust and the Non-Jewish Population in Eastern Europe

A description of the course of the Holocaust and the conduct of the Jews, the actions of the perpetrators, and the reactions of the bystanders in Eastern Europe cannot be provided here.⁴⁸ Therefore, the following remarks will be limited to the factors that influenced the behaviour of the region’s various population groups in response to the mass murder of the Jews.

Although the situation in the space between the Baltic and the Black Seas varied sharply after 1938–1939, some general principles and characteristics can be recognised that are valid for each individual area, even if with varying degrees of emphasis. Although Judeophobia existed in the countries of East Central Europe, the systematic disfranchisement and murder of the Jews was brought to the region by the Germans. However, the prewar situation, distribution and intensity of enmity towards the Jews, and the presence of Jews among local elites (as in Hungary) played a certain role in how National-Socialist policies were implemented. The status of a region or country within the German sphere of influence after 1938–1939 was also important: an ally (e.g. Romania and Hungary); an administrative unit under German control with rudimentary indigenous administrations (e.g. Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia or the Baltic general commissariats within Reich Commissariat Ostland); or an occupied area with native administration only at the community level (e.g. the General Gov-

⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, George J. Becker, trans. (New York 1965), p. 13.

⁴⁶ Stanisław Lec, “Auch die Antisemiten erkennt man an ihren Nasen. Den witternden”. *Neue Unfrisierte Gedanken* (Munich 1964), p. 64.

⁴⁷ Sonja Margolina, *Das Ende der Lügen. Russland und die Juden im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 1992); Johannes Rogalla von Biberstein, “Jüdischer Boschewismus”. *Mythos und Realität* (Dresden 2002); the contributions by David Shneer, Aleksander Etkind and Jurij Slezkine, *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2005), pp. 157–189.

⁴⁸ For a rough orientation, see Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich 1991); Dieter Pohl, “Nationalsozialistischer Judenmord als Problem von osteuropäischer Geschichte und Osteuropa-Geschichtsschreibung”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 40 (1992), pp. 95–119; On the history of the murder of the Jews: Raoul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, 1–3 (Berlin 1982); Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, Christopher Dieckmann, eds., *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager. Entwicklung und Struktur*, 1–2 (Göttingen 1998); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg 1999), Ch. 7.

ernment, i.e. those parts of western Poland not annexed into the Reich plus, as of August 1, 1941, Eastern Galicia, and Reich Commissariat Ukraine).⁴⁹

With the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, “spontaneous” anti-Jewish excesses took place in those areas occupied by the Soviets in 1939 and 1940, from Vilnius to L’viv. Under the impact of Soviet coercion, stereotypes of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets had become entrenched, which in turn prepared the way for violence. To what extent the German side encouraged these excesses, in particular with help from exile groups, remains disputed to this day.⁵⁰

Here, unlike in Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia, the disfranchisement, mass murder, and ghettoisation of the Jews were carried out in public. Only the industrialised murder took place in the secluded extermination camps set up in Poland. In Eastern Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, there was hardly a community that was not the site of a mass shooting and a mass grave. That is to say, in nearly every locality in these lands, the local non-Jewish population witnessed the mass shootings.

The role of the indigenous auxiliaries working with the *Einsatzgruppen* and various regular police formations in the killing operations seems to have been largely determined by the extent to which these local accomplices saw themselves as champions of the national cause. The idea and practice of ethnic cleansing and the use of “surgical operations” as demographic policy directed at certain population groups did not become part of the political repertoire only in the wake of Hitler and Stalin’s Treaty of Non-Aggression in August 1939. New – and certainly also intimidating – were the dimensions and the systematic brutality of these kinds of “measures” under National-Socialist occupation. Faced with hunger and constant danger, most collaborators, even those in the German armed forces, must have been thinking primarily of survival.

By contrast, for political activists from Latvia to the Ukraine, their involvement was aimed at creating an armed starting point for future national confrontations over territory and influence. In the event that Germany should go into decline or withdraw, or the Soviets should advance, this starting point was to serve as a guarantee for the establishment of state independence.⁵¹ The depiction of deployment under German occupation as part of the “national” struggle against regional rivals, the Red Army, or even the German Armed Forces has led to a situation in which participation in the disfranchisement and murder of Jews has been “forgotten”. This is especially true of the actions of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Ukrainian formations.⁵²

⁴⁹ Czesław Madajczyk, “Die Besatzungssysteme der Achsenmächte”, *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, 14 (1979), pp. 105–122.

⁵⁰ Bogdan Musiał, “Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschießen!” *Die Brutalisierung des deutsch-sowjetischen Krieges im Sommer 1941* (Berlin and Munich 2000); Jan T. Gross, *Nachbarn. Der Mord an den Juden von Jedwabne* (Munich 2001).

⁵¹ Christian Dieckmann et al., eds., “Formen der Kollaboration im östlichen Europa 1939–1945”, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, 19 (2000).

⁵² Beiträge von Martin Dean, Bernhard Chiari, sowie Abschnitt III in Bernhard Chiari, ed., *Die polnische Heimatarmee. Geschichte und Mythos der Armia Krajowa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich 2003); Alfred J. Rieber, “Civil Wars in the Soviet Union”, *Kritika*, 4, 1 (2003), pp. 129–162; Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA, and London 2004), pp. 287–299; Björn Felder, “‘Mit Lettland leben – Mit Lettland sterben.’ Der SS-Jagdverband Ost – Unternehmen ‘Wildkatze’ und die Vorbereitungen von antisowjetischen Partisanen in Lettland (1944–1945)”, *Zeitschrift für*

The native population was largely passive vis-à-vis the systematic annihilation of the Jews. This had many causes, which cannot be reduced primarily or even exclusively to anti-Jewish attitudes before the war or the effect of National-Socialist propaganda. An overwhelming part of the urban population in the General Government – and this was even more the case in the Soviet territories – saw itself exposed to exploitation, deportation, and starvation. Even if the population had wanted to help, the resources would not have sufficed. That systematic assistance for Jews emerged only in the *General Government* was no coincidence. It was possible to organise civilian and military underground structures there. This “underground state” in turn enabled Jews to receive a modest amount of assistance from outside the ghettos.⁵³ In some cases, the Catholic Church helped as well. After the final German surrender at Stalingrad in February 1943 at the latest, the rural population was exposed to exploitation and deportation as well. In some areas, such as Eastern Poland or Belarus, the occupiers and the partisans carried out constant reprisals.

The National-Socialist policy of exploiting the Polish and eastern Slavic populations as forced labourers was a source of constant danger; individual survival stood in the foreground. Demonstrations of solidarity in the daily struggle for survival or all manifestation of political and military self-assertion apparently took place according to ethnic or denominational criteria. “International” solidarity, as officially propagandised by the Soviet Union, does not seem to have had much effect here.

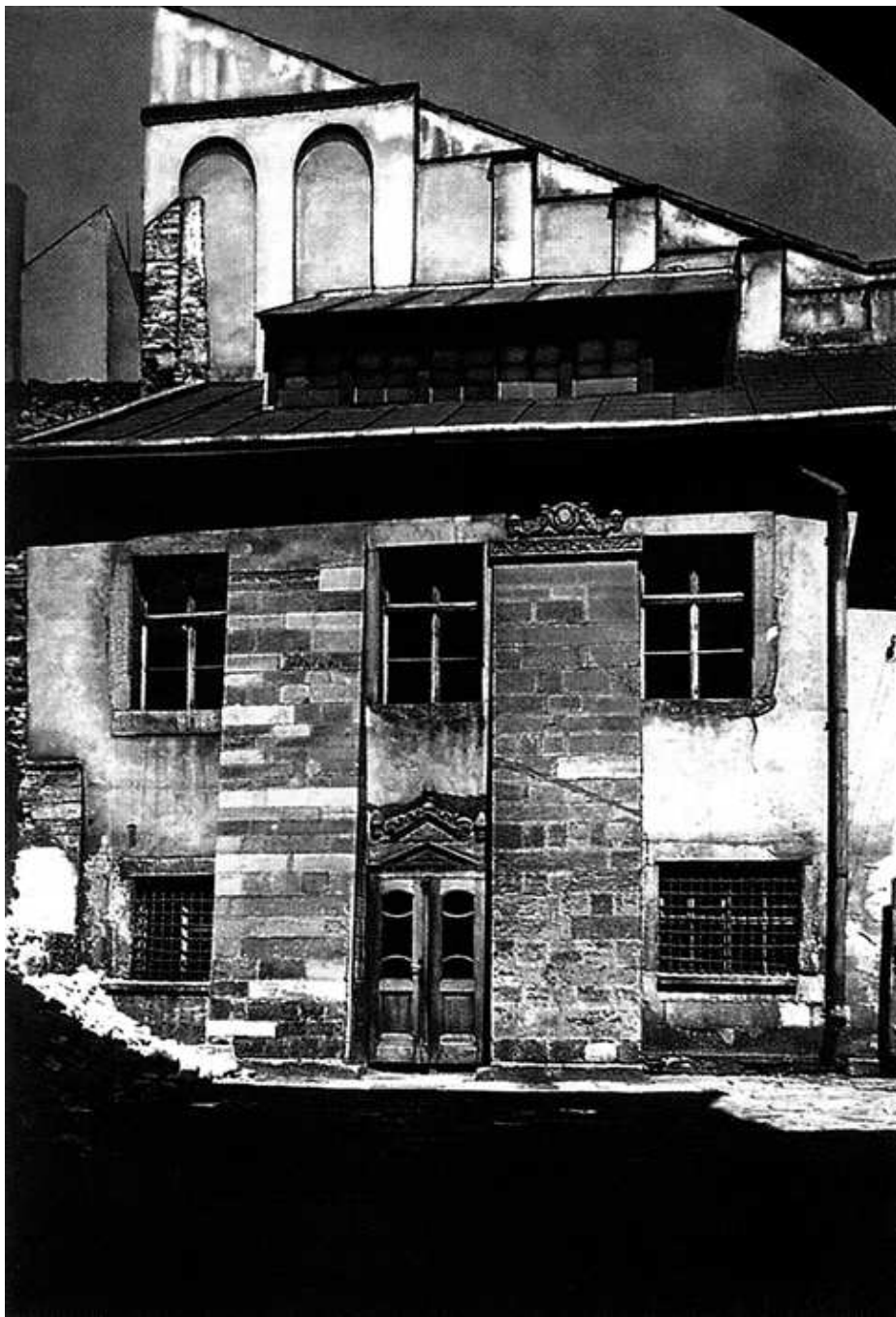
German reprisal measures, exploitation, despotism, chaos, and inefficiency not only provoked an unrestricted competition for scant resources in the towns and villages. They demoralised and criminalised wide segments of the population (as well as the occupiers). Black market activity, bribery, and corruption saved many a Jewish life, but they also put Jews in danger, because denunciation and betrayal were a part of the general demoralisation.⁵⁴

The annihilation of the Jews of Poland, the Baltic countries, and the Soviet territories had essentially come to an end by early 1944, by which point resistance and partisan movements had become a major local factor. Throughout the occupation, the Soviet government demanded that the inhabitants of the ghettos and camp inmates show the same unconditionally aggressive commitment as the population in general and the partisans and party members in particular. Since the Jews could hardly comply, open Jewish resistance in the camps and ghettos on occupied Soviet territory as in Warsaw became heroic last stands. For the great majority of Jews, there was nothing else but the vain hope that the Red Army would advance in time. By contrast, nationalist partisan groups were largely disinterested in the fate of the Jews. Sometimes they hunted down the Jews in hiding.

Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung, 1 (2005), pp. 98–127; Björn Felder, *Lettland im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Zwischen sowjetischen und nationalsozialistischen Besatzern* (Paderborn 2008) (forthcoming); Klaus Richter, “Der Holocaust in der litauischen Historiographie seit 1991”, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 3 (2007), pp. 389–416.

⁵³ David Engel, *The Shadow of Auschwitz. The Polish Government in Exile and the Jews 1937–1942* (Chapel Hill 1982); Klaus-Peter Friedrich, *Der nationalsozialistische Judenmord und das polnisch-jüdische Verhältnis im Diskurs der polnischen Untergrundpresse (1942–1944)* (Marburg 2006).

⁵⁴ Bernhard Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front. Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weißrußland 1941–1944* (Dusseldorf 1998); Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation. The Generalgouvernement 1939–1944* (Princeton 1979), pp. 145–182.



The Golden Rose Synagogue in Lemberg (Lwów, L'viv)

A significant factor for post war Judeophobia throughout Eastern Europe was a condition that Jan T. Gross has characterised as the “opportunistic complicity” of the defeated population with the occupier.⁵⁵ Despite all of the expropriations and raids carried out by the occupiers against the non-Jews, a considerable part of the population benefited from the disfranchisement and murder of the Jews. Goods of all kinds were acquired on the cheap; abandoned property, apartments, and houses were – despite prohibitions – appropriated and used. There was a brisk trade in “Jewish things”. A “lumpen bourgeoisie” emerged, as Isaac Deutscher called it in 1946: “The death certificates of the murdered Jews were their only valid trade licenses.”⁵⁶ The occasional cases of anti-Jewish unrest and excesses, or even the murder of Jews, in the Soviet Union and in the people’s democracies after 1944–1945 were in most cases probably conflicts between returnees and new “residents” over the restitution of Jewish property.

The End of Soviet Internationalism

The postwar societies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were so preoccupied with themselves, reconstruction, and the emerging Cold War political re-alignment that the special dimension of the Holocaust was probably understood only by the small circles of Jewish survivors and returnees. Otherwise, the tendency was to downplay and marginalize the Shoah within the context of the overall barbaric occupation. This was true not just for Eastern Europe.⁵⁷

In Soviet reporting, the special fate of Jews had been subjected to “white-washing” since 1943; from that point on, all talk was about the mass murder of “peaceful Soviet citizens”. This formulation continued to be used right up until the end of the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ The particular engagement of Soviet Jews in the Red Army, propaganda departments, or the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) was praised abroad and in Jewish circles, but in broader Soviet society, it was rather marginalised. By the anti-cosmopolitan campaign of 1948–1949 with its antisemitic subtext at the latest, Jews were excluded from Soviet ruling bodies. The banning of the meticulously prepared *Black Book* on the murder of Jews under National-Socialist occupation, the dissolution of the JAC, and the murder of many of its prominent activists ensured the marginalisation of the Holocaust. Until the end of the Soviet Union, it remained an official non-topic.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Jan T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York 2007), p. 249.

⁵⁶ Isaac Deutscher, *Der nichtjüdische Jude. Essays* (Berlin 1977), p. 33; Bernhard Chiari, “Die Kriegsgesellschaft in Weißrußland im Zweiten Weltkrieg (1939–1944)”, in Dietrich Beyrau, Rainer Lindner, eds., *Handbuch der Geschichte Weißrußlands* (Göttingen 2001), pp. 408–425, here p. 423.

⁵⁷ Tom Segev, *Die siebte Million. Der Holocaust und Israels Politik der Erinnerung* (Reimbek bei Hamburg 1995); Rolf Steininger, ed., *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust. Europa – USA – Israel* (Wien et al. 1994); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York 1999).

⁵⁸ Arkadii Zeltser, “The History of the Jews in the Soviet Union in Documents from the State Archive of the Russian Federation”, *Jews in Eastern Europe*, 21 (1993), pp. 88–93.

⁵⁹ Arno Lustiger, *Stalin und die Juden* (Berlin 1998); G.V. Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina. Vlast’ i antisemitizm* (Moscow 2001); Il’ia Al’tman, “Shoah Gedenken verboten. Der weite Weg vom Sowjettabu bis zur Erinnerung”, *OSTEUROPA* 4–6/ 2005, pp. 149–164.

Symptomatic of this is the treatment of Babi Yar in Kiev. There, on 29–30 September 1941 almost 34,000 Jews were murdered, allegeded in reprisal operation for a series of explosions in the Ukrainian capital. In the years that followed, until the evacuation of Kiev in October 1943, Babi Yar served as the execution site for tens of thousands of Roma (Gypsies), prisoners of war, patients from psychiatric clinics, and other civilians. It is estimated that 100,000–150,000 persons were killed at Babi Yar. After the war, Soviet officials initially planned to build a sport and recreation area at the site. Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals protested this. Individual writers made the mass murder operation a literary topic. Under pressure from intellectuals, officials finally brought themselves to build a melodramatic, heroizing memorial to the murdered “peaceful Soviet citizens”. Only after 1991 was a clear attribution of the victims added to make clear what this memorial site is really all about.⁶⁰

Postwar Soviet society obviously had numerous motives for marginalising the mass murder of the Jews. The motives are not explained solely by the open and latent anti-semitism among the population and within the party. During the war itself, absolute priority was given to the struggle against the “German-Fascist invaders”. A special role for the Jews in this “community in arms” was not foreseen. Ideally, the Jews – like all other Soviet citizens, especially party members – had to fight the enemy to the last drop of blood, whether on the front, in the countryside, or in the ghettos and camps. After the war, only combat action was recognised, not suffering or surviving as camp inmates or forced labourers. This was of course also true for millions of non-Jewish prisoners of war and forced labourers. In the Bolshevik ethos, martyrdom had only to function as propaganda for mobilising the population against the enemy. “Compassion” in a Christian or humanist sense was not important; sacrifice had no value in and of itself if it did not serve the struggle.

In East Germany, Poland, and Hungary, the situation was not as rigid as in the Soviet Union. Thus, surviving Jews were recognised as victims of Fascism in the German Democratic Republic. However, those who fought Fascism ranked higher – also when it came to material compensation.⁶¹

Another aspect should be noted in the Soviet case: Given the sheer number of victims among the Soviet civilian population during the war – approximately 10 million to 11 million persons, including the Jews – the number of Jews killed on Soviet territory – estimated to be between 1.1 million (without territory annexed in 1939–1940) to 2.5 million (with the annexed territories) – appears in the eyes of some to be somewhat relativised.

After Stalin’s death, the struggle against “cosmopolitanism” (and the Jews) was suspended. Jews, however, were still kept away from the corridors of power and positions of influence. The treatment of the Jewish and non-Jewish victims of German occupation continued to be depicted in the black-and-white narrative of the “re-

⁶⁰ Richard Sheldon, “The Transformation of Babi Yar”, in Terry L. Thompson, Richard Sheldon, eds., *Soviet Society and Culture. Essays in Honor of Vera Dunham* (Boulder and London 1988), pp. 124–161; Frank Grüner, “Die Tragödie von Babij Jar im sowjetischen Gedächtnis. Künstlerische Erinnerung versus offizielles Schweigen”, in Frank Grüner, Urs Heftrich, Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, eds. “*Zerstörer des Schweigens*”. *Formen künstlerischer Erinnerung an die nationalsozialistischen Rassen- und Vernichtungspolitik in Osteuropa* (Cologne and Weimar 2006), pp. 57–96.

⁶¹ Olaf Groschler, “Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust in der DDR”, in Rolf Steininger, ed., *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust*, pp. 233–245.

sistance of the entire people". In this version of history, there were only heroes and traitors. A more differentiated picture was portrayed only in literature. But when Vasilii Grossman, a former leading member of the JAC, once again sought to take up the Holocaust as a topic at the start of the 1960s, and even took the liberty of comparing the Stalinist system with that of the National Socialists, his manuscript – *Life and Fate* – was confiscated.⁶²

Grossman is an example of the transformation of a non-Jewish Jew into a writer, who, after the experiences of the "Great Patriotic War", the Holocaust, and the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, was haunted by his being Jewish. The extent to which the Holocaust and the Second World War, the founding of Israel, the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, and the Six-Day War in 1967 with all of its domestic implications ultimately buried the Soviet-internationalist assimilation project and created a new and special Jewish consciousness is a matter of dispute.⁶³ Reactions to the anti-cosmopolitan campaign and later to the anti-Zionist campaign point to a pluralisation of Jewish identity. In many cases, Jewish identity probably functioned in Sartre's sense of an antisemitic construct, just as the campaigns and experiences of everyday antisemitism also served to motivate Jews to stress the peculiarity of being Jewish – right up to a commitment to Zionism.⁶⁴

The End of Jewish Communism in the People's Democracies

The export of the Soviet system to the countries of East Central Europe influenced attitudes towards the Holocaust and the returning or surviving Jews in the sense that their marginalisation, which was made official in 1947–1948, was promoted by arguments similar to those used in the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, there were variations. Almost everywhere, those Communists returning from the Soviet Union or already in-country – analogous to recently established Soviet patriotism – linked their accession to power with the adaptation of programmes and goals from bourgeois-national, even nationalist resistance movements or prewar and wartime rightwing parties. This meant, in varying degrees of radicalism, the re-establishment of the prewar statehoods – but this time as ethnically homogenous nation-states. With the exception of Romania, this programme was directed primarily against the German minority and the German population of the former territories of the German Reich.⁶⁵ However, it also affected other minorities such as the Hungarians in Slovakia as well as the Poles, Belarusians, and Ukrainians on both sides of the Poland's new eastern border.

⁶² Dietrich Beyrau, "Totaler Krieg. Begriff und Erfahrung am sowjetischen Beispiel", in Beyrau, Hochgeschwender, Langewiesche, eds., *Formen des Krieges. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn 2007), pp. 327–353.

⁶³ Frank Grüner, *Patrioten und Kosmopoliten. Juden und Sowjetstaat 1941 bis 1963* (Cologne and Weimar 2008).

⁶⁴ Daniela Bland-Spitz, *Die Juden und die jüdische Opposition in der Sowjet-Union* (Diessenhofen 1980); Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent. Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights* (Middleton 1985), pp. 175–198.

⁶⁵ Detlef Brandes, Edita Ivanickova, Jiri Pesek, eds., *Erzwungene Trennung. Vertreibung und Aussiedlung in und aus der Tschechoslowakei 1938–1947 im Vergleich zu Polen, Ungarn, Jugoslawien* (Essen 1999); Ulf Brunnhauer, Michael G. Esch, Holm Sundhaussen, eds., *Definitionsmacht Utopie. Vergeltung. Ethnische Säuberungen im östlichen Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munster 2006).

The acquisition of nationalist programmes also meant that the Communist rulers – more implicitly than explicitly – welcomed the consequences of the Holocaust. Now, nothing stood in the way of the homogenous “people’s democratic” nation-state.⁶⁶ Moreover, ownerless German and Jewish assets made available a handsome amount for the Socialist project of reconstruction.

In the Soviet Union, the term Fascism was used to define the specific dimension of National Socialism as an extreme expression of imperialism and capitalism. Such a definition made it possible, when opportune, to differentiate between good and evil, fascist and non-fascist Germans. In Eastern Europe, more than in the Soviet Union, National Socialism was seen as an expression of a specifically German anomaly and the climax of a centuries-long conflict between the Germans and their eastern neighbours. There, “Fascism” served more as red flag in order to link domestic rivals with National Socialism and to discredit them, even to criminalize them.⁶⁷ Through this pattern of perception, the Holocaust was likewise marginalised – at best instrumentalised whenever it was considered necessary to mobilise the population against West German revanchism and revisionism.

Due to each ethnic group’s separate wartime experiences, there was, even after the war, little solidarity between the victims and the resistance fighters. Poles who had hidden Jews had to ask them not to talk about it after liberation. Such pleas point to the intensity of anti-Jewish sentiment within the Polish population. From Lithuania to Hungary, the nationalist, oft antisemitic general public, including the Catholic clergy, saw the strong presence of Jews in the party, the security apparatus, and the media as confirmation of ingrained stereotypes of “Judeo-Bolshevism” and Jews as Soviet agents. The Communist parties and their leaderships – unlike the Soviet Communist party in the 1920s and 1930s – failed to take action against the rampant Judeophobia. To the contrary, they even occasionally toyed with the existing stereotypes.

One cannot help but suspect that Stalin, while keeping Jews far from any positions of power in Moscow, systematically put them in leading positions in the satellite countries. The more disliked they were in Warsaw, Budapest, or Bucharest, the greater their dependency on Moscow. But this was true for Jewish and non-Jewish returnees from the Soviet Union.

What has already been said about Soviet-Jewish Communists in the 1920s and 1930s also holds for their comrades in arms in East Central Europe from the 1920s to the 1950s: The party was “home” and “family”; ethnic origin did not matter. Likewise, these Jewish activists were not representative of the Jewish population of their countries,⁶⁸ not even of those Jews who had survived the Holocaust in the Soviet Union as refugees. Despite occasional efforts in postwar Poland – for example, allowing a degree of Jewish territorial autonomy in Lower Silesia and creating a Jewish centre in

⁶⁶ Helga Schutz, ed., *Bevölkerungstransfer und Systemwandel. Ostmitteleuropäische Grenzen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin 1998); Robert B. Pynsent, ed., *The Phoney Peace. Power and Culture in Eastern Europe, 1945–1949* (London 2000).

⁶⁷ Klaus-Peter Friedrich, “Die Legitimierung ‘Volkspolens’ durch den polnischen Opferstatus. Zur kommunistischen Machtübernahme in Polen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges”, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 1 (2003), pp. 1–51; idem, “Die Anfänge der volkspolnischen Presse 1944–1945: Ihr (jüdisches) Personal, ihre Organisation, ihre Themen und Tabus”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2 (2006), pp. 207–228.

⁶⁸ Jeffery S. Kopstein, “Who Voted Communist? Reconsidering the Social Basis of Radicalism in Interwar Poland”, *Slavic Review*, 52, 1 (2003), pp. 87–107; Gross, *Fear*, pp. 220–221 and 226–238.

the Jewish Historical Institute – Judeophobia in Polish society was so strong that the majority of Jews fled the country. After the Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946, which resulted in 41 deaths, and the murder of about 1,500 Jews in 155 places by October 1947, Poland's Jewish population went into sharp decline due to emigration – from 220,000–240,000 in the summer of 1946 to 80,000 in 1951 and 30,000 in 1960.⁶⁹

One would think that with the emigration of largest part of the Jews, there would no longer be a “Jewish problem” in the countries of East Central Europe. However, in the show trials in Budapest, with the climax being the case against László Rajk (1949), and in Prague, with the climax there being the case against Rudolf Slánský (1952), the model of Soviet anti-Zionism and anti-cosmopolitanism, i.e., a hardly concealed antisemitism, was transferred to the satellite countries.⁷⁰

After the “Polish thaw” and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, there were very few Jews left in the security services. Instead, a new-old Judeophobia surfaced within the Polish security forces. This was tied to the rise of a certain veterans' organisation, the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*), and its leader, Mieczysław Moczar. Using antisemitic and nationalist slogans, Moczar attempted to displace the first secretary of the Polish ruling party, Władysław Gomułka, in 1968.

Poland's 1968 antisemitic campaign, which forced 13,000–15,000 persons of Jewish origin to emigrate, was – unlike in the 1940s – a symptom of an inner-party power struggle and indirectly an after-affect of a nationalism still coloured by war and occupation. Israel's Six-Day War, the student unrest in March 1968, and developments in Czechoslovakia provided the backdrop. As in the Soviet Union, Israel's victory over the Arab neighbours was accompanied by anti-Zionist campaigns, which again revealed obvious signs of Judeophobia within Poland. Gomułka suspected his country's Jews of acting as a “fifth column” for Israel.

The campaign obviously met with great interest and an overwhelmingly positive resonance within the party. The population seems to have acted in a wait-and-see manner; at any rate, there were no “spontaneous” excesses; given the small number of Jews in Poland, there would have been no target. For the intelligentsia, this campaign seems to have discredited the regime for good.⁷¹ In many respects, 1968 marked the end of the symbiosis between a minority of Jews and Communism that had begun towards the end of the 19th century.

Beyond structures of powers, however, the reality of the Jewish presence in Poland was completely different. Just as Babi Yar had gained symbolic importance for the terror of the German occupation in general and the murder of the Jews in particular within the Soviet Union, the same can be said about the site of the former camp complex Auschwitz within Poland. Up until the early 1990s, a majority of Poles saw in

⁶⁹ Jeff Schatz, *The Generation. The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley 1991), pp. 20–21.

⁷⁰ George Hermann Hodos, *Schauprozesse. Stalinistische Säuberungen in Osteuropa 1948–1954* (Berlin 2001).

⁷¹ Beate Kosmala, *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Polen 1968. Antisemitismus und politisches Kalkül* (Berlin 2000); Dariusz Stola, “Fighting Against the Shadows: The Antizionist Campaign”, in Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca 2005), pp. 284–300; Christian Dahlmann, “Die antisemitische Kampagne in Polen 1968”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 56 (2008) (forthcoming).

Auschwitz a place of primarily Polish suffering.⁷² This view caused a sensation in 1998, when crosses were erected on the grounds of the camp to commemorate the estimated 70,000–100,000 Poles (“Catholics”) who died there.⁷³

However, the marginalisation of the Holocaust in Poland followed different criteria than in the Soviet Union. In the latter, it was the “resistance of the entire people” that determined the narrative of the Second World War and the marginalisation of not only Jewish victims. In Poland, the master narrative of the war also concentrated on the nation’s resistance, but suffering and martyrdom as a symbol of Polish history since the 18th century partitions had a value in and of itself in the Catholic tradition. The self-sacrifice of the Franciscan Maksymilian Kolbe in Auschwitz, who has since been canonised, can be more convincingly represented as heroic resistance. Even if the mass murder of the Jews has never been denied or concealed in Poland, as in the Soviet Union, even at Auschwitz, the suffering of the Poles and Catholics stood front and centre in commemoration policy from the start.⁷⁴

Since the events of 1989–1991, the “Jewish problem”, which has always been one for non-Jews, has become a comparatively prominent historical topic within the tenets of European “political correctness”. In the post-Soviet countries, this topic has now faded into the background given the mass emigration of Jews, ethnic conflicts, and other problems. That a considerable part of the post-Soviet “oligarchs” represents a new take on the non-Jewish Jew has hardly been a public issue, despite all the controversy surrounding them and despite their political taming by Vladimir Putin.

Translated by Richard Mann, Berlin



The Great Synagogue in Berdychiv (Berdichev) in the early 20th century

⁷² Antony Polonsky, ed., *“My Brothers’s Keeper?” Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust* (London 1990); Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust. The Poles under German Occupation 1939–1944* (New York 1990); see also the debate over Jedwabne between Bogdan Musial and Frank Golczewski, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 50 (2002), pp. 384–411 and 412–437. As an example for Hungary in the postwar period see Ivan Bibo, *Zur Judenfrage. Am Beispiel Ungarns nach 1944* (Frankfurt am Main 1980).

⁷³ Klaus-Peter Friedrich, “Über den Widerstandsmythos im besetzten Polen in der Historiographie”, *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 1 (1998), pp. 10–60; Janine P. Holc, “Jewish and Catholic Views on Auschwitz Contested”, in Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitismus*, pp. 301–325.

⁷⁴ Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1949–1979* (Athens, OH, 2003).

Remembrance as Balancing Act

The Public and Academic Handling of Eastern Europe's Jewish Heritage

Knowledge about the life of the East European Jews and the Shoah has grown in past decades. But the appropriate transmission of East European Jewish history and culture is highly demanding. Sometimes, there is a danger of remembrance of the Holocaust's victims sliding into commercialism and kitsch, and because Jewish life is often treated as a museum artefact, its renaissance ends up forgotten. Delphine Bechtel, Michael Brenner, Frank Golczewski, Rachel Heuberger, François Guesnet, Cilly Kugelman, and Anna Lipphardt explain what kind of conclusions they have drawn from this balancing act for their work in museums, libraries, classrooms, and archives.

OSTEUROPA: *For decades, the Jews of Eastern Europe have been viewed through the prism of the Holocaust. What kind of consequences does this have for the way Jewish life in Eastern Europe is perceived? Is this view starting to change?*

Cilly Kugelman: After 1945, there were hardly any Jews left in Eastern Europe who could not be associated with the genocide. The image of the East European Jews before National Socialism is highly differentiated, depending on whether one focuses on the history of the Jews in the Baltic states, Poland, or the Soviet Union. It ranges from the romanticisation of the shtetl, the study and portrayal of its less appealing reality, to the engagement of Jews on behalf of Socialist revolution in Communist parties, and their membership in the nomenclature of Soviet governments and institutions.

Michael Brenner: Given the almost total eradication of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, it is wholly understandable that the Shoah dominates our contemporary view of Jewish history. Unlike in Germany, where a polar perpetrator-victim relationship shapes the way history is viewed, the situation in Eastern Europe is more complex. In the wake of the German occupation of large areas of Eastern Europe, a competition of victims was established, which during the Communist era often resulted in the failure to acknowledge the specific suffering of the Jews. To this day, for example, some segments of Polish society refuse to recognise Auschwitz primarily as a place where Jews were annihilated. The process of working through the murder of the Jews in Jedwabne

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Anna Lipphardt (1970), Dr. phil., cultural specialist, Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin

at the hands of their fellow Polish citizens has raised the question of the extent to which Polish victims of National Socialism also committed crimes against Jews during the war. This debate is intensifying in the discussion of anti-Jewish pogroms after the war. Ultimately, the image of “Jew = Communist” from the postwar years is still deeply rooted in society today and often serves as a model for anti-Jewish propaganda.



Rachel Heuberger

Rachel Heuberger: Even before the Shoah, the West already had a one-sided view of East European Jewish life and had reduced it to an idealised version of a pre-modern society with an intact religious tradition. Think of the romanticising images of Roman Vishniac, the glorifying interpretation of Hasidism by Martin Buber, or the trivialisation of eastern Jewish literature written by the likes of Sholem Aleichem. The urban intelligentsia and the enlightened Polish Jewry that tried to integrate into civic life were overlooked to the same extent as the members of the Socialist movements. As a result of the Shoah, with its destruction of East European Jewish life, this false perception has been reproduced several times over in our commemorative culture and is the only one to have been handed down. The few survivors were not and are not considered authentic Jews. As far as I can tell, there has been no essential change in this view.

François Guesnet: It is true that in the German-speaking countries, the East European Jews were viewed primarily through the prism of the Holocaust. However, this does not apply elsewhere in the world. For the German-speaking countries, this attitude basically signified a continuation of the racist and totalitarian perspective of the German master race: Only the murder of East European Jewish men and women was perceived, not, however, the individual lives, hopes, and aspirations that were extinguished by this genocide. However, there is no question that German-language research has also been focused on this suppressed perspective for some time. The “eastern Jews” – itself a misleading and stereotypical term, by the way – became a topic of interest during the 1980s. Trude Maurer and her work should be mentioned first. For years, it is precisely the historians and cultural experts who have been trying to make the loss of human life in all its complexity more imaginable. Here, the lifeworld-research by Heiko Haumann can be mentioned, but also individual contributions by Gabriele Freitag, Yvonne Kleinmann, Heidemarie Petersen, Gertrud Pickhan, or Katrin Steffen. The large share of female colleagues and the low participation of male colleagues is conspicuous and not coincidental. The situation is also different elsewhere in the world.

Delphine Bechtel: After the Shoah, the history of the living Jews was indeed ignored. In Germany in particular, Jews were perceived solely as “dead Jews”. This emerged implicitly from the systematic way the Shoah was investigated, through the reconstruction of the origins, the preparations, to the implementation of the annihilation. Jews thus became “Jews annihilated by the Germans”. Anything that had to do with Jewish life was engulfed by the aura of the Shoah and consequently became “sacred”,

“untouchable”. There were also “imaginary Jews”. In France, which is home to a large number of Ashkenazi Jews, Alain Finkielkraut used this term to describe the descendants of the victims of the Shoah who themselves no longer have any idea of their grandparents’ culture. But their Jewish identity is based on the negative experience of the Shoah. In Germany, where far fewer Jews lived up until the 1990s, the “imaginary Jews” were construed by young Germans. It was known that the Jews were “the victims”, but they otherwise remained unknown.

Anna Lipphardt: There are two prisms among the general public in the West: horror (Auschwitz) and kitsch (klezmer, shtetl, “eastern Jews”). In Eastern Europe, the Holocaust has been ignored for decades. Now, it is becoming the focus of attention. East European Jews are dedicating a great deal of intellectual energy to the issue. From the Jewish point of view, the life of the Jews living in Eastern Europe was also often viewed through the prisms of “horror” and “nostalgia”. But a differentiated attitude also existed after 1945. The YIVO research institute in New York and the Yiddish cultural movement should be mentioned here. Josh Waletzky’s documentary film “Image Before My Eyes” (1981) shed light on the multifaceted nature of Jewish life in Poland between the wars. In the interim, a growing number of impulses are coming from the younger generation of East European Jews, which does not wish to see its cultural heritage reduced to the Holocaust and the shtetl, and from Israel, where the one-dimensional Zionist version of history, which regards the diaspora as the prelude to Auschwitz, has lost its appeal. Young Jews are growing more interested in their Eastern European roots.

Frank Golczewski: A distinction must be made between the academic world and the general public. For the general public, the assumption that their perception is filtered through the Shoah is generally true. This has a political dimension, because the problems surrounding the Shoah are “clearer” than a discussion about today’s “Jewish issues”, and pre-Shoah history is interpreted as a history of “failure”. For academics, the lifeworlds of East European Jews before the Shoah have been of interest for many years. Think of the work by Verena Dohrn, Yvonne Kleinmann, Kai Struve, François Guesnet, and Gertrud Pickhan. Here, I would say to the contrary that research on the Shoah – to the extent that it was not purely research on the perpetrators – has only gotten underway more strongly in recent years. Here, I’d like to refer to the studies by Dieter Pohl, Michael Alberti, Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, Christoph Dieckmann, and Joachim Tauber. However, research into the Shoah is still limited, to some degree because work with so-called “ego sources”, such as memorial books, has hardly developed. This work demands a great deal of source criticism and a knowledge of languages. With regard to the subjective view of the persecuted Jews, there is still a tendency toward projecting one’s own attitude. Scholars of East European History in Germany are happy to leave the subject of the Shoah to German specialists such as Christian Gerlach, Götz Aly, or Andrei Angrick. However, the latter are frequently unable to make direct use of Hungarian, Slavic, Yiddish, and Hebrew texts. This may be a “technical” argument, but it is one that is clearly reflected in the type of research conducted.

Despite some differentiating studies, the perception among the general public, and often among academics as well, has been influenced by the ethnicisation of the Jews, which has occurred due to Zionism. References are made to “Germans and Jews”, rather than “Jewish and non-Jewish Germans”. A similar phenomenon applies in Eastern Europe, where the contrast between the full suppression of the Jews in public discourse (victims of the Shoah as “Soviet citizens”) and the reinforcement of their identity by administrative measures (item 5 on the Soviet passport) is still rife. This results in terminological confusion. On the one hand, Trotsky, is defined or defamed as a Jew; on the other hand, it is said that he was not a “real” Jew, because he was a Bolshevik. The issue of assimilation (also an insult for assimilated Zionists) as a normal process of modernisation has hardly been touched upon. This also goes for the Soviet Union in particular, where assimilation was especially effective.

OSTEUROPA: *In Prague, Cracow, or other places that were important centres of Jewish life before the Shoah, a reconnection with Jewish traditions can be observed. What is your assessment of this development?*

Bechtel: The situation is not the same in all cities. The manner and timing of this reconnection with the Jewish past differ widely. In Prague, the synagogues and Jewish museums are an integral part of any visit to the city. The process of putting history in a museum began during the Communist era and progressed very rapidly in a situation where Jews were almost completely absent. In Warsaw, the Jewish Museum still hasn’t been built. In general, there is relatively little in this respect. In the Kazimierz district in Cracow or on Oranienburger Strasse in Berlin, a substitute for Jewish life (Café Silberstein, Tacheles, Café Ariel) has been created for appearances, with much good will and bad conscience. There is something ghostly about this. In Ukraine, there is almost nothing.

Golczewski: This reconnection is partly trend and to a large degree commercial. What Neuschwanstein represents for some people is for others the Remuh Synagogue or the Old New Synagogue. This “reconnection” is a romanticisation, “coming out” is also a romanticisation of one’s own vitae – comparable to the “Roots” movement among Afro-Americans. To this extent, it is impossible to be either for or against it, since this meets a basic human need, the need to make one’s past “accessible”. Religious highlights are better suited to this purpose than concentration camps. Atheists also visit the Cologne Cathedral or the Wailing Wall. However, one should not confuse this ultimately anachronistic “revival” with “real” present-day “Jewish life”, in which this environment plays only a very limited role. For most, this is no different than in the gentile world with regard to secularisation and modernisation, including sporadic tourist visits to events with religious connotations – comparable to the hype surrounding the Pope.

Lipphardt: In my view, discussion of the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe after its decades-long suppression is appropriate and important. At the local level, awareness of the Jewish past has developed. The multiethnic past is seen as containing more potential than ballast. I would not call the restoration of former Jewish districts, the construction of

Jewish museums, and the klezmer festivals a “reconnecting with Jewish traditions”, since much of this is taking place over the heads and needs of the local Jewish communities.

Guesnet: The question is what one understands by reconnection. In general, I can only welcome the fact that in these and many other cities, the Jewish presence and a multi-ethnic population are being remembered in different ways, whether in the form of festivals, film series, literary works, academic events, or other types of public discussion. In some cases, a kind of exaggerated street market gains the upper hand, in order to meet the need among Americans, Israelis, or West Europeans for proper souvenirs, for example. When I first visited Poland over 20 years ago, the carved wooden figures of traditional Jews were nowhere to be found. Is it such a bad thing that in the meantime they can be purchased in every Cepelia store? I don’t think so.



François Guesnet

Heuberger: I see these developments critically. The so-called renaissance of Jewish life is based on a hotchpotch of economic interests on the part of the tourist industry, political considerations, and attempts by individuals, who are as a rule non-Jewish, to revive a glorified past. The real problems of the small Jewish communities on site are ignored.

Brenner: Aside from several noteworthy academic endeavours, this involves above all the commercialisation of Jewish heritage. Golem figures in Prague and dancing Hasidic dolls in Cracow have replaced the rich Jewish life that once flourished there. Notable efforts have also been made, such as the big klezmer festival in Cracow. Here, there is a reconnection with Jewish culture. However, given the absence of a significant Jewish community, this is a “non-Jewish Jewish culture”. Ruth Gruber has described it as “virtually Jewish”.

Kugelmann: Until now, the activities in the area of cultural references to the prewar Jewish population are repertory. It is well meant, but offers nothing else. The rediscovery of Jewish culture in these geographic regions is perhaps instead the first encounter with this culture for those who occupy their time with it, to that extent it is not a reconnection, but an initial confrontation as an attempt to deal with the history of the annihilation.

OSTEUROPA: *What does the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union mean for research on Jewish history in Eastern Europe? Where has important progress been made? Where are there still gaps to be filled?*

Kugelmann: Archives that were previously inaccessible have opened their doors. More details from the process of mass annihilation and the attitude of the local population to these events can now be analysed using new sources.

Heuberger: The downfall of the Soviet Union and the opening of the archives have lent impetus to national historical perspectives. However, the Jewish history of individual countries is still not being adequately researched and documented. This may be due to a lack of knowledge of the languages needed and differs from country to country. Poland is taking a leading role in researching the lifeworlds of East European Jews, as is reflected in the number of new papers being written. Anti-Jewishness and antisemitism in the currents and institutions that are regarded as traditional opponents of Fascism, such as national movements, workers' movements, and the churches, should be researched and analysed.

Guesnet: There has been an enormous increase in the dynamism of the field. Here, too, the German-speaking countries are far behind. Progress has been comprehensive and cannot be restricted to specific issues. To a certain extent, this is due to the improved access to sources in Eastern Europe, but it is due first of all to the great curiosity in Jewish history and culture in Eastern Europe that has been demonstrated by colleagues elsewhere in the world. Eighty percent of the Jews living today have roots in Eastern Europe. The intensity of the discussion is increasing. Poland and Russia show the most dynamism. The most dynamic field internationally over the last 20 years has probably been research into Jewish mysticism, Hasidism. The greatest potential here is the incorporation of East European Jewry into the history of the Jews in Europe. Here are just two examples: East European Jewry was characterised by various specific features, and yet in familial, economic, cultural, and religious terms, these Jews were connected to the Central and West European Jews to a certain extent by highly stable and efficient networks. These networks must be researched. The second example is that there was more than one modern Jewish movement. There was also a modern Jewish movement specific to Eastern Europe, without which, in my view, the Prussian Jewish renaissance would hardly have been possible. This influence came not least of all from spiritual and intellectual stimuli that originated with teachers from Eastern Europe, who, as Heinrich Graetz grumbled, had "sullied" the German Jews. There was no Iron Curtain in Europe before 1945.

Golczewski: First of all, access to the archives has improved. Issues that had previously been taboo can now be worked on. A large number of source editions and fact-based accounts have appeared in Poland. However, the number of publications in other Eastern European countries has declined. A great deal of work has also been conducted in Poland on the problem of Jewish-gentile relations. Political debates, such as the dispute over Auschwitz, Jedwabne, and the new book by Jan Tomasz Gross, have created a great deal of movement.

A painful issue everywhere is collaboration, the depiction of which is minimised as far as possible. Attempts are made to expel collaborators from their own national community, if their existence is acknowledged at all. Another strategy is to convert their activities into a specific form of resistance against Germany. This is the case in Latvia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, for example.

East European historiography would benefit from a move away from the use of history for purposes of national affirmation and apologetics to a critical view of its own history (and politics). In Central and Eastern Europe, criticism is often restricted to the period 1945-1989 and is supported by old notions of the enemy (including anti-Jewish ones). A critical treatment of national identity in general (primordial notions of ethnic origins are widespread) and individual identity in particular (where the postulate of continuity and the “invention of tradition” dominate) would be beneficial.

It would also be productive to refrain from discussing “national” Jewries, but rather to study the historic groups that traverse today’s national boundaries. Ezra Mendelsohn began with this kind of work in his day.

Bechtel: It was better before things were turned into a museum. I will never forget seeing the old town in Lublin for the first time in the early 1980s. It had not changed since 1945: uninhabited, half destroyed with broken windows, Jewish words on the walls, and places where the mezuzot hung on the doors. It was as if history were “frozen”, as if one could conjure up the past by travelling to the east. One saw the real situation head on, the annihilation without improvements. Now one sees just reconstructed buildings. Even if it is more attractive, perhaps more soothing for most people.

Even so, I do not agree with the competition to erect a Jewish museum in every city. In Warsaw for example, it would be much better, in my view, if Jewish history were integrated into the city museum, rather than building a separate “Jewish Museum”. Jewish history is not the history of an exotic minority that you “attractively” portray in a special museum – and in doing so contain it – and then rub your hands and say: “There, now we’ve also got a Jewish Museum. Done!” In Warsaw, 40 percent of the population was Jewish. Jews were therefore an integral part of the city. That’s why they should be an integral element of the permanent exhibition in the Warsaw City Museum.

In my view, the same applies to research. I am against special Jewish Studies if they form a type of academic ghetto. In departments for Jewish Studies at American universities, specialists have been trained who have an excellent knowledge of Jewish culture and history, but know little about other cultures. For this reason, they simply fail to appreciate their penetration. To the contrary, it is very important that scholars, together with researchers on site – be it in Cracow, Lviv, Vilnius, or elsewhere – build up an entangled history in which the Jews are not researched in isolation but in terms of their interaction with the rest of the city’s population. Unfortunately, in some places, this is still wishful thinking.

Lipphardt: Finally, it is once again possible to research and teach the history of the East European Jews. The sources are accessible, and academics are free to focus on Jewish topics. Many younger historians have completed part of their studies in the West. They have international networks, and their horizons stretch far beyond their own respective national history.

The run on the archives, which began in 1989, has resulted in a large number of studies on the situation of the East European Jews in the 18th, 19th, and first half of the 20th century. Politics and institutional questions are at the forefront. Jewish urban or local history has also received new impulses. Academic interest in the Holocaust has increased in those areas that were not occupied by the Wehrmacht until 1941. How-

ever, controversial topics are frequently ignored, or, as with Jan Gross's studies on the history of Polish-Jewish relations during and after the Second World War, they result in such an uproar that there is no possibility of holding a differentiated exchange. To date, we know little about the postwar history of the Jews in and from Eastern Europe. I would also welcome more studies on everyday life and the cultural history of the Jews – and not only high culture!

Shared history offers great potential. Differentiated individual studies are not enough when it comes to writing an integrated European history. For some topics, we need research networks, in which academics with different linguistic, historical, and cultural skills can work together.

OSTEUROPA: *Jewish history and European history are inseparably intertwined. This is also true of East European Jewish and East European history. At the same time, the history of the Jews has always been a history of persecution. What significance does the knowledge gained from studying the Jews or East European History as a discipline have for your work?*

Brenner: I don't work on the history of the Jews of Eastern Europe, rather German-Jewish history, the history of the Jews in Western Europe and the United States, and the pre-history of the State of Israel. However, nobody working on modern Jewish history can ignore Eastern Europe, for that is where the greater part of the Jewish community lived until the Shoah. The descendents of East European Jews have shaped American Jewry as well as the State of Israel, so that it is impossible to separate Jewish history outside Eastern Europe from the region.

Kugelmann: The degree of persecution of the Jews and the way it was organised provides information on social developments with regard to the economic and demographic development of a region. For cultural history, the influence of the religious and folk customs of Christian cultures on the rituals and traditions of the Jews is of interest.

Golczewski: First of all, Jewish and non-Jewish history really are interwoven, even if representatives of both sides often try to portray their respective turf as "unsullied" by the other. In the linguistic (Yiddish), cultural (clothing), and religious (Hasidim and Pentecostal) fields, we can see developments that traverse and run parallel to these ostensible boundaries. For this reason, Jewish history is by no means always a history of persecution. It is also a history of religious and non-religious development, cultural transfer, economics, modernisation, Socialism, and nationalism. In addition, all categorisations of historical sub-disciplines are artificially created in order to overcome complexity. They should be consciously broken down without being removed fully so as to highlight this fact. However, if one assumes that East European History and Jewish Studies stand in opposition to one another – which one shouldn't, since each is an integral part of the other – then Jewish Studies allows normal historians of Eastern Europe to understand the intellectual and material development within the Jewish segment of society, a development that we often know only from the perspective of the gentile community (and that is warped accordingly) or from the point of view of

atypical “frontier crossers”. The autonomy of the inside perspective often comes up short. This makes it possible to grasp the difference between the way the Jews saw themselves and the way they were perceived by others and thus contributes to analysis of the conflict and to a basis of mutual understanding.

Guesnet: Since I regard neither East European History, nor Jewish Studies as independent academic disciplines with a specific set of methods, I can’t say much about this issue – except, perhaps, that in most cases it is difficult to think of the one in comprehensive terms without the other.

Lipphardt: I’m not of the opinion that the history of the East European Jews “has always been a history of persecution”. Certainly, it has always been a history of a minority that has suffered from discrimination more than other Eastern European minorities (except for the Sinti and Roma) and frequently from persecution. But despite the Holocaust, it should not be reduced to this. As minority history, it is a history of relationships, but it also stands on its own. It is also a history of Jewish self-empowerment, everyday Jewish life, and a separate Jewish cultural heritage – in interaction with its surroundings.

However, to return to the actual question: Since the end of the Cold War, East European History has developed or adapted an entire repertoire of research angles that have great potential for research into East European Jewish history: empire and border studies, multi-ethnic urban history, and the concept of neighbourhood. The sensitisation to spatial connections and local references, which accompanied the spatial turn in East European History, can also be seen increasingly in the field of Jewish Studies in relation to Eastern Europe. The concept of lifeworlds, as developed by Heiko Haumann, also offers exciting starting points for Jewish Studies.

However, there are several structural problems that impede a rapprochement between East European History and Jewish Studies. East European Historians who seek to research Jewish topics must acquire a solid knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew and a comprehensive knowledge of the lifeworlds of East European Jews and Jewry in general. Conversely, East European Jewish history and culture cannot be researched without knowledge of Eastern European languages and a sound understanding of the non-Jewish environment. This cannot be learned in a crash course, nor by studying just history. Such exchange is hindered by the fact that at German universities, Jewish Studies are, understandably, geared primarily to the study of German-Jewish history and culture. This knowledge and these concepts associated with it cannot be transferred to East European Jews. It would therefore be helpful to strengthen Eastern European themes within Jewish Studies in Germany and to foster closer cooperation between East European History and those academic institutions in North America and Israel where “holistic” and inter-disciplinary approaches are used in classroom instruction and research on East European Jews.

Bechtel: Real life cannot be divided into academic disciplines. Researchers have been working according to philological categories (German, Slavic, and Jewish Studies, etc.) for too long. It is still far too easy to tell what kind of background a researcher has, and what their qualifications are. We should be growing out of this self-imposed

immaturity and take a genuinely free approach to studying the lifeworlds of the Jews and their neighbours. Even so, in my view, the field of East European studies in Germany, as one of the most active areas of research, has achieved a great deal: Young researchers have emerged who are proficient in three or four languages, including Yiddish, and can shed light on events from several points of view.

Heuberger: For me, as a representative of Jewish Studies, individual local and regional history studies with numerous documents are helpful. Interdisciplinary exchange has been hindered above all by the fact that important Hebrew works have not been translated and are therefore not known in Eastern Europe, just as the West became familiar with many East European works only years later.

OSTEUROPA: *Every era asks its own questions of history. Dan Diner describes the history of the Jews as a “paradigm of a European history”. Is the history of the East European Jews also of specific relevance for present-day Europe?*

Golczewski: If Dan Diner meant that the history of the Jews contains everything that has been broached as a topic in other parts of European history, then this of course also applies to Eastern Europe. However, it does not necessarily follow that it is of relevance today. The Jewish group is too small proportionally – and too functionless, because it does not differ from gentile society. Here, I specifically exclude the history of Israel, which I regard as a colonial history. We don’t yet know whether this history will follow the American or the Algerian model – or perhaps a totally different one. If one wanted to be completely heretical, then today one can see greater relevance in the controversial remarks by Faruk Şen [director of the Centre for Studies on Turkey in Essen, ed.] that the Turks are the new Jews. This may not be true literally, but it does raise the issue of the distrust that exists between mutually dependent groups with different value systems. When politicised accordingly, this distrust can lead to catastrophe.

Kugelmann: The treatment of minorities is a measure of a society’s stability. The “paradigm” should be understood in this light and can be used as a model for analysing comparable situations.

Bechtel: These paradigms were already underscored by German and American sociologists at the start of the 20th century: the Jew as “alien”, i.e. as an urban dweller, as “modern”, as “neurotic”, as “intellectual”, as “cosmopolitan”, as “outsider”, as go-between, as European citizen par excellence. However, I am not sure whether that’s still true today. The Jews are so “normal” statistically, so (petit) bourgeois, biased, educated and uneducated, communitarian, etc. – just like other people.

Guesnet: No, the history of the East European Jews has no specific relevance for present-day Europe. At least none that makes them more interesting or relevant than the history of the Greeks or the Catalans or the Germans. It is interesting and relevant in and of itself. It lends itself to the occasional comparison if anything. Currently, references are frequently made to the parallels in the history of the European Jewish

minorities and the Muslim minorities now living in Europe, and rightly so. However, the differences between the two should not be forgotten.

Brenner: Jewish history shows how quickly and brutally a culture with such an important influence on a society can disappear not only from life, but also from the memory of its surroundings.

Heuberger: Whereas in Western Europe, the model of emancipation meant the long sought integration of the Jews as individuals into society, the Jewish minorities in Eastern Europe were defined as an ethnic group and were recognised as such to varying degrees, depending on the region. This experience can be used as a “model” for a future multicultural Europe with different cultures and ethnic identities. As a minority per se, one that belonged to no other national movement, the Jews of Eastern Europe were also the only “Europeans in a spiritual sense”. They embodied the ideals and concepts of a transnational Europe



Michael Brenner

OSTEUROPA: *Why does remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust play a subordinate role in Eastern European countries?*

Golczewski: That’s not the case at all. The Holocaust is ultimately always latently present in its negation and the emphasis given a country’s “own” victims. The entire Holodomor campaign by the Ukrainian government is aimed at equating the victims of starvation with the victims of the Shoah in qualitative and numerical terms. This acknowledges the existence of the Shoah – as well as the exclusion of the Jews from “real” Ukrainian society. For the historicisation of the new Ukrainian national identity, farmers are better suited than Jews. This process therefore says quite a lot about the essentialisation of the “Ukrainian nation”.

The competition between victims is more ambivalent in Poland. Moreover, Christians and Jews commemorate their losses differently, something that fuels the competition. We know from soccer that in a rivalry, one takes the side of one’s own “team”, thereby making it easy to regard the other team as the “opponent”.

Finally, the Soviet way of integrating Jewish victims into Soviet society without labeling them is not so absurd. This also reflects the attempt at the time to construe a Soviet people (sovetskii narod). Moreover, there is the fact that the perpetrators used the term “Judeo-Bolshevism” in their propaganda, an argument still used by some “historians” today. However, this version does not take into account the fact that groups always seek to remember their own victims. The way they make these victims their own differs significantly. For example, the German Democratic Republic (along with a bloc-party called the National Democratic Party of Germany) declared itself the representative of German “anti-Fascism”. Thus in Poland, Israelis from the March of the Living stand opposite Polish nationalists. They each feel that the victims of the other side are of less

relevance than their own. However, in order to have this argument, both sides have to take into account the value of the Shoah's victims as a subject of debate.

Bechtel: For me, this is one of the most important divisions between east and west today. In Riga, L'viv, and Budapest, the victims of the Soviet terror are given preference as "our victims" over the "others", the Jews. National history is still being formed. At the same time, the image of "Judeo-Communism" is still vivid. In popular imagination, Jews still tend to be portrayed as executioners (NKVD men, Communists from Marx to Trotsky, Kaganovich as "the man responsible for the catastrophic famine in Ukraine") than as victims of the National Socialists' policy of annihilation.

The traumas of Soviet occupation have not yet been processed, nor has local collaboration with the Soviet authorities, even more so collaboration with the Nazis. If the victims of Stalinism are going to be glorified, one should not forget that in some cases these same victims of Stalinism had actively supported the Nazis. To work through and acknowledge this issue in all its complexity has taken decades in Germany and in France as well. I am troubled by the fact that categories such as "biological heritage", "ethno-national assets", and the "gene of the people" are so widespread in Eastern Europe. That has never augured well.

Guesnet: I consider the term "subordinate" problematic. If you look at the Poles, in the years since the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross' book *Neighbours* – and recently *Fear* – they have talked in detail about those victims of the Holocaust who were murdered by Polish accomplices in Jedwabne and elsewhere. This was no doubt necessary, but where was the "subordination"? At the same time, there is an urgent need to remember the victims of injustice and tyranny who suffered in such large numbers in Eastern Europe, in particular under the different authoritarian regimes and dictatorships that came to power during the 20th century. This takes time. Franco died in 1975, and it still took around 30 years before the bodies of the victims of the civil war began to be exhumed in Spain. Here, more is probably going on than one can learn about by simply following the major debates in the newspapers. To take just one example: In the Radogoszcz district of Łódź, there is a department of the Museum of the Traditions of Independence that was established in the ruins of a prison run by the German occupiers during the Second World War. In the night of 17-18 January 1945, the occupiers set fire to prison, which was full, and burned some 1,500 inmates alive. A good number of temporary exhibitions at this museum have commemorated the Polish and Jewish victims of the German occupation in exemplary fashion. Rather than lumping them together as a single group, the specific nature of the Łódź ghetto, for example, is shown very clearly. This doesn't mean, incidentally, that it's not irritating to note that there is still no separate memorial to the many hundreds of thousands of ghetto inhabitants who were murdered.

Heuberger: Here, I would refer first and foremost to antisemitism, which is still rife among various social groups, from the virulent political antisemitism in Hungary, to the clerics in Poland and nationalists in Ukraine, to the suppression of the Holocaust in Lithuania. As a result, the Shoah as well as anti-Judaism and antisemitism in its

various forms have yet to be confronted. This lack of discussion concerning their own past, as well as their role under Nazi occupation and collaboration, leads to the suppression of the Shoah's victims and above all to the complete negation of those few survivors who have not emigrated.

Kugelmann: The heroisation of the Red Army, the process of coping with the huge wartime losses, and the Communist master narrative of the victory over the capitalist hemisphere have not left any room for acknowledging antisemitism and the policy of annihilation motivated by it. This experience had to be suppressed the same way as other national narratives.



Cilly Kugelmann

Lipphardt: In my view, there is little sense in measuring the degree to which the countries in Eastern Europe have come to terms with their past by using measures geared to the current situation in the West. In the Federal Republic of Germany as well, it took a long time after the Second World War, before discussion of the Holocaust really started. I rather doubt whether this would have happened without an outside push, such as the re-education programme or the Eichmann trial.

Even if a lot has been achieved in terms of remembrance as a result of EU integration, East European societies are still in a state of flux. That includes the revision of Soviet and Communist versions of history. First, there was a revival of the struggle for political self-determination, which had lasted for decades and had been discredited by the Communists before 1989 as a form of bourgeois-fascist nationalism. This national, sometimes even nationalist re-assessment of the past strained relations between Jews and non-Jews. In particular, episodes that took place during the Second World War were assessed in contradictory terms. The problem is aggravated by a great lack of knowledge about the Holocaust and antisemitism. In the Baltic states, for example, many people who look back on a long history of political repression still regard themselves purely as victims. From this defensive position, they are neither prepared to confront their behaviour during the Holocaust in a self-critical manner, nor do they recognise that they now form the majority within the societies of sovereign states that should reach out to the local minorities with the same understanding and tolerance that they had previously demanded for themselves.

Remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust is without a doubt a key issue for a pluralistic understanding of society open to historical reflection within Eastern Europe. Remembrance must go hand in hand with a comprehensive process of working through the past. Collaboration, the stubborn persistence of the caricature of “Judeo-Communism” in Poland, or the “double genocide” in Lithuania should not be omitted. Remembrance would also include a fair-minded restitution of property and compensation for expropriation.

Brenner: For me, this closes the circle. I would give the same answer to this question as at the outset of this conversation.

Translated by Anne Güttel, Berlin

Steven E. Aschheim

Reflection, Projection, Distortion

The “Eastern Jew” in German-Jewish Culture

Since the Enlightenment, the image of the “Ostjuden”, the “Eastern Jews”, has played a crucial role in German Jews’ self-definition. Jews from Eastern Europe were considered backward. This backwardness seemed to endanger the German Jews’ integration into modern society. Therefore, they repudiated the “Ostjuden”. At the same time, there emerged a sense of collective responsibility for their “weaker brothers”. At the start of the 20th century, a positive countermyth was established. The unspoiled nature of the “Ostjuden” was turned into a cult. These clichés revealed more about the self-understanding of the German Jews than the reality of the “Ostjuden”.

The modern German Jew, like other West European Jews, was a new and distinctive creation, the product of 18th century Enlightenment thought, 19th century urban capitalist development, and emancipation.¹ This, by now, is a historical commonplace. Less familiar is the proposition that the very notion of the “Eastern Jew”, or Ostjude, was likewise the outcome of the embourgeoisement of Jewish life and consciousness in Western Europe. The actual expression “Ostjude” became widespread only in the early 20th century, but all its characteristics – negative and positive – had been delineated earlier under different names. Although there were exceptions, East European Jews were generally considered to be loud, coarse, and dirty. Together with a more generalised, negative picture of “the East”, these Jews were often portrayed as immoral, culturally backward creatures of the ugly, anachronistic ghetto. Once German Jewry appeared to undergo modernisation and no longer corresponded to traditional images of strangeness and exclusiveness, unemancipated East European Jewry served as a constant reminder of the presence of the mysterious and brooding ghetto, endowing the stereotype of a fundamentally alien, even hostile culture with life and ongoing resonance. It is

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This essay is partly based upon my book, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison 1982). It incorporates some subsequent, significant additions in research and changes in thinking. Readers may also wish to see my essay “The East European Jew and German Jewish Identity”, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 1 (1984).

¹ Michael Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew* (Detroit 1967); Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Emancipation* (New York 1978); Steven M. Lowenstein, “The Pace of Modernisation of German Jewry in the Nineteenth Century”, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 21 (1976).

important to note that German “progressives”, Jews and antisemites alike, appeared to repudiate the physical and spiritual characteristics associated with East European Jewish life and conveniently (and misleadingly) embodied in the notion of the ghetto and its Jews. This was the consensual framework around which the contested discourse concerning pre-emancipation East European Jewry unfolded. Neither the Nazi obsession with what Hitler, recalling his strolls through Vienna’s inner-city, had labelled a rather inhuman “apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks”,² nor Martin Buber’s or Franz Kafka’s romanticisation of the “Ostjude” as the “authentic”, spiritualised Jew can be understood outside the informing categories and dialectics of this debate.

It comes as no surprise that most antisemites propagated negative views of the ghetto (while of course always linking this to an equally critical demonisation of the “modern” Jew).³ But why did West European and German Jews do so? Eastern ghettos became a symbolic construct by which emergent Jewry could distinguish itself from their less fortunate, unenlightened, and unemancipated East European brothers. Such an attitude was encouraged by the implicit dictates of assimilation. Integration was not merely the attempt to blend into new cultural and social surroundings. It was also a purposeful, even programmatic dissociation from traditional Jewish national and cultural moorings. In their eagerness to prove their worthiness for equal rights, it was first necessary for West European Jews to demonstrate “self-regeneration” and to establish the difference between themselves and the traditional Jews of the ghetto. The emergent stereotype of the “Ostjude” was therefore as much the dialectical product of Enlightenment thinking as the self-image of modern German Jews. Both notions had their origins in the drive to modernity, and both were the outcome of the breakdown of traditional Jewish self-understanding and signalled the rise of new modes of cultural perception. One fashioned the other.

Enlightenment versus Backwardness

The division of Jewry into radically antithetical “Eastern” and “Western” components was a new and historically fateful development. To be sure, local, regional, and even quasi-ethnic differences between Jews had always existed. In the early modern period, “aristocratic” Western Sephardim openly exhibited contempt for many of their Ashkenazi co-religionists.⁴ But historical developments after the late 18th century produced a far more profound and fateful fragmentation. The gulf between Enlightenment and emancipation in the “West” and the continuation of political disenfranchisement and traditional culture in the “East” introduced an entirely new dialectic into the fabric of political and cultural life.

² Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Ralph Manheim, trans. (Boston 1971), pp. 56-57.

³ The relationship between perceptions of “traditional” and “modern” Jews in anti-Jewish thought and practice is discussed in my essay, “Caftan and Cravat: The Ostjude as a Cultural Symbol in the Development of German Anti-Semitism” in S. Drescher, D. Sabeian, A. Sharlin, eds., *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe* (New Brunswick 1982).

⁴ For example, Daniel Schroeter, “From Sephardi to Oriental: The ‘Decline’ Theory of Jewish Civilization in the Middle East and North Africa” in Jeremy Cohen, Richard I. Cohen, eds., *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization: Reassessing an Idea* (Oxford 2008), especially pp. 139-140.

We should remember that the stereotype of the ghetto and the ghetto Jew was not always synonymous with Eastern Jews. The association was relatively new. At the start of the 19th century, Jews in Germany were still commonly regarded as creatures of the ghetto. Goethe's description of the ghetto as he remembered it from his youth in the 1750s referred to the Jewish quarter in Frankfurt, not an obscure village in Eastern Europe. His shocked reaction to the dirt, the throngs of people, the ceaseless haggling, and the ugly "German-Jewish" (jüdisch-deutsch) dialect reflects broader, "enlightened" attitudes.⁵ The notion of the ghetto referred not only to an area where Jews were forced to live by law. The concept was far broader than that. It went beyond a place of physical Jewish concentration (whether voluntary or coerced) and referred, more pointedly, to a separatist culture and mentality. "Ghetto" became a kind of ontological and epistemological category, a certain mode of being and state of mind. This was by no means a viewpoint limited to antisemites. Indeed, it was integral to a "progressive" outlook in general. For liberal minds of the day, the ghetto was a medieval relic that highlighted the distinction between progress and reaction, Enlightenment and superstitious backwardness, even beauty and ugliness.⁶

It is hardly surprising, then, that between 1800 and 1850 German Jewry applied the critique of the ghetto to themselves as well as to other Jews. Only when German Jews believed that they had significantly overcome their own ghetto inheritance, did the stereotype of the "Ostjude" assume its full meaning and function. Acculturation had to be relatively complete before the synonymy of the Eastern Jewry with the ghetto and all it stood for could be made definitive. It was of course through the refining tenets of education and cultivation, i.e. classical German *Bildung*, that German Jews officially built their project of cultural integration and produced their critique of traditional Jewish life and culture.⁷ Under these demanding standards, many old Jewish habits and modes of sociability were to be discarded. This is well illustrated by the attitudes of the early reformers towards "Jewish-German", what was commonly referred to as jargon. Thus, in early 1782, even Moses Mendelssohn, who as a youth had himself used this language, declared that Yiddish had "contributed not a little to the immorality of the common man; and I expect a very good effect on my brothers from the increasing use of the pure German idiom".⁸ "Jargon" symbolised much of the negative Jewish qualities of the past, the very antithesis of *Bildung*.

The modernisation of the Jewish self was obviously not limited to the linguistic realm: An all-around middle-class gentility increasingly became the norm for Jewish behaviour.⁹ Jewish (and non-Jewish) reformers stressed manners, refinement, and

⁵ Wilhelm Stoffers, *Juden und Ghetto in der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Weltkrieges* (Graz 1939), p. 69. The author also quotes numerous other negative perceptions of the ghetto – one apparently shared by the author himself.

⁶ Ibid. Stoffers's book contains innumerable examples of these attitudes.

⁷ For the most compelling account of the ways *Bildung* informed German Jewish integration, indeed its new self-conception and very identity, see George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington 1985). At a different level, of course, aspects of a more intimate, less formal culture prevailed.

⁸ Mendelssohn to Klein, 29 August 1782 in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften V* (Leipzig 1844), pp. 605-606.

⁹ John M. Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Marx, Freud, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York 1974). The author correctly stresses the importance of etiquette and manners in the assimilation process, though many would question his analysis of the role of Jewish intellectuals in the self-subversion of this process.

politeness and contrasted these modes with the crudity and boorishness of traditional Jewish life. Integration also clearly entailed a change of attire: Traditional badges of distinction had to be discarded. Increasingly, the traditional dress of the Ostjuden, the caftan and the side locks, came to be viewed as both an embarrassment to the German Jew and a deliberate provocation to the non-Jew.¹⁰ But the process was even subtler. Acculturation applied also to a nuanced modulation of tone, a lowering of the decibel level, the restraint of gestures. In 1844, the pedagogical reformer Anton Reé argued that real emancipation would ensue not just from political freedom and religious reform, but also through social transformation. Jews had to reshape their manners, mannerisms, and gesticulations fundamentally. Reé's work reads like a tract of impression-management, a sustained plea to German Jews to eliminate all traces of their ghetto past. "Gentility" was incorporated as an essential Jewish aim: "It is all too ungentle to be a Jew!" ("Es ist doch gar zu ungentil, ein Jude zu sein!")¹¹

"Eastern Jews" as Object of Projection

By the time the westward mass migration of "Eastern Jews" got underway in the 1880s, German Jews (at least on the surface) seemed confident that they had succeeded in putting the ghetto behind them. Now, it was the "Ostjude" who embodied the ghetto Jew and *Unbildung*, the incarnation of the past that German Jews had rejected and transcended. To be sure, we are talking here about stereotypes. The presentation of East European Jews as an undifferentiated mass was always misleading and distorted both in terms of their differentiated geographical, cultural, social, and economic situation as well as their location on the spectrum of modern and premodern¹² – just as the German Jews' presentation of themselves as entirely bereft of older, traditional, and more intimate patterns of behaviour belied a certain persistent reality. But here, we are concerned with the important function that this stereotype played for German Jewry. In non-Jewish circles, the Ostjuden, living on Germany's geographical borders and always infiltrating its space and consciousness, played a crucial role in keeping alive notions of the "traditional" Jew and thus maintained a continuity of the stereotype that National Socialism was later able to appropriate with ease and brutality. At the same time, Ostjuden fulfilled multiple functions in the German Jews' understanding of themselves. In many ways, they appeared to pose a ubiquitous threat to ongoing assimilationist aspirations. For German Jewry, they became a living reminder of its own recently rejected past, at times the source of a bad conscience, and – later – for some a possible foundation for Jewish recovery and reconfiguration. Eastern Jews could henceforth act as a convenient foil for German Jews to externalise and displace "negative" Jewish characteristics or, conversely, to idealise traditional or "national" Jewish qualities that had been lost and rejected.

¹⁰ See, for example, Abraham Geiger's attempt to persuade East European Jews from wearing this garb in Ludwig Geiger, ed., *Abraham Geiger's nachgelassene Schriften*, (Berlin 1875-1878), p. 298.

¹¹ Anton Reé, *Die Sprachverhältnisse der heutigen Juden im Interesse der Gegenwart und mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Volkserziehung* (Hamburg 1844), p. 40.

¹² For a nuanced, differentiated picture see Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington 1983), especially the introduction.

It is not difficult to find shockingly negative portrayals of “Polish” Jews by German Jews and non-Jews from throughout the 19th century. Not untypical was the depictions of Galician Jewry by the newspaper *Der Israelit* as sunk in the lowest ethical and spiritual depths, living in terrible filth and poverty, and ruled by ignorance and superstition.¹³ Even historian Heinrich Graetz, both proto-nationalist and committed Jew, berated the Eastern Jews’ Talmudic spirit, their love of “twisting, distorting, ingenious quibbling and a foregone antipathy to what did not lie within their field of vision.”¹⁴

Yet, at least for German Jews, it is clear, beneath the rhetoric of dissociation, a stubborn sense of Jewish collective responsibility (if not solidarity) persisted. Traditional forms of mutual aid continued to operate as a real social force. But now, German Jews justified their concern for their brothers in terms of the same Enlightenment concerns that had provided the grounds for de-nationalisation in the first place. Enlightenment became the basis for both dissociation and justification for mutual aid. For, as German Jews surely argued, they could apply the same modern goals to unemancipated East European Jewry as they had done to themselves. Old patterns of mutual aid could realise new ends: Providing Jews with the same rights would ensure one’s own emancipation, render one’s own integration easier, and thus loosen the grip of a debilitating identification. In this manner, both the imperatives of integration and the demands of Jewish conscience seemed to be satisfied. This was a programme to which most segments of German Jewry could subscribe, albeit with varying emphases.

The new mission was to remake East European Jews in the image of German *Bildung* – a goal of course rejected by most antisemites, who regarded this idea as both undesirable and unrealisable. We cannot simply dismiss this as crude cultural and cognitive colonialism, as German nationalism in Enlightenment trappings. There was much of that, but to reduce this mission to such an extent is to miss its more complex character. In those days, German cultural superiority was widely recognised, self-evident. German Jews and non-Jews thus brought to their East European neighbours a particular blend of mission, sympathetic benevolence, and antipathy.

The numerous works of Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904) captured this widely diffused sensibility – as epitomised by the title of his 1876 collection *Aus Halb-Asien* [From Half-Asia]. This sensibility was to colour future liberal Jewish confrontations with their mobile eastern brothers. Franzos catalogues all the defects of the Galician ghetto and its inhabitants: the religious fanaticism, the treatment of women, the filth, and the superstition. Yet there is also a certain empathy and a didacticism that serves an obvious commitment: to liberate these Jews from their wretched conditions and elevate them into a state of *Bildung*. For Franzos, who had been born in Podolia and had spent his childhood first in Galicia and then Bukovina, Germandom (*Deutschtum*) was not a matter of political control but a cultural idea, part of the path from darkness to progress.¹⁵ Moreover, if the Eastern Jews were so clearly “backward”, this was a product of the even greater backwardness of the societies in which they lived. This is the context of Franzos’s famous formulation, half-Asia (Galicia, Rumania, Southern

¹³ “Galizische Zustände”, *Der Israelit*, 7, 12 (22 March 1846), p. 93.

¹⁴ Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews: From the Chmielnicki Persecution of the Jews in Poland to the Period of Emancipation in Central Europe*, 5 (Philadelphia 1895), pp. 5-6 and 206.

¹⁵ See the foreword to Karl Emil Franzos, *Aus Halb-Asien*, 1 (Stuttgart and Berlin 1914), pp. 17-18. By 1914, this had already reached its fifth edition.

Russia, Bukovina), which was as much a state of mind as a geographical location. Ostjuden were half-Asians because they lived within these cultural and political boundaries. It was within this context that one should locate Franzos's much-quoted, ambivalent dictum: "For every country gets the Jews it deserves." ("Denn jedes Land hat die Juden, die es verdient.")

By the 1880s, a century of diverging historical development had created for some observers two radically juxtaposed, perhaps unbridgeable cultures. The ghetto had become a kind of anthropological curiosity. The author and translator Jakob Fromer later wrote:

Whoever desires to experience an ethnological sensation need not venture to the far corners of the world. For that, a day's journey from Berlin will suffice. One need only cross the Russian border to find an almost unknown human type full of mystery and wonder... to look with astonishment at these people with dirty caftans, the exotic faces, which, like ghostly apparitions from times long past, still haunt the modern present.¹⁶

Distance, Protection, and Philanthropy

This was to be sure an extreme view. Nonetheless, when Eastern Jewish refugees began streaming into the cities of Western Europe, the cultural distance seemed so great that mainly paternalistic and philanthropic modes of relationship seemed possible. Still, the older ambivalence prevailed; protective and dissociative attitudes and actions operated uneasily side by side. Despite the gulf, perhaps because of it, German Jewish philanthropy attained a level of unprecedented magnanimity. This aid was formally justified in terms of a common religious faith, but the bond was also the result of older habits in which traditions of Jewish mutual concern remained alive.

Indeed, family was a more accurate, even if less invoked model for describing and justifying the relationship between Western and Eastern Jews. This model had the virtue of embracing the emotional and existential dimension, without at the same time threatening Western Jews' sense of Germandom. As journalist Hugo Ganz, put it, members of the same family could belong to different nations. But Ganz alluded to an important, not always acknowledged bond between the Western Jew and Eastern Jew: The caftan Jews, he declared, were simply "the images of our own fathers". This was not an ideological legitimation but instead an admission of a charged, multivalent, psychological fact. Families, according to Ganz, contained inequalities, whereby some members "worked themselves into the brightness, while others had to remain in the shadow of wretchedness". Western members had to help their eastern brothers become more like themselves.¹⁷ For modern and liberal Jews, equal family member-

¹⁶ See Jakob Fromer's introduction to Salomon Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte* (Munich 1911), pp. 7-8. Fromer, like his subject, was a transplanted, modernised Ostjude. It is worth noting that many key creators of the stereotype (and opponents thereof) were themselves of Eastern Jewish origin. Some of the most critical depictions of ghetto life flowed from the pens of Eastern Jewish authors.

¹⁷ "Das ostjüdische Problem", *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, 55, 42 (6 November 1891).

ship was predicated upon the overcoming of a common, debilitating past. This was the source of both the rejection and the responsibility.

For many German Jews, their specific sense of self was of course based upon the explicit difference that they sought to establish between themselves and the East European Jew (while among non-Jewish Germans, a heated debate continued over whether such a difference mattered). More than ever, for many “assimilating” German Jews, their own sense of particular identity was based upon an explicit, even radical distancing of themselves from the East European Jew. The author Ernst Lissauer recalled:

Once, as I stood with some fellow Jewish students outside my Berlin school, a man with a caftan and side locks came from Friedrich Street station and asked us, ‘Are there no Jews in Berlin?’ And, instinctively, I answered to myself, ‘No’, for he meant something else by the word than I did.¹⁸

This was not simple Jewish self-denial, but Jewishness defined in its particular German self-understanding, as opposed to its East European mode. The word was simplistically and stereotypically divided into cultured German and uncultured Eastern Jews. The novelist Jakob Wassermann (1873-1934) graphically described the gulf thus:

When I saw a Polish or a Galician Jew I would speak to him, try to peer into his soul, to learn how he thought and lived. And I might be moved or amazed, or be filled with pity and sadness; but I could feel no sense of brotherhood or even of kinship. He was totally alien to me, alien in every utterance, in every breath, and when he failed to arouse my sympathy for him as a human being he even repelled me.

Wassermann drew an ontological distinction between a “Jewish” Jew and a German Jew: “Are those not two distinct species, almost two distinct races, or at least two distinct modes of life and thought?”¹⁹ An even more radical anecdote comes from Theodor Lessing, who later became very self-critical about these attitudes and turned to a committed, albeit idiosyncratic Zionism: “On the street, my mother pointed to a man in a caftan and said, ‘There goes a Jew.’ I then concluded that we were not really Jews.”²⁰ Yet such attitudes were extreme and ultimately atypical. A certain acceptance of Jewishness, no matter how formulated, accounted for the continuing German Jewish nagging sense of responsibility for their eastern brethren. Nor was this always simply a question of duty. A degree of nostalgia and sentimentality for older, traditional ways, for a bygone manner of life, persisted and was transmitted in everyday attitudes, literature, the popular press, and art.²¹ But this was usually most apparent for life within the ghettos of the German cultural realm. German Jews could rehabilitate

¹⁸ Ernst Lissauer, “Deutschtum und Judentum”, *Der Kunstwart*, 25, 13 (April 1912), p. 7.

¹⁹ Jakob Wassermann, *My Life as a German and Jew*, English translation S.N. Brainin (New York 1933), pp. 196-198.

²⁰ Theodor Lessing, *Einmal und nie wieder* (Gütersloh 1969), p. 112.

²¹ Richard I. Cohen, “Nostalgia and ‘return to the ghetto’: a cultural phenomenon in Western and Central Europe” in Jonathan Frankel, Steven Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 130-155.

and aestheticise their own ghettos because they had transcended them, the classic precondition for nostalgia. Although these portraits were not without their critics, their idealised depictions would hardly have been possible in the early literature of the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*). Thus Leopold Kompert and Aaron Bernstein associated the Bohemian and Posen ghettos of their youth with happy times and positive qualities.²² The popular paintings of Moritz Oppenheim depicted the ghetto as a refuge of sanctity and spirituality in an otherwise hostile, uncivilised world. To be sure, the ghetto itself underwent a certain modernising embourgeoisement in his pictures, its dwellers became the incarnation of solid middle-class virtues.²³ Emancipation and respect for the past could be combined. For all that, as Ismar Schorsch has shown, it was not the ghetto of old but rather the accomplished Jews of medieval Spain, the Sephardic experience, to which German Jews increasingly turned as a more suitable model for a legitimate and useable Jewish past.²⁴

The Idealisation of the “Eastern Jews”

Of course, a certain admiration for the immersion of the Polish Jew in tradition, his spirit in the face of adversity, even a kind of begrudging respect for some of the more endearing qualities of the despised beggar, or shnorer, was never entirely absent. The rougher edges of this disdain were softened, humanised by recognition of the Eastern Jews’ sense of humour, their wit and gall (*chutzpah*), and an abiding, if ambivalent attraction to their intimacy and informality as opposed to the mannered constraints and restraints of German *Bildung*. Sigmund Freud amply illustrated this in his *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905).²⁵ Still, in larger terms, the notion that East European Jewry could serve as a model, as a source of emulation, for modernised Western Jewry would have seemed rather outlandish during most of the 19th century. The positive countermyth of the “Ostjude” – as a more widespread, even institutional, rather than individual attitude – could arise only in the early 20th century under different conditions: the rise of the Zionist movement, fin-de-siècle German neo-romanticism, and a conscious Jewish “post-assimilationism”.

Actually, as early as 1822, that great German-Jewish rebel and poet Heinrich Heine had already outlined the basic elements of later glorifications of the Eastern Jew. But in the 19th century, these were the views of a great dissenter and hardly representative. Nonetheless, because the Ostjude, whether negatively or positively conceived, was regarded as the archetype of Jewishness, the living link in a long tradition, the celebration of the Eastern Jew was always a potential, albeit usually unrealised element, the positive side of an inbuilt Western Jewish ambivalence. Thus, alongside the

²² Jonathan M. Hess, “Leopold Kompert and the Work of Nostalgia: The Cultural Capital of German Jewish Ghetto Fiction”, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 97, 4 (Fall 2007), pp. 576-615.

²³ Ismar Schorsch, “Art as Social History: Oppenheim and the German Jewish Vision of Emancipation” in Moritz Oppenheim, *The First Jewish Painter* (Jerusalem 1983).

²⁴ Idem, “The Myth of Sephardi Supremacy”, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 34 (1989), pp. 47-66.

²⁵ For a compelling, but problematic view of the Jewish undermining of civility, see John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York 1974), and the insightful review by Robert Alter, “Manners and the Jewish Intellectual”, *Commentary*, 60, 2 (August 1975), pp. 58-64.

contemptuous remarks – “the nausea I felt at the sight of these ragged creatures” who lived in “pig-sties... jabbered, prayed, and haggled” – Heine also declared after an encounter with Jews in a Polish village:

I esteem the Polish Jew more highly than his German counterpart... As a result of rigorous isolation, the character of the Polish Jew acquired a oneness... The inner man did not degenerate into a haphazard conglomeration of feelings... The Polish Jew, with his dirty fur cap, vermin-infested beard, smell of garlic, and his jabber is certainly preferable to many other Jews I know who shine with the magnificence of gilt-edged government bonds.²⁶

These remarks presciently anticipated future representations of the “Ostjude” as a symbol of premodern, un-fragmented wholeness (although these later presentations often lacked Heine’s qualifying realism). Moreover, Heine foreshadowed the tendency to base the elevation of the Eastern Jew upon a critique of the Western Jew. The cult of the “Ostjude” always proceeded from a comparative east-west analysis. In this way, the Eastern Jew could become a foil for what was regarded as the shallow, imitative, assimilating Jew of the west. Starting with Heine, this evaluation was typically, perhaps even by definition, linked to anti-bourgeois sentiments. But such attitudes could not become normative until the success of the emancipation project, the desirability of embourgeoisement, and the insistence on Jewish denationalisation began to be questioned seriously. Therefore, only with the Zionist movement did an institutional impetus towards a radical revision of Eastern Jewry develop.

It is true that German Zionists represented only a small minority of German Jewry.²⁷ But they were exceedingly vocal, and because they threatened the prevailing liberal consensus by arguing that – contrary to the premises of emancipation – the Jews did indeed constitute a nation, they were an ideological nuisance in German Jewish life. It was upon this simple proposition that they advocated a radically reformed relationship between the Eastern Jew and the Western Jew. The national movement, it was claimed, would transform the “Ostjude” from the passive object of philanthropy into the natural and equal historical partner of his western brother. The formulation of a western Zionist identity presupposed a period of secularisation and was from the start linked to the critique of many assimilationist assumptions and the recovery of Jewish commitment after a period of estrangement.²⁸ Thus, in Rome and Jerusalem (1862), the “Communist rabbi” Moses Hess (1812-1875), a founder of Socialism and a proto-Zionist, had already combined a merciless critique of the “cowardly” and “contemptible” Western Jew with a paean for the more honest, self-respecting Jews of Eastern

²⁶ Heine to Christian August Keller, 1 September 1822. See Hugo Bieber, ed., Heinrich Heine, *Jüdisches Manifest* (New York 1946), pp. 11-12. Heine later published his “Memoir on Poland”, *Der Gesellschafter* (January 1823). The translation here is from F. Ewen, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of Heinrich Heine* (New York 1948), pp. 690-691.

²⁷ Even within this minority, many members of German Zionism were themselves immigrants from the east. For a portrait of this movement and its membership, see Stephen Poppel, *Zionism in Germany 1897-1933: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia 1977).

²⁸ The preconditions for modern Jewish national self-consciousness are analysed by Jacob Katz in “The Jewish National Movement: A Sociological Analysis” in idem, *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Farnborough 1972).

Europe. It was there that the kernel of Jewishness had been preserved. All that was required was the secularisation of such forms of Jewish life into the living idea of Jewish nationalism. Hess understood that in the west, Zionism would require a post-emancipationist reassertion of national identity, while in the east a modernisation of this national identity was necessary.

Over the years, this glorification of the Eastern Jew became a rather conscious “countermyth” set against prevailing liberal (as well as various German Orthodox) definitions of Jewish self-understanding. The image of the “Ostjude” as the embodiment of Jewish authenticity, exemplar of the spiritual, un-fragmented Jewish self, was diametrically opposed to previously normative conceptions of the ghetto and the ghetto Jew. The Western Jew, Max Nordau declared while still flush with his initial enthusiasm for Zionism, was “an inner cripple” and contrasted his “poisoned” soul with the ghetto Jew who, despite all the poverty and persecution, maintained his integrity and “in the moral sense... lived a full life”.²⁹

This is no doubt correct. Yet there was another side to the matter: The founders of Western Zionism and the first generation of German Zionism never entirely overcame the same liberal cultural biases characteristic of the “assimilationist” Jews whose position they criticised. They, too, envisaged the relationship in terms of a Western Jewish elite and a compliant Eastern Jewish mass.³⁰ The familiar patronising air was often apparent. Moreover, there was a clear limit to the glorification of the Eastern Jew from a classical Zionist standpoint. After all, the Zionists viewed exile (galut) as an unnatural state, and in this context, the eastern ghetto retained its status as a “pathological” form of life. Herzl’s explicitly West European formulation of the problem referred basically to Eastern Europe:

Zionism is a kind of new Jewish cure for the sick. We have stepped in as volunteer nurses, and we want to cure the patients – the poor, sick Jewish people – by means of a healthful way of life on our own ancestral soil.³¹

From this viewpoint, Zionism could also be understood as a kind of safety valve for bourgeois German Jewry, a convenient mechanism for removing from German territory the ubiquitous threat of invading masses of Ostjuden.³²

Therefore, early German Zionism did not universalise Herzl’s analysis and apply it to itself, but instead referred primarily to the “unfree” Jews of non-emancipated Eastern Europe. As German Zionist Adolf Friedemann put it:

²⁹ See Nordau’s famous address to the First Zionist Congress in Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York 1975), pp. 235-241.

³⁰ The examples are numerous. See Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften* (Cologne and Leipzig 1909), pp. 311 and 317; Theodor Herzl, “The Solution of the Jewish Question” in *Zionist Writings I* (New York 1975), pp. 25-26. On the attitudes of German Zionist leaders, such as Franz Oppenheimer and Adolf Friedemann, see Kurt Blumenfeld, *Erlebte Judenfrage: Ein vierteljahrhundert deutscher Zionismus* (Stuttgart 1962), pp. 52 and 59.

³¹ “The Family Affliction” (1899) in Herzl, *Zionist Writings*, 2: 1898-1904 (New York 1975), p. 45.

³² Max Nordau, “Der Zionismus und seine Gegner” *Zionistische Schriften* (1898), pp. 117-119.

“West Europeans will mainly provide the organisers for colonisation... naturally we are not about to initiate a mass emigration of German, French, and English Jews.”³³

For Franz Oppenheimer, the distinguished German-Jewish sociologist, Zionism, through physical settlement on the land, would help abolish the physical and degeneration and oppression of the ghetto.³⁴ Oppenheimer clearly distinguished himself from liberal Jews, because, as he put it, he regarded himself as an “ethnic Jew”, proud of his Jewish past and present identity. Yet he clearly dissociated this identity and himself from the crucially different cultural and “national” consciousness of the Eastern Jews – and did so in terms of a wider distinction of western culture and eastern barbarism.³⁵

The Myth of the “Eastern Jew”

The early Zionists then “discovered” and recast Eastern Jews – but in a specifically distinguishing and philanthropic manner. While they did pave the way for a closer sense of east-west Jewish interdependence, they were still very far from the idea that Zionism demanded personal, existential commitment and Jewish cultural totality, which was the hallmark of the second generation of German Zionism. These radicalised young Zionists scandalised their elders with the belief that Germandom and Jewishness were ultimately incompatible, and that Zionism entailed an act of “uprooting” (*Entwurzelung*) from diaspora life. Zionism, they proclaimed, was also an internal and spiritual revolution: The call for a Jewish renaissance was now transposed from the external and the political to the existential and cultural planes.³⁶ It was in this context that the “countermyth” of the Eastern Jew came to play a central, defining role. As always, though the content was now transformed, representations of the “Ostjude” were designed to give the German Jew a new and different picture of himself.

The radical Jewish revival can only be understood as part of a wider neo-romantic, anti-positivist fin-de-siècle Western and Central European shift in sensibility.³⁷ These new currents went much against the grain of and provided an alternative to prevailing middle-class rationalist positivism. The new emphasis on “myth” and a revised conception of the role of the “unconscious” and the “irrational” in culture facilitated a new appreciation of elements in Jewish life that had been previously neglected or castigated. Martin Buber’s re-evaluation of the Hasid was perhaps the most dramatic and best-known example of the change at the time.³⁸ Gershom Scholem’s slightly later project, which

³³ Adolf Friedemann, *Was will der Zionismus?* (Berlin 1903), p. 17.

³⁴ Franz Oppenheimer, “Der Aufbau einer Jüdischen Genossenschaftsiedlung in Palästina” in idem, *Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes: Lebenserinnerungen* (Düsseldorf 1964), pp. 281-296.

³⁵ This remarkable text is to be found in idem, “Stammesbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein”, *Jüdische Rundschau* 15, 8 (25 February 1910).

³⁶ “Der XIV Delegiertentag im Leipzig am 14 und 15 Juni”, *Jüdische Rundschau*, 25 (June 1914), pp. 268-269.

³⁷ Steven Aschheim, *Nietzsche und die Deutschen. Karriere eines Kults* (Stuttgart 1996), Chapters 1, 3, and 4.

³⁸ On Buber’s remarkable popularity among non-Jewish German intellectuals as well as Jewish

brought mystical, Kabbalistic elements to the dialectical centre of historical Judaism, was also a product of this trend.³⁹ Such sentiments also clearly created a greater receptivity to other aspects of Eastern Jewish culture and identity as well.⁴⁰

Like many other German youth, these radical Zionists combined nationalism with life philosophy. They sought meaningful, “rooted” communities capable of vitalising and regenerating the authentic national character.⁴¹ But for them, unlike their parents, incorporation into the German Volk appeared to be neither possible, nor for some desirable. Given their nationalist commitment, it was thus necessary to find their own people and establish their own national framework. They discovered this in the eastern ghettos. Ostjuden, they argued, were a real Volk. In the east was an authentic entity – not a pale adjunct to a foreign culture – replete with its own unique, living forms. Perhaps Buber’s Hasid – vibrant, rooted in community and spiritual values – was the unconscious Jewish answer to the peasant, the ideal figure of the German ethno-nationalist (völkisch) movement. At any rate, for these Zionists, the Eastern Jew became a kind of surrogate for the German nation, an alternative framework of identification.

This celebration of Ostjuden (and the related critique of bourgeois Western Jews) tells us more about the ideological predicament and proclivities of these German Jews than it illuminates the realities of ghetto culture. Moreover, it was not limited to Zionists. Intellectuals such as Franz Rosenzweig and, in the 1920s, Alfred Döblin were equally prone to such idealisations.⁴² As Rosenzweig euphorically wrote his mother after his wartime encounter with Ostjuden:

The Jewish boys are magnificent and I felt something I rarely feel, pride in my race, in so much freshness and vivacity... I can well understand why the average German Jew no longer feels any kinship with these East European Jews; actually he has very little kinship left; he has become philistine, bourgeois; but I, and people like me, should still feel the kinship strongly.⁴³

Franz Kafka’s discovery of Eastern Jews similarly illustrates the major impulses behind the intellectual search for a post-bourgeois, post-assimilationist Jewish identity. Like many of his contemporaries – the philosopher and historian Gershom Scholem is the best known but by no means the only example⁴⁴ – Kafka’s Jewish “return” was to

adherents, see my book *Brothers and Strangers*, Chapter 6.

³⁹ Idem, “The Metaphysical Psychologist: On the Life and Letters of Gershom Scholem”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 76 (December 2004), pp. 903-933.

⁴⁰ One exemplary document of this mood in general and the particular emphasis on Ostjudentum may be found in the anthology, Hans Kohn, ed., *Vom Judentum* (Leipzig 1913), especially the contributions by Robert Weltsch, Max Brod, Gustav Landauer and Moses Calvary.

⁴¹ On the influence of the völkisch idea on these circles and an analysis of the similarities and differences relative to broader German currents, see George L. Mosse, “The Influence of the Volkish Idea on German Jewry” in idem, *Germans and Jews: The Search for a “Third Force” in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York 1971).

⁴² See N. Glatzer, ed., *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York 1961), pp. 37-38, 73-74, and 80, and Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen* (Olten 1968) and the afterword by Walter Muschg in this reprint.

⁴³ Letter of 23 May 1918 in Glatzer, *Rosenzweig*, pp. 73-74.

⁴⁴ Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth* (New York 1980), Chapter 5.

a large extent predicated upon the conflict with his parents and what he regarded as their hypocritical, bourgeois life. Indeed, Ostjuden and Zionism became objects of interest for Kafka to a large extent precisely because of his father's dismissal of these matters: "Had you shown interest in them", Kafka wrote, "these things might, for that very reason, have become suspect in my eyes."⁴⁵ In some moods, Kafka's appreciation of the "Ostjude" went together with his experience of German coldness:

Yesterday it occurred to me that I did not always love my mother as she deserved and as I could only because the German language prevented it... "Mutter" is particularly German for the Jew, it unconsciously contains, together with the Christian splendour, Christian coldness... I believe that it is only memories of the ghetto that still preserve the Jewish family, for the word "Vater" is too far from meaning the Jewish father.⁴⁶

The East European Jews incarnated for Kafka this missing warmth. A personalised relationship, at least ideologically, was an imperative of the cult. Buber expressed this when speaking of Eastern Jewish refugees:

We shall perceive them, all of them, not merely as our brothers and sisters; rather... every one of us will feel: These people are part of myself. It is not together with them that I am suffering; *I am* suffering these tribulations... my people *is* my soul.⁴⁷

Yet such personal relations were ultimately more the exception than the rule. Contradictions between theory and practice persisted. The very theory of these radical Zionists reflected a certain confusion, for the paradox of their revolt against German culture was itself couched in deeply German neo-romantic terms.⁴⁸ Moreover, there were also built-in ideological limits to this Zionist counter-narrative. Given the emphasis on creating a new Jew in Palestine, no empirical acceptance of Jewish life in Eastern Europe as it actually existed could be endorsed. The young Hans Kohn (1891-1971) put it this way: "We want to revolutionise Jewry, not just Western Jewry, but above all Eastern Jewry."⁴⁹

It was precisely this rejection of ghetto life that prompted a small minority of Zionists to withdraw from Zionism in the name of existing East European Jewry. Here Zionism spawned its own dialectic. Influenced by the Zionist opposition to assimilation and its romantic affirmation of living Jewishness, these intellectuals concluded that only in the eastern ghettos did – and could – real Jewish culture exist. Men like Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937) and Fritz Mordecai Kaufmann (1888-1921) sought in

⁴⁵ Franz Kafka, *Letter to his Father* (New York 1965), p. 85.

⁴⁶ See the entry for 24 October 1911, Max Brod, ed., Franz Kafka, *Diaries 1910-1913*, (New York 1965), p. 111.

⁴⁷ See Buber, "Judaism and the Jews" (1909), in *On Judaism*, N. Glatzer, ed. (New York 1967), p. 20.

⁴⁸ See Scholem's critique of the Jüdisches Volksheim in Gershon Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, pp. 76-80, and Georg Lublinski, "Erinnerungen and das jüdische Volksheim in Berlin", *Der junge Jude* (July-August 1930), p. 135.

⁴⁹ Kohn, ed., *Vom Judentum*, p. 17.

different ways to reconcile modernity with the ghetto and to affirm what both Zionists and assimilationists denied: that authentic Jewish identity was ultimately the Judaism of Eastern Europe. Though a tiny movement, it is worth mentioning, for it constituted the most extreme glorification of the Eastern Jew.

“Eastern Jews” and the Self-Definition of German Jews

What kind of picture emerges from all these developments? From the Enlightenment onwards, “Eastern Jewry” constituted a vital element in German Jewish self-definition, identity, and culture. At one extreme, the East European Jews acted as a living reminder to German Jewry of its own recently rejected past and were an ever-present threat to its integrationist aspirations. The “Ostjude” served as a convenient foil for modernising German Jews to displace characteristics labelled both negative and “Jewish”. In the middle of the spectrum was a consistently ambivalent approach to the Eastern Jews – a dissociative commingling with the protective mode. At the other extreme lay the celebration of the Eastern Jew. Almost a cult, here was a “countermovement”, whose psychological function was an inverted mirror of the myth of the ghetto Jew it so vehemently opposed. For if the creation of the German Jew was dependent upon a negative image of the Ostjude, then the recreation of the German Jew obviously depended on the positive symbolic reconstruction of that same despised ghetto neighbour.

Such German Jewish representations revealed the function of the Ostjuden as a “Rorschach” inkblot test: The negative and positive stereotypes tell us more about the nature of German Jewish self-understanding than they illuminate the realities of Eastern Jewry. From Franzos to Buber, there is a massive symbolic change in content – but not in underlying function: Both are didactic, both employ archetypal (if not stereotypical) language, both address and mirror the world of German Jewry and its needs.

Much of modern Jewish history – as well as gentile perceptions of Jewry – was conditioned by the rift between unemancipated Eastern and emancipated Western Jewry. The existence of the ghetto, both as myth and reality, profoundly influenced the fate and disposition of German Jews in particular. The “Eastern Jew” and the “German Jew” were archetypal representations of the dichotomy, the main participants in an unprecedented confrontation marked always by tension, often by intolerance, and occasionally by creativity as well. Mirror opposites, they remained psychologically bound to each other. Idealised or despised, Ostjuden retained their symbolic resonance because they seemed to live their lives in a distinctively Jewish mode: This “totality” gave them an ur-quality lost to German Jewry. They satisfied perfectly the requirements of both myth and countermyth making. Their power as cultural symbols made them essential elements of German Jewish self-definition. Their changing image reflected the complex and contradictory face of German Jewry itself.

Gershon David Hundert

New History, Refined Memory

The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe

Since the end of the Cold War, interest in the history and culture of East European Jews has grown enormously. Access to archives has opened up new research opportunities. The YIVO Institute of Jewish Research has used them. Together with over 400 scholars, YIVO has produced the first encyclopaedia of East European Jewry. The results are significant. The encyclopaedia lays bare all the layers and diversity of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Work on the encyclopaedia has also shown where the gaps in our knowledge of East European Jewry remain. Furthermore, this project is by implication a compendium of Jewish Studies in the world.

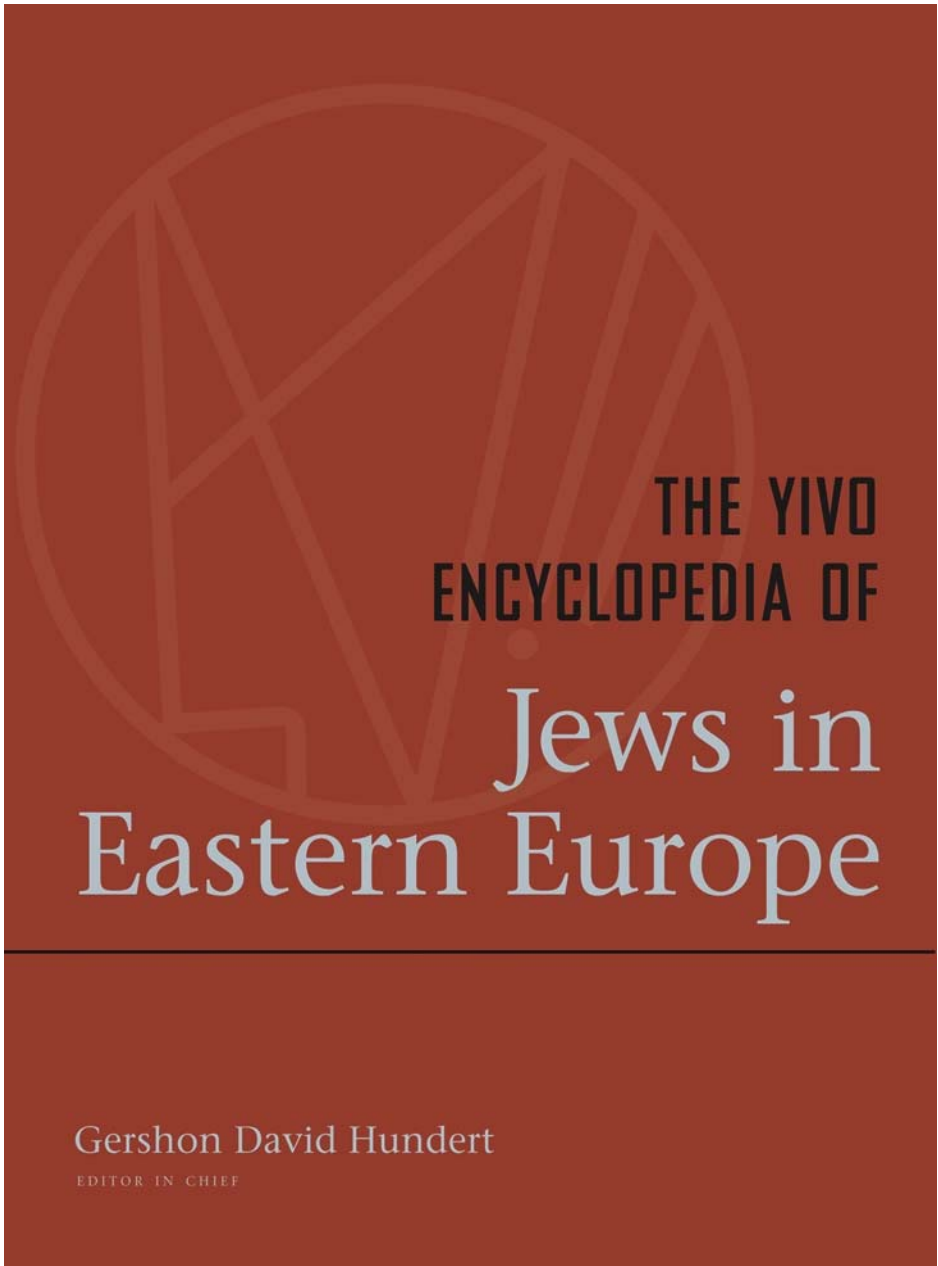
Most Jews are descended from East European ancestors. From the 18th century until the Holocaust, the majority of the world's Jews lived in Eastern Europe. Those communities served as the demographic reservoir of the Jewish people, when emigration from Eastern Europe began to form the nucleus of Jewish communities from the United States to Australia, from Canada to South Africa, from Argentina to Israel. At the start of the 21st century, many Jews are seeking to learn more about their origins and their ancestors' experience, but until most recently, there was no comprehensive, reliable resource that could act as a port of entry to the history and culture of East European Jewry.

But history has intervened. The events of 1989 led to the opening of many archives. The new states of Eastern Europe made it possible to conduct research on a large number of previously forbidden topics. With the re-definition of national histories, there emerged a growing interest to allow a place for the "others" – including the Jews. This trend gave scholars a unique opportunity to contribute in a fundamental way to the shaping of both history and memory.

For the field of Jewish Studies, the aforementioned developments opened up the possibility of creating the first comprehensive, authoritative reference work on East European Jewry: *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, which, after seven years of planning and preparation, appeared in two volumes in May 2008.¹ Some 2,500 pages in length, the encyclopaedia contains 1,800 entries, over 1,100 illustrations (including 57 colour plates), and 55 maps, which were specially prepared for this project by the Cartographic Laboratory of the University of Toronto.

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¹ Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London 2008).



THE YIVO
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

Jews in
Eastern Europe

Gershon David Hundert
EDITOR IN CHIEF

The encyclopaedia's sponsor, YIVO – the acronym for *Yidisher visenshaftlikher institut* – was founded in Vilnius (Vil'na) in 1925 with the aim of becoming the central institution for Yiddish-language research on the history and culture of East European Jews and their emigrant communities. Located in New York City since 1940, the YIVO Institute of Jewish Studies is today the world's pre-eminent resource centre for East European Jewish Studies; Yiddish language, literature, and folklore; and the American Jewish immigrant experience. The YIVO Library and Archives house the world's most important collections of materials related to East European Jews. These treasures and the institution's primary concern with Eastern Europe made YIVO the perfect home for the encyclopaedia.

Goals

The basic goal of the encyclopaedia is to impart and reflect East European Jewish civilisation as a whole. To this end, the *YIVO Encyclopedia* seeks to represent Jewish life in *all* its variety and complexity: religious and secular; male and female; urban and rural; Hasidic and Misnagdic; Yiddishist and Hebraist; Zionist and assimilationist; Russian and Polish; Romanian and Ukrainian; *Litvak* and *Galitsianer*; even Karaite and Rabbinite. The fundamental test for inclusion was historical and cultural significance. The *YIVO Encyclopedia* is intended to be an ecumenical work: nondenominational, nonideological, and nonconfessional. Nothing Jewish is considered foreign.

This is a single reference work where one can find, for example, biographical entries on Ludwik Fleck, a pioneer in the sociology of science who anticipated and substantially influenced the work of Thomas Kuhn; Marcel Iancu, an avant-garde artist and illustrator of the first volume of Dada; Rózsika Schwimmer, the first female ambassador ever; Moshe Isserles, a 16th-century rabbi and codifier of Jewish law; Lev Shestov, the existentialist religious philosopher; and Sholem Aleichem, probably the most famous Yiddish writer.

One can consider this encyclopaedia a monumental work of translation. This is meant literally – the language of East European Jewish culture was chiefly Yiddish, along with Hebrew and other local languages – but also metaphorically – most of our readers live in quite different circumstances than their ancestors. Moreover, the *YIVO Encyclopedia* highlights not only high cultural achievements in their various forms but also the everyday life of ordinary Jews as manifested in their clothing, books, festivals and holidays, and certain customs.

In the preface to the encyclopaedia, I use the phrase “dispassionate filiopietism”, which – even if it has too many syllables – best expresses the motivation behind this project. The *YIVO Encyclopedia* is filiopietistic and dispassionate precisely because it seeks to present East European Jewish life in detail – as soberly, comprehensively, and accurately as possible. The goal is not to celebrate or eulogize, but to recover and represent on the basis of the most up-to-date and objective scholarly research available. The piety, our obligation to our ancestors, is therefore expressed in our determination to present East European Jewish civilisation without prejudice and nostalgia but with as much thoroughness and objectivity as possible.

As editor in chief, it was especially important to me to avoid the kitsch sometimes associated with East European Jewish culture. Tacky, overly sentimental images and

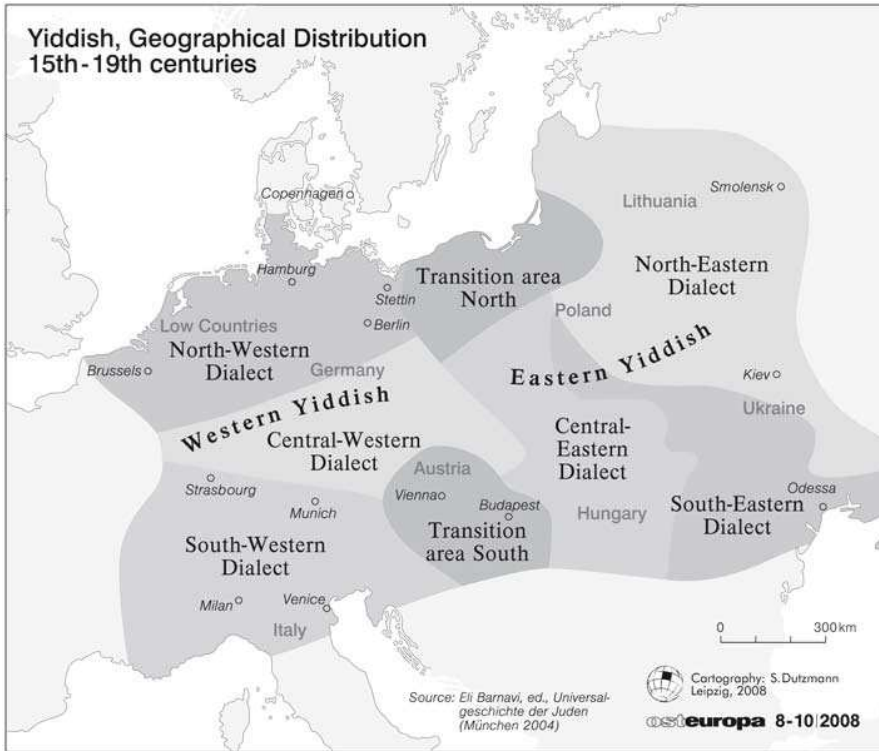
melodies have distorted and cheapened the historical memory of an extraordinarily rich and diverse culture. Consequently, I attached great significance to the encyclopaedia's physical appearance and design. Guided by leading U.S. designer Joan Greenfield, Yale University Press has succeeded in making a physically beautiful book that presents the contents with clarity and dignity and contributes to our effort to re-frame and re-imagine the history and memory of East European Jewry. The encyclopaedia is to counter the widely shared notion that this Jewry was culturally homogenous, poor, pious, and unmannered.

Contributions were provided by 451 authors from 19 countries, all of whom rank among the foremost experts in the various branches of East European Jewish Studies. The encyclopaedia will allow scholars – especially those who do not normally publish in English – to reach a much broader audience than the readership of specialized academic publications. This project – perhaps because it is unprecedented – generated a great deal of excitement in the field, which may explain why it was possible to enlist virtually every major scholar to write about his or her areas of expertise. To choose just a few examples: Jan Gross wrote on the Jedwabne massacre; Zvi Gitelman, on Communism; Jay Harris, on Talmud study; Michael Silber, on Orthodoxy; Michael Meyer, on religious Reform; Ruth Wisse, on Y.L. Peretz; Chava Weissler, on *tkhines* (Yiddish prayers associated with women); Todd Endelman, on assimilation; Chava Turniansky, on Yiddish literature before 1800; James Young, on monuments and memorials; James Hoberman, on cinema; Dan Miron, on Sholem Aleichem; and Jonathan Frankel, on parties and ideologies. The high standing of these and the hundreds of other scholars who contributed to the *YIVO Encyclopedia* lends the project prestige and authority.

Each article was reviewed by the editor of the relevant topical section, with some articles being submitted to others for additional review. Every article is signed and includes suggestions for further reading, with preference being given to books and articles in English. About half of the submissions had to be translated into English from one of ten different languages.

Issues

The assumption implicit in our project is the distinctiveness of the East European Jewish experience. The key elements of this distinctiveness are numbers and language as well as the differences in the political and economic development of Eastern Europe compared with that of Central and Western Europe. By the 18th century, there were ten times more Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth than in the lands of the future German Empire. East European Jews spoke a dialect of Yiddish that was infused with thousands of Slavicisms and very difficult for speakers of Western Yiddish to understand. It is striking, for example, that the Hasidic movement never crossed this geographical-linguistic boundary. The historical and cultural path of East European Jews also followed a very different course than that of their neighbours to the west. The Jews of Eastern Europe tended to remain more attached to Jewish culture than the Jews of Western Europe, the best examples of this tendency being the Hassidic movement and the persistence of the Jewish languages in the Russian Empire despite the Jews' efforts to modernise.



Geographical limits

In designing the *YIVO Encyclopedia*, the editors first had to answer the question: Where is Eastern Europe? The answer, we concluded, was the region east of the German-speaking realm, north of the Balkans, and west of the Ural Mountains, that is to say, the borders of the region corresponding roughly to the present-day Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states and Finland, as well as that part of Russia west of the Ural Mountains. It is true that, in North American academic parlance at least, the very notion of “Eastern Europe” has fallen into disuse by scholars, who now tend to prefer terms such as East Central Europe or Central Europe and seldom use either to mean Russia. Nonetheless, the vague, general term Eastern Europe suits the purposes of the encyclopaedia, which for the most part addresses the eastern Ashkenazic experience. The original intent to treat the area where the eastern dialect of Yiddish was spoken had to be dropped. The western boundary of that region corresponds to no national borders. Moreover, the borders of the states concerned have shifted repeatedly in the course of history. Although the area defined by speakers of Eastern Yiddish would have been correct – almost pedantically so – we feared confusing readers by including only parts of several countries.

Using other, more general cultural criteria, we might have included some regions for specific historical periods alone. For example, for the period prior to the 19th century, Prague’s Jewish community should be included as a part of the same cultural region of the Jews living farther east. However, one does not usually think of a figure such as

Franz Kafka as East European. He is nevertheless included here as somewhat of an anomalous consequence of the simplifying decision to include the Czech lands within our geographical boundaries. Treating some regions for some historical periods and not for others would have created more problems than it solved.

Chronological limits

The chronology of the encyclopaedia extends from the earliest signs of a Jewish presence in Eastern Europe to the end of the 20th century. The starting point varies from place to place, in some cases going back to Roman times. Generally, more attention is given to recent centuries than to Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

This was not an easy decision and resulted mainly from the project being limited to 2 million words. In discussions concerning the chronological limits, some maintained that the *terminus ad quem* ought to be 1939, because, it was argued, East European Jewish life in all its variety and complexity was wiped out during the Holocaust. It is indisputable that the Second World War represents a momentous historical divide. Nevertheless, because Jews continued to live in these regions during the second half of the 20th century, because their story has not been told in full, and because the downfall of Communism created a fundamentally new situation, the encyclopaedia runs to the year 2000.

Treatment of the Holocaust

The period of the Holocaust – or *khurbn* (Hebrew: annihilation, devastation) – presented a major challenge. While the Holocaust is appropriately represented in this work, it should be noted that there exists an enormous literature on this subject in English, including several reference works.² The Holocaust is treated mainly within the entries on countries and other geographical entities in order to integrate this period into the longer-term narrative. The *YIVO Encyclopedia* pays particular attention to the experience of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe and their responses to events at the time. There are several entries for certain ghettos and biographies for the most prominent chairmen of the Jewish councils and other important figures. Specific concentration camps are dealt with in the entries “Aktion Reinhard” and “Killing Centers”. There is also an entry “Labor Camps.” Other Holocaust-related entries include “Babi Yar”, “The Black Book”, “Honor Courts” (informal courts that tried Jews accused of collaboration with the Nazis after the war), and “yizker-bikher” (postwar memorial volumes published by survivors, usually one for each community). The main focus of the encyclopaedia, however, is on the life of the East European Jews and not their murder or their murderers. Consequently, there are no entries for individual killings centres, not even Auschwitz. This represents one of our guiding editorial principles. The Holocaust must not be allowed to define the East European Jewish experience. We must try to avoid seeing the centuries that preceded the Second World War through the prism of the *khurbn* and avoid depicting the history of those hundreds of years and millions of lives as leading inevitably to destruction.

² The reference works include Walter Laqueur, Judith Tydor Baumel, eds., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven 2001) and Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York 1990).

Insert I

Map 1: Jews in East Central Europe ca. 1900

Map 2: Jewish Population in Europe 1933

Map 3: Jewish Population in Europe 1945-1949

Map 4: Jewish Population in Europe 2005

Jews in East Central Europe ca. 1900



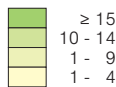
Source: Paul Robert Magocsi:
*Historical Atlas of East
 Central Europe*
 (Seattle and London 1993)

Cartography: S. Dutzmann
 Leipzig, 2008

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Share of the Jewish Population

in %



Share in towns and cities



11.7 Share in provinces

Borders

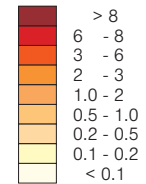
- — — international borders
- - - - kingdom border
- · · · · provincial borders

0 250 km

Jewish Population in Europe 1933



Share of the Total Population in %



200 Number of Jews

— international borders
 - - - Soviet republic borders

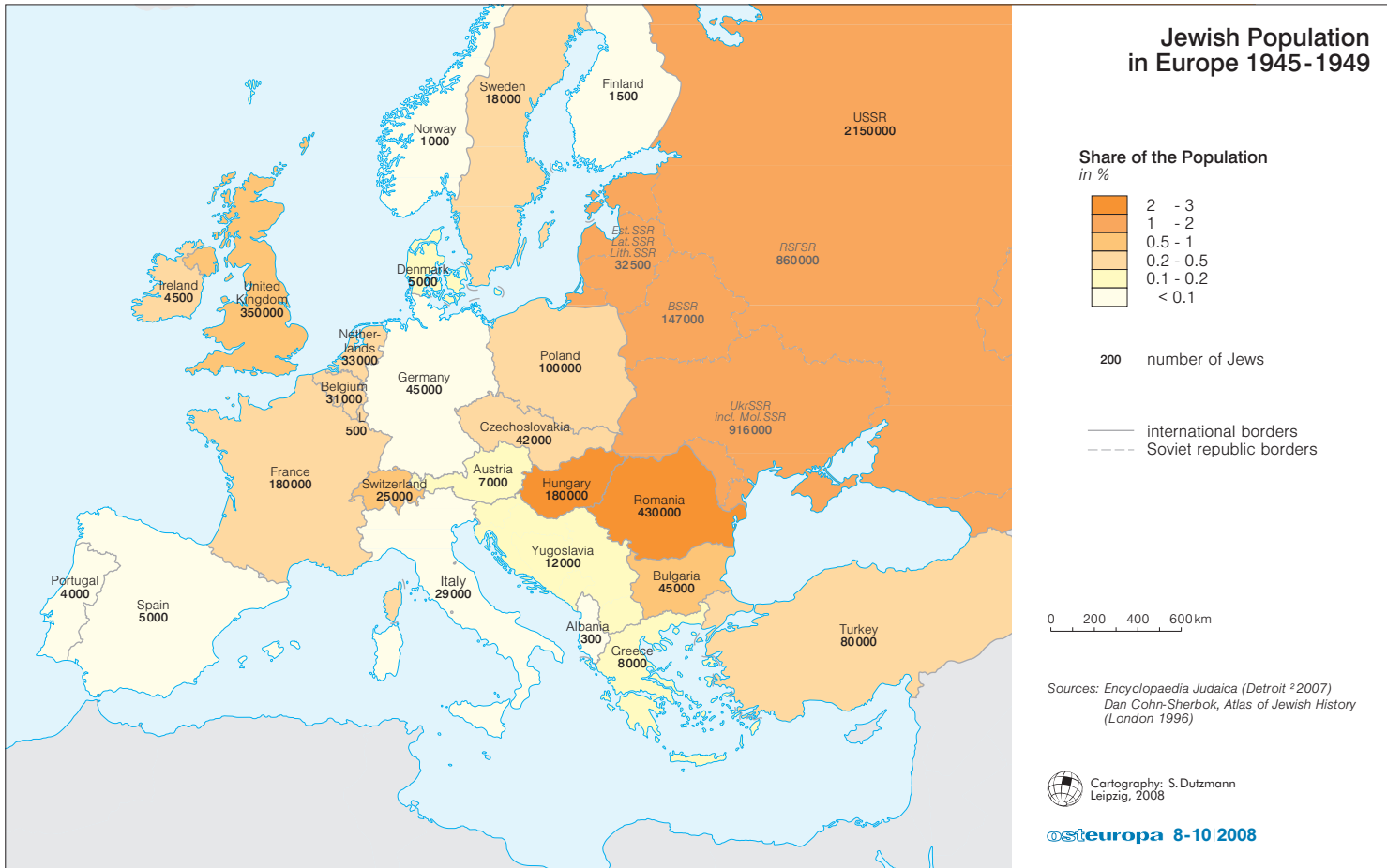


Source: Gideon Botsch, Norbert Kampe, eds., *Die Wannsee-Konferenz und der Völkermord an den europäischen Juden* (Berlin 2006)

Cartography: S. Dutzmann
 Leipzig, 2008

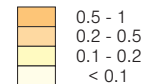
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Jewish Population in Europe 1945-1949



Jewish Population in Europe 2005

Share of the Total Population
in %



500 approximate number of Jews

— international borders

Abbreviations:
HR Croatia
L Luxembourg
MK Macedonia
SLO Slovenia



Sources: *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit 2007)
Fischer Weltatmanach
(Frankfurt am Main 2008)

Cartography: S. Dutzmann
Leipzig, 2008

Criteria for inclusion

In discussions on the encyclopaedia's emphasis and criteria for inclusion, the editors agreed to dedicate articles exclusively to Jews. Persons such as Iosif Stalin, Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, Adam Mickiewicz, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk are mentioned in the appropriate contexts, and their names do appear in the index.

Even more important, the Jewish experience stands front and centre in this work. The "Jewish contribution" to political, artistic, literary, or ideological movements in the countries where Jews lived plays a much smaller role. The very notion of such contributions is fraught with difficulty and is often either patronizing or apologetic. In the past, they were frequently used to reinforce calls for Jewish civil rights and to respond to anti-Jewish allegations.³ Nonetheless, the encyclopaedia does include two or three entries that might be considered an exception to this rule. Among them is the substantial article "Communism". Many of the questions surrounding the role of Jews in the Communist movement seemed so important that they outweighed the flipside of the coin – the role of Communism in Jewish life. Zvi Gitelman addresses not only the putative attractions of Communism to Jews, but also tries to express in numbers, wherever available, the proportion of Jews who could be counted as Communists and the proportion of Communists of Jewish origin. This matter continues to be a sensitive one in our own time.

We did not omit important figures whose behaviour could be called into question on ethical grounds. The test was prominence and importance, not righteousness. Therefore, there are biographical entries on Genrikh Iagoda, Stalin's commissar for internal affairs from 1934–1936, and similar figures in addition to a long entry entitled "Crime and Criminals".

Entire libraries could be filled with books and articles that attempt to define who is a "Jew". In this encyclopaedia, we used a broad definition that includes Jews who converted to other religions or who never identified themselves as Jews even though they were born Jews. In the case of converts, an attempt has been made to include the date and circumstances of conversion. People with remote Jewish ancestry, however, are not included. This category, it turns out, even includes Lenin. It also did not seem appropriate to include the famous Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein, whose only connection to Jewry was his father, who was Jewish by birth. On the other hand, we did include orientalist Daniil Khvol'son, who, in explaining his conversion to Christianity, famously said: "I was convinced it was better to be a professor in Saint Petersburg than a *melamed* in Eyshishok."⁴

Generally speaking, our criterion was ontological: Those who were considered Jews by others and those who saw themselves as Jews were included.

The more vexing issue was what to do about individuals who were Jewish by birth but did not identify themselves as Jewish. The decision was made to include them for the following reasons: First, they may have excelled or accomplished their achievements

³ Jeremy Cohen, Richard I. Cohen, eds., *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization: Reassessing an Idea* (Oxford 2008).

⁴ A *melamed* is a teacher in a Jewish religious school for children. Eyshishok is now Eišišškės, Lithuania. The quote is taken from Barry Rubin, *Assimilation and Its Discontents* (New York 1995), p. 159.

despite being Jewish in a society that was full of prejudices against Jews and placed obstacles in their way; second, their being Jewish by birth tied them to the Eastern European Jewish experience; third, their fame may have affected the Jewish community negatively or positively; fourth, they are famous, and readers expect to find them in this book. Including such individuals also provides an opportunity to explain to readers the attitudes of the people in question towards their Jewish heritage. If people were of particular importance in their fields of endeavour and were born Jews, they are included here. Obvious examples are some very prominent Soviet scientists, such as Lev Zil'ber or Iakov Zel'dovich, and important Hungarian bankers, such as Leo Goldberger or Ferenc Chorin.

It was easier to decide not to have entries on living persons. The editors were of the opinion that a life could not be represented properly in a reference work unless that life was over. Because this work attempts to cover history up to 2000, this principle led to some borderline cases. Therefore, there are some exceptions, for example, the entries on the Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever (born 1913) and the athlete Agnes Kéleti (born 1921). When necessary, within the context of a certain entry, living persons are given the place they deserve.

Since the focus of this encyclopaedia is on people and events in Eastern Europe, the inclusion of people who had roots in Eastern Europe but made their mark outside the area would have been overwhelming. One of the guiding principles for inclusion was that a person had to have done something of significance in Eastern Europe. For this reason, there are no entries on many Jews who stood out in labour movement or the film industry in the United States or in the Zionist movement and the history of State of Israel. The editors were not inflexible on this. Decisions were made to include Perets Smolenskin, who edited the important Hebrew monthly *Hashakhar* in Vienna, and Joseph Roth, who wrote many of his stories about Galicia in Paris. These two figures, and a few others, are so closely linked to Eastern Europe that their inclusion seemed necessary. The articles on individuals who began to produce important work or make notable achievements in Eastern Europe before moving elsewhere generally focus on what they did before they left the region.

Language problems

Aspiring Jewish Studies scholars, who must study Hebrew, are nowadays taught modern Israeli Hebrew. Consequently, Modern Hebrew has become the language of scholarship in the field. Most East European Jews spoke Yiddish, however, and when they spoke Hebrew, they spoke it with an Ashkenazic pronunciation, which differs from that of contemporary Hebrew. It was important to the editors to avoid, or better to highlight, the drift to anachronism in transliteration that has resulted from this situation. Thus, in some instances, the actual Ashkenazic Hebrew-Yiddish version of a term has been preserved for pedagogic reasons. Two examples are the political movement *Agudas Yisroel* (not *Agudat Israel*) and the revolt in Ukraine in 1648–1649, which is identified here as *gzeyres takh vetat* (not *gezerot takh ve-tat*). This was done to remind the reader of the actual language and terminology of the time and place. Similarly, Yiddish-speaking Jews who wrote primarily in Yiddish are identified in that language. Rabbis who generally wrote in Hebrew are identified not in the Ashkenazic Hebrew version of their name

– as would be proper if we want to avoid anachronism – but in the Modern Hebrew version. By no means does this exhaust the list of problems encountered as a result of the multi-lingual character of this endeavour.

There is an article on the cultural meaning of the term “Litvak”, which describes a Jew who sees things unemotionally and sceptically and speaks a specific Yiddish dialect. Polish readers may find this surprising, for in Polish historiography and memory the term “Litwak” is associated with Russian Jewish immigrants to Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century. Another problem arose from the fact that many cities have had a variety of designations over time and Jews sometimes referred to them in yet another way. Perhaps the best known example is L’viv, previously known as Lwów, Lemberg, and L’vov. The entries for towns reflect their contemporary designations – Vilnius, instead of Vilna – but variations from other relevant languages are also provided. Nevertheless, in other articles, historical designations appropriate to the discussion at hand are usually employed. Thus, we refer to the Gaon of Vilna, not the Gaon of Vilnius. A comprehensive index with 40,000 entries is available to help readers find what they are looking for.

Geographical affirmative action

Another problem confronting the editors was the geographical unevenness of research on numerous topics. There has been, for example, a great deal of research on a variety of topics as they relate to Jews in Poland but not on the same topics as they relate to Romania or Hungary. Where possible, the *YIVO Encyclopedia* tries to redress this imbalance by devoting an appropriate amount of attention to regions outside of the Polish-Lithuanian heartland. An encyclopaedia cannot commission new research. Nevertheless, the state of scholarly study for these regions is represented as extensively as possible, for their importance is substantially greater than the quantity of attention they receive in the scholarly literature.

In the case of Romania, there is a genuine dearth of research, even though it was home to one of Europe’s largest Jewish communities before the war. Thoughtful studies on the differences between the Jewish communities within Romania’s various regions, the role of Jewish intellectuals in the development of Romanian national consciousness, the possible distinctiveness of Romanian Jewish artists, to name a few examples, still await their scholars. In the case of Hungary, a good deal of research is underway, but this work is largely unknown due to the language barrier. Few academics outside that country know Hungarian.

Given the limited amount of space, we could not achieve anything approaching total coverage of every individual and every community included in the *YIVO Encyclopedia*. Each editor had to make difficult decisions. There are, for example, entries on circa 190 cities and towns. Had we aspired to comprehensiveness, there could easily have been more than 20 times that number. Here, too, our program of “affirmative action” can be seen. The criteria for inclusion were applied more strictly to Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian communities than to Hungarian and especially Romanian towns.

Gender

From the outset of this project, the editors were highly aware of the need to redress the imbalance in the amount of attention given the depiction of women, who are often ignored in studies of Eastern Europe. As a matter of principle, the decision was made not to “ghettoize” women. All of the contributors were therefore instructed to address gender and use it as a category of analysis whenever possible and appropriate. In many cases, particularly the section devoted to everyday life, this yielded interesting and novel material, for example, on child-rearing, sexuality, and holidays. There is also a general essay devoted to gender by Paula Hyman. Among the 220 biographical entries on rabbis and other religious leaders, there are only two women. The imbalance among the authors is not quite so dramatic. This unhappy state of affairs reflects the current state of research and the patriarchal nature of Jewish society. The editors therefore saw themselves confronted with the dilemma of doing justice to women, on the one hand, and upholding the criteria of including in the encyclopaedia only culturally significant persons, on the other.

“Canonisation”

The encyclopaedia is unavoidably a kind of canon. This is not in fashion in the academic world. Our rather old-fashioned approach is owed to the fact that the field of East European Jewish Studies developed rather recently. The selections made by the editors are largely their own. The encyclopaedia undoubtedly provides the basis for future debates and discussions that will further enrich the field.

Funding

The cost of this project ultimately amounted to over U.S. \$ 3 million. Fortunately, many of the institutions to which we turned for financing were as enthusiastic about the project as the scholars themselves. Instead of providing articles, foundations and other donors supported the encyclopaedia by providing dollars. One important source was the United States National Endowment for the Humanities, which responded positively to our first application and a request for a supplementary grant as well. We also received financial support from The Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, The Charles H. Revson Foundation, The Righteous Persons Foundation, the members of the YIVO Board of Directors (under the chairmanship of Bruce Slovin), and a number of other private donors. Such backing not only made the encyclopaedia possible, it served as an emboldening and encouraging endorsement of the project.

The state of East European Jewish scholarship

The geographical distribution of the contributors to the encyclopaedia reflects the state of the academic field of East European Jewish Studies at the start of the 21st century. Unsurprisingly, most of the researchers are from Israel (167, or 37 per cent of the authors) and the United States (162, or 36 per cent). The rough parity between these two groups represents the tremendous development of Jewish Studies in general, and East European Jewish Studies in particular, in the United States in recent decades. Jewish

Studies scholars in both Israel and the United States, especially since the 1970s, have liberated themselves from the longstanding tendency to focus on the west, which began with Heinrich Graetz, the architect of Jewish historiography, back in the 19th century.⁵ A remarkable number of the contributors – 75, or 16.6 per cent – come from East European countries. The largest contingent is from Poland (28), followed by Hungary (20) and the Czech Republic (10). There are eight Russians, three Romanians, two contributors each from Estonia, Finland, and Lithuania, as well as one author from Slovakia. That is to say, we are witnessing the return of Jewish Studies to Eastern Europe after a hiatus of about a half-century – even longer in the states of the former Soviet Union. The total number of European contributors – 113, or 25 per cent – includes 15 scholars from England, ten from Germany, and eight from France. Two contributors reside in Switzerland, with individual authors living in Austria, Holland, and Italy. In addition, eight Canadian scholars prepared articles for the encyclopaedia.

How to Make an Encyclopaedia

The encyclopaedia was assembled on the basis of a synoptic outline that was the subject of much debate and considerable revision in the early stages of the project. The final version is included at the end of Volume 2. Working in consultation with one another, the 33 editors constructed a framework that aimed to take into account all aspects of the culture and history of Jews in Eastern Europe. This framework serves as the conceptual skeleton of the project. We began with nine divisions:

- Geographical-Political Units
- Social History and Politics
- Religion
- Language and Literature
- Social Organization, Economics, and the Professions
- Communications Media
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Everyday Life
- History of Study

We initially apportioned space within the limit of 2 million words on the basis of these broad categories. Each of these divisions was then divided into principal articles, supporting articles, and biographies. Thus, each major topic includes an extensive principal entry and shorter entries on specific subjects and issues related to the major topic. In the case of Geographical-Political Units, this was relatively straightforward; this division starts with long essays on various countries and moves on to regions, cities, and towns.

In Social History and Politics, the second division, the major essay “Parties and Ideologies” introduces more detailed entries such as “Bund” and “Zionism and Zionist Parties” as well as entries on other particularly important figures, parties, and events.

⁵ The encyclopaedia includes an entry on historiography, which gives a general overview focused on Poland and Russia, and supplementary articles on the Bohemian lands and Hungary as well as Orthodox historiography. There is also an analogous entry on “Folklore, Ethnography and Anthropology”.

In the same division, the composite entry “Relations between Jews and Non-Jews” leads to the entries “Antisemitic Parties and Movements”, “Informers”, “Judaizers”, and “Conversion”, among others. These are somewhat provocative examples. In the first case – so as to avoid anachronism – Zionism is presented implicitly as one of several parties and ideologies. In the second case – so as to avoid distortion – anti-semitism is presented as one form of relations between Jews and others. Generally, the goal here is to provide context for the entries as they become more specific.

While it is tempting to describe dozens of entries, I will merely draw special attention to the extensive treatments of theatre, art, and literature, including Jewish literature in Yiddish and Hebrew as well as the various languages of the region. I am particularly proud of the division “Everyday Life”, which includes entries such as Angels, Birth and Birthing, Childhood, Food and Drink, Love, Marriage, Dress, Pilgrimage, Bad-khonim (jesters), Beggars, Cartoons, Chess, Christmas, Cookbooks, Crime and Criminals, Dogs, Galitsianer, Litvak, Humor, Landkentenish, Money, Pigs, Sport, and Yikhes (lineage), in addition to four entries under the rubric Talk.

Gaps in Knowledge

Describing the ideal encyclopaedia, H. G. Wells insisted that “it would not be a miscellany, but a concentration, a clarification and a synthesis”.⁶ Precisely because the *YIVO Encyclopedia* has no precedent, it not only concentrates, clarifies, and synthesises knowledge on numerous topics for the first time. The editors hope that the encyclopaedia will by its very existence inspire inquiry among future generations of scholars. A by-product of our work has been to expose gaps in the existing body of knowledge. One of these gaps, for example, is in economics and economic history. Adam Teller, the editor for this field, struggled to provide a comprehensive picture in the absence of basic research on a number of essential questions. For example, there is a lack of systematic research on the role of Jews in banking and finance, the links between East European Jewish merchants and court Jews, and the place of Jews in the industrialisation of the Russian Empire.

It was especially difficult to find scholars able to write about such matters as the visual arts, youth movements, sport, and communal organisation in Eastern Europe. This is owed to the tendency towards increasing specialisation in a region or country and the fact that few scholars know more than a few of the region’s many languages. Because Jewish Studies is relatively new to East European universities, scholars in the region frequently lack rigorous training not only in Hebrew and Yiddish, but also in the canonical texts of Jewish culture.

Although the *YIVO Encyclopedia* includes a splendid and innovative essay by Jay Harris on the history of Talmud study, the general field of the intellectual history of East European rabbinic literature contains numerous gaps. If there had been a conceptual framework on the development of Jewish law in the region, to take a most crucial case, it would have been possible to place the biographies of various prominent rabbis within a larger context. This important topic is under-researched, and this lack of research is reflected in the encyclopaedia. An analysis of the impact of the printing press on this field, in particular with regard to the wider circulation of legal literature

⁶ David Smith, ed., *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells*, 4, (London 1998), p. 20.

of Sefardi provenance, would be very useful. Another related and equally important lacuna is the history of liturgy in Eastern Europe. A careful, analytical comparison of the most popular and influential prayer books in different periods and regions would be extremely rewarding.

Matters related to popular culture and daily life, particularly in regions outside the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, have not received adequate attention. And even for those “central” regions, we need much more sophisticated research. The very interesting entry “Money” is based largely on work published in 1959. To cite another desideratum, the role of the *shadkhn* (matchmaker), which seems to have declined in prestige from the early modern period to the 19th century, still awaits its historian. A detailed illustration of the differences in dress among the various Hasidic groups in Eastern Europe would be very helpful as well. Such a chart could be prepared for the Hasidim in present-day Jerusalem, New York, and elsewhere, but nobody has studied the matter with regard to 19th- and 20th-century Eastern Europe.

One gap in our knowledge that emerged in the course of preparing the encyclopaedia was rather surprising. There are many studies on the mass migration of East European Jews to the west, which began in the last decades of the 19th century and continued to about 1924. But none of them attempts to link places of origin and destinations. This phenomenon is known from more general studies of European migration patterns, which have shown that people from a certain place migrate to a limited set of destinations. The Jewish example, however, still has not been analyzed systematically.

Moreover, historians sometimes mistakenly link the start of this migration to the pogroms of 1881–1882, whereas it actually began in the 1870s and not in the regions later affected by the pogroms. Nonetheless, the years 1881–1882 continue to be seen by some as initiating a crisis and change in the mentality of the Jews in the Russian Empire. Our entry on pogroms will surprise many readers, because it estimates that the total number of deaths in roughly 250 violent incidents during this period to be about 50 and suggests that about half of those killed were attackers and not Jews.

Although we were able to provide an entry on “Military Service in Russia” and considerable information on the same subject regarding Hungary, the current state of research did not allow for comprehensive treatment of this subject for all of the countries of Eastern Europe. The problem deserves attention because service in the army was often seen as a path toward acculturation and acceptance and marked, generally speaking, a departure from the norms of the traditional Jewish community. We also thought of commissioning an essay on the entry of Jews into Eastern Europe’s nobility, but quickly realized that this subject has also yet to find its historian. Similarly, we were unable to find anyone who could prepare a chronological and quantitative table of Jewish persons elected to national parliaments in their various forms. Although it would have contained numerous asterisks to account for the revolutionary regimes in Hungary, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere (e.g. Ukraine), such a distillation of information would have been revealing and useful. These gaps will not remain open forever, however. We have agreed with Yale University Press to place the contents of the encyclopaedia on YIVO’s Web site starting in June 2010. This will not only make it possible for the *YIVO Encyclopedia* to reach the widest possible audience. Given adequate funding, the work can be expanded indefinitely. Thus future scholars will be able to continue providing concentration, clarification, and synthesis as they recover lost elements of East European Jewish heritage.

Micha Brumlik

From Obscurantism to Holiness

“Eastern Jewish” Thought in Buber, Heschel, and Levinas

In public perception, East European Jewish thought is surrounded by a mystical veil. The three thinkers Martin Buber, Joshua Heschel, and Emmanuel Levinas shared the East European Jewish experience, an education in existential philosophy in Germany, and the ordeal of witnessing the mass murder of Europe’s Jews. They are united by a universalistic ethic aimed at promoting direct human responsibility. More clearly than Buber and Heschel, we have Levinas to thank for an appreciation of what one could call “East European Jewry”.

In public perception, East European Jewish thought continues to be surrounded by an almost mystical veil. Particularly after the systematic murder of at least 3 million Polish Jews by National-Socialist Germany, the perception of this culture is accompanied by a justifiable sense of irreparable loss. An outward sign of this melancholy, which is never precisely specified and often borders on kitsch, is the playing of klezmer music at any suitable – or indeed unsuitable – occasion.

“Eastern Jewry” is itself a culture that is still seen as a mixture of nostalgic perceptions regarding impoverished shtetl life and the sometimes nebulous sayings of miracle-working rabbis. The fact that this narrow point of view fails to do justice to the reality of this destroyed culture, that at least just as many Polish or indeed Russian and Romanian Jews lived in large cities, that – in addition to the largely Hassidic miracle-working rabbis – East European Jewish culture also had at its disposal the intellectually demanding philosophy of the misnagdim, a Vilnius-based school of rational, even rationalistic interpretation of the Talmud, is overlooked as much as the fact that a part of Eastern Europe’s Jews had joined reform Judaism, that they created Socialist mass movements – from a Yiddish-speaking trade union, which strove for cultural autonomy, the General Jewish Labour Union (the Bund), to a Zionism that aimed at Socialist self-realisation – and that a large Jewish underworld also existed, as did an entrepreneurial and capitalist class that was anything other than weak.

The colourful spectrum that emerged from the co-operation, co-existence, and competition among these extremely different classes, groups, ideologies, and schools of religious thought has been preserved mainly in the novels and shorter works of the Nobel Prize winning author Isaac Bashevis Singer. Due to its complexity, this spec-

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trum is ill-suited for simplified views aimed at mystical edification. Judaism, not least in its East European forms, was the expression of a profound economic, cultural, and political modernisation process that has even provoked some historians to claim somewhat audaciously that the 20th century was a “Jewish century”.¹

“Eastern Jewry”, in the first place, was the perception of a Judaism “to the east”, namely to the east of Germany, where the Jews had been granted equal civil rights following the establishment of the German Reich (1871).² With regard to Jewry, east of Germany in 1913 meant Galicia, which was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and those areas of Poland under Russian rule, Ukraine, and Russia west of the Urals as well as the Danube principalities, that is to say, Romania and parts of southern Hungary. Up to 1913, “Eastern Jewry” was also a form of Judaism characterised by its own language, a separate Jewish idiom, Yiddish, which originated from Middle-High German and incorporated words borrowed from Hebrew and the Slavic languages.

In the end, this form of Judaism to the east of Germany – and on this enlightened national Jewish intellectuals (such as the historian Heinrich Graetz), liberal philosophers (such as Hermann Cohen), and neo-Orthodox spiritual leaders (such as Samson Raphael Hirsch and his successors) were of the same opinion – was considered to be the epitome of an unenlightened, obscurantist, ultimately superstitious form of the Jewish faith, which was to be resisted or enlightened. This “Eastern Jewry” was regarded as a problem child, the defenceless victim of antisemitic pogroms and excesses, the source of an never-ending stream of immigrants who flooded the major population centres of Central Europe – Vienna, Berlin, or Hamburg – from whence they travelled on to the United States or Canada, and to a far lesser extent to Argentina or to Ottoman-ruled *Arz-i Filistin*, the land of Palestine.

The crisis of the First World War and the bankruptcy of the bourgeois-enlightenment culture, the experiences of the German Jewish soldiers in Poland and Russia with their peculiar “tribesmen” behind the front, and the emerging failure of assimilationist Jewry against the backdrop of growing antisemitism produced a change in attitudes. What had previously been considered dangerous – Jewish revolutionary efforts, be they Socialist or Zionist – was now regarded as an articulation of hope. What used to be seen as obscurantist nonsense – Hasidism – appeared as the locus of living holiness that had been misunderstood for too long. What had formerly seemed repulsive and vulgar – Yiddish – now became the epitome of a poetic and sensitive language.

But what was considered “especially Jewish” was hardly more than a kind of intellectual trend cultivated by Jews and at the same time adopted by the entire German intelligentsia after the First World War: an enthusiasm for the feeling and thinking of Russian culture, which was at least “non-Western” if not downright “anti-Western”. From the early poems of Rainer Maria Rilke, to appraisal of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s work among ethno-nationalist circles and enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution (for example, Ernest Bloch’s *The Spirit of Utopia*), to the melancholy of Cossack ballads sung around the campfires of the German youth movement, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, Russia was seen as the reservoir of a revolutionary new world orientation.

The three Jewish thinkers examined here – Martin Buber (1878-1965), who focused on dialogue and encounter; Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995), who promoted an unconditional human responsibility; and Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), who

¹ Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton 2005).

² Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Hamburg 1986).

concerned himself with God's questions to humanity – were shaped by this constellation just as much as they helped shape it – at least within Jewish intellectual movements. Above all, however, this constellation had a profound and formative influence on their thought and philosophy. These “Eastern Jewish” philosophers were essentially trained in Germany, in the Germany of dialogue and existential philosophy, a philosophical climate that was by no coincidence fascinated and overshadowed by the thinking of Martin Heidegger.

It is also striking how these “Eastern Jewish” philosophies influenced and enriched those philosophical and political cultures in which their protagonists were active, be it Buber, that “Habsburg intellectual” whose influence may have been greater in Germany after the Second World War than in Israel, the country in which he lived and taught; Levinas, the Lithuanian-French moralist, whose work increasingly emerged as the secret background for “new philosophy” and “deconstruction” once structuralism and Marxism had come to an end in France; or Heschel, the “spiritual leader” whose existentialist-progressive convictions were to propel him to the forefront of the civil rights and peace movements in the United States of the 1960s.

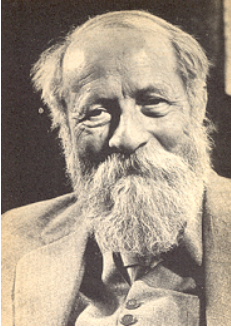
In all three cases, the “Eastern Jewish” experience, existential philosophical thinking, the mass murder of 6 million European Jews, and the contemporary conflicts in the countries where they lived in their later years merge into a framework of thought combining a universalist ethic promoting direct human responsibility with clear reference to the “Eastern Jewish” legacy. However, it must be asked whether this clear reference to the “Eastern Jewish” legacy is more than simply an expression of “imitated substantiality” (Jürgen Habermas), whether this legacy has in fact been recently invented, and whether the thought set in motion by these three philosophers really does justice to the “Eastern Jewish” legacy or at least one of its characteristic and distinctive elements.

Martin Buber

Martin Buber was by no means always interested in Hasidism. Born in Vienna in 1878, he moved to Lemberg (today L'viv, Ukraine) in 1881, where he grew up in the house of his grandfather, an enlightened, rationalist academic, who interpreted and edited rabbinical and Talmud scriptures. Buber probably saw a Hasidic group for the first time in Sadagora (today Sadhora, Ukraine), a town in Austrian Bukovina, when he was 14. Years later, in 1918, when he was 30 and living in Heppenheim in southern Germany, he described this experience as follows:

The palace of the rebbe, in its showy splendor, repelled me. The prayer house of the Hasidim with the enraptured worshipers seemed strange to me. But when I saw the rebbe striding through the rows of the waiting, I felt, “leader,” and when I saw the Hasidim dance with the Torah, I felt, “community”. At that time there arose in me a presentiment of the fact that common reverence and common joy of soul are the foundations of genuine community.³

³ Martin Buber, “My Way to Hasidism”, in idem, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, Maurice Friedman, ed. and trans. (New York 1958), p. 52-53.



Martin Buber

However, as a student in Vienna, Buber was above all drawn to other thinkers. Buber was attracted by the work of Friedrich Nietzsche⁴ as much as that of Nietzsche's follower Micha Josef Berdyczewski (Mikhael Yosef Bin Gurion),⁵ whose merits included the publication of a compilation and readable summary of Jewish sayings. A year of study in Zurich and Theodor Herzl's work stirred Buber's enthusiasm for Zionism, but his dissertation was a conventional one: "Contributions to the History of the Problem of Individuation" (*Beiträge zur Geschichte des Individuationsproblems*), which was submitted in Vienna in 1904. After two years in seclusion, Buber published *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* (*Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*) in 1906. In retrospect, Buber saw his studies on Hasidism during that period of reclusiveness as a path to conversion and enlightenment. In 1918, by then 40, Buber wrote of himself at age 28:

The primally Jewish opened to me, flowering to newly conscious expression in the darkness of exile: man's being created in the image of God I grasped as deed, as becoming, as task. And this primally Jewish reality was a primal human reality, the content of human religiousness. Judaism as religiousness, as "piety," as Hasidut opened to me there. The image out of my childhood, the memory of the tsaddik [spiritual leader, ed.] and his community, rose upward and illuminated me: I recognized the idea of the perfected man. At the same time I became aware of the summons to proclaim it to the world.⁶

After *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, additional works followed in rapid succession: *The Legend of the Baal-Shem* (*Die Legende des Baalschem*, 1907); *Ecstatic Confessions* (*Die Ekstatischen Konfessionen*, 1909); a translation of sayings and parables by Zhuangzi (*Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang Tse*, 1910) with an epilogue on the teachings of Tao; a volume of Chinese ghost and love stories (*Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten*, 1911); a collection of speeches on Judaism (*Drei Reden über das Judentum*, 1911); *Daniel: Dialogues on Realisation* (*Daniel – Gespräche über die Verwirklichung*, 1913); and an extended translation of the Finnish national epos Kalewala (1914). It is clear that Buber was not only interested in exploring Judaism in a narrow sense, but in tracing a certain type of holistic, mystical experience in its various cultural articulations. What was ur-Jewish turned out to be ur-human, a road to experience and enlightenment, which was attainable by all human beings - perhaps most clearly in Hasidism.

After the First World War, which Buber clearly hoped would end in victory for Austria-Hungary and Germany,⁷ the story "Der große Maggid und seine Nachfolge" [The

⁴ Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Zarathustras Apostel: Martin Buber und die jüdische Renaissance", in Jacob Golomb, ed., *Nietzsche und die jüdische Kultur* (Vienna 1998), pp. 225-235.

⁵ Werner Stegmaier, Daniel Krochmalnik, eds., *Jüdischer Nietzscheanismus* (Berlin 1997).

⁶ Buber, "My Way to Hasidism", p. 59.

⁷ Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin 2001), pp. 57-58.

Great Maggid and his succession, 1921] appeared, followed by “Das verborgene Licht” [The hidden light, 1924]. These were then published in a compilation in 1928 and appeared in expanded form in 1938, when Buber was already living in Palestine. In 1949, all of the *Tales of the Hasidim* (*Erzählungen der Chassidim*) were published in German. Buber explained in the introduction to this book that he was consciously writing about “my work of re-telling the Hasidic legends”.⁸ As collector and compiler, he was most aware that the source material was unreliable and based on “fervent human beings”, so that the stories of miracles can be regarded as “only” an expression of enthusiasm, as stories about things “which cannot happen and could not happen in the way they are told, but which the elated soul perceived as reality and, therefore, reported as such”.⁹

Therefore, Buber’s *Tales of the Hasidim* are, in his own words, his own personal “re-telling” of the fervour among the supporters of a charismatic rabbi that is not even based on reliable sources. This re-telling consists above all in giving the anecdotes and novella-like short stories “the missing links in the narrative”.¹⁰ Even so, research on Hasidism – research subjecting the sources to historical and critical scrutiny – had already been underway since the 1890s at the latest, when the leading Jewish historian Simon Dubnov published six articles on the history of Hasidism in a Russian Jewish monthly. In 1931, re-worked versions of these articles appeared in a two-volume compilation published in Berlin.¹¹ In a supplement to the first volume, Dubnov acknowledged 193 source editions, including Buber’s work, which he discussed in detail and assessed in a balanced way. Summarising Buber’s life work – Buber was by then 53 – Dubnov wrote:

The thought arises that [Buber] himself could be the subject of the final chapter of the history of Hasidism, that of neo-Hasidism. From him the legendary “reality” of Hasidism’s creators emerges ahead of the true reality, which can be explained by academic criticism. Buber’s books are therefore suitable for promoting contemplation and speculation, but not research. They do not broaden our knowledge, but merely enable deeper psychological empathy. They represent a new and thoroughly modern commentary on Hasidic teachings.¹²

Buber, who spoke Polish, spent the first 13 years of his life in an upper middle-class household in the metropolis of Vienna and the subsequent 11 years in the equally upper middle-class household of his grandfather in the East Central European city of Lemberg. He studied in Vienna, Leipzig, and Berlin, then in Zurich and again in Berlin, and finally – between 1919 and 1938 – lived in Heppenheim and taught in Frankfurt, from whence he emigrated to Jerusalem in 1938. He remained there until his death in 1965. Apart from his brief childhood experience in Sadagora, Buber never lived in East European Jewish surroundings. There is nothing to suggest that he ever sought any personal

⁸ Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim, I, The Early Masters*, Olga Marx, trans. (London 1956), p. 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹ Simon Dubnov, *Geschichte des Chassidismus, I. & II.*, reprint (Königstein 1982).

¹² *Ibid.*, I, p. 310.

contact with mystics or Hasidim or with their rabbis and tsaddikim – as was the case with Dubnov and the historian and philosopher Gershom Scholem.

However, between October 1941 and October 1942, Buber's story "Gog and Magog" appeared in a Hebrew newspaper, the central organ of the Zionist trade unions in Palestine, then still under British mandate. The subject of the story was the possibility of a mystical influence on the politics of Russia during the Napoleonic War. It was written at the height of the Second World War, months before Britain's decisive victory against the German Afrika-Korps, whose victory would have exposed the Yishuv – the Jewish population of Palestine – to the same fate suffered by the Jews of Eastern Europe.

Here, Buber describes for a second time direct contact with Hasidism – even if it was only on the occasion of a visit to his son behind German lines in Poland during the First World War that he "could familiarize myself with the physical scenes in which the story of this controversy [between two Hasidic schools, M.B.] took place".¹³ This experience, he explained, had enabled him to envisage recording the story, even if – later in Jerusalem – what ultimately compelled him to complete the repeatedly postponed project was an "objective factor":

the beginning of World War II, the atmosphere of telluric crisis, the dreadful weighing of opposing forces and the signs of a false Messianism on both sides. The final impulse was given me by a dream-vision of that false messenger spoken of in my first chapter, in the form of a demon with bat's wings and the features of a judaizing Goebbels.¹⁴

The world of the Hasidim and their spirits were an object of projection, a stage, the figures of a vast global theatre where the philosopher, who regarded himself as existentialist, gave form to his conflicting principles. The "Eastern Jewry" of Buber's Hasidim, as it has become known since the 1950s, especially in postwar Germany, thus proves to be – and this is no small matter – a fiction, the fantastic notions of a talented philosopher of language with great powers of imagination, of a "religious intellectual" (F.W. Graf) who was not even remotely concerned with participating in the way of life that he glorified so poetically, and who – and this is also not without significance – did not see this way of life as having a promising future. Appraisals of his work that naively assume the existence of a distinctively Hasidic "conception of man"¹⁵ culminating in individual value and perfection confuse against better judgement Buber's own ethic with the very different ethic of the historic Hasidim. Was it possible for somebody who was at least a kindred spirit to Buber – somebody who projected the image of a modern intellectual during his studies in Berlin and a 19th-century Hasidic rabbi during the American civil rights movement – to avoid such false appraisals?

¹³ Martin Buber, *For the Sake of Heaven: A Chronicle*, Ludwig Lewisohn, trans. (Heidelberg 1978), p. 405.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁵ Ute Holm, "Die chassidischen Geschichten und ihre implizite Didaktik", in Martha Friedenthal-Haase, Ralf Koerrenz, eds., *Martin Buber: Bildung, Menschenbild und Hebräischer Humanismus* (Paderborn 2005), p. 144.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Abraham Joshua Heschel, who invited the 30-year-old Buber from Berlin to Frankfurt's Free Jewish House of Learning in 1937, really did come from the Hasidic milieu that had purportedly fascinated Buber so much. In 1973, Heschel's widow Sylvia, a concert pianist from New York, published a study by Heschel on the Hasidic rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk, which he preceded with a brief introduction entitled "Why I Had to Write This Book". Here, Heschel tells the reader not only that he was born in Warsaw, but that in his early childhood, he lived in Medzhybizh (Yiddish, Mezhbizh), Ukraine, a small town where the founder of Hasidism, Baal Shem Tov, spent the last 20 years of his life.

Describing the landscape of his childhood, Heschel, who was descended from famous Hasidic dynasties on his mother's and father's side of the family, wrote that "every step on the way was an answer to a prayer, and every stone was a memory of marvel". It was in Medzhybizh where, at the tender age of nine, he apparently first heard of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk (Polish, Kock), a spiritual leader who was to accompany Heschel throughout his life, binding him with the chains of doubt, the power of sadness, and the authenticity of dismay. According to Heschel, the Kotsker Rebbe became for him an antidote to uncontrolled feelings of love, excitement, and fervour, attitudes that led to "a fool's Paradise" that could equally become "a wise man's Hell".¹⁶ Some time before taking his school-leaving exam, Heschel left Warsaw and sat for the exam at a gymnasium in Polish Wilno (today Vilnius, Lithuania), a secular institution. He then studied in Berlin at the Friedrich Wilhelm University and at Jewish institutions of higher education. He earned his doctorate with a work on the Biblical prophets and was ordained as a rabbi in 1934.

Heschel, unlike Buber, had known Hasidic rabbis from his own family and had thus observed them at first hand. There was for him no possibility of glorifying their lives and piety. Heschel, who remained in Berlin mainly as a teacher of adults until 1937, worked from March 1937 until October 1938 at Franz Rosenzweig's Free Jewish House of Learning in Frankfurt.¹⁷ Following his deportation to Poland in the autumn of 1938 and a brief stay in London, Heschel finally travelled to the United States in 1940, where he lived as a prophetic poet and thinker, spiritual leader, civil rights activist, and teacher at various institutes of higher education until his death in 1972. In his later years, he became the first officially recognised Jewish advisor to the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).¹⁸

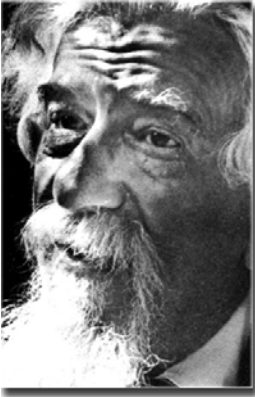
Heschel lived for only 65 years, of which the first 30 were spent among the Jews of Eastern Europe: in Warsaw, in Medzhybizh, in Wilno, and in Berlin. At the time, the German capital was a lively centre of culture for Jews from Eastern Europe and served as home to no fewer than 19 Yiddish newspapers.¹⁹ Berlin's East European Jewish culture never drew Buber's attention, however. For Buber, contact with non-Jewish

¹⁶ Abraham J. Heschel, *A Passion for Truth* (London 1973), pp. 8-15.

¹⁷ Ulrich Lilienthal, "Zeuge Gottes", in Werner Licharz, Wieland Zademach, eds., *Treue zur Tradition als Aufbruch in die Moderne* (Waltrop 2005), pp. 361-402, especially 379-380.

¹⁸ Maurice Friedman, *Abraham Joshua Heschel, Elie Wiesel: You Are My Witnesses* (New York 1987), p. 82-84.

¹⁹ Lilienthal, "Zeuge Gottes", p. 367.



Joshua Heschel

religious intellectuals who followed the philosophy of dialogue and existentialism or the German-Jewish Zionist and non-Zionist youth movement was in every respect more important than any involvement with the lively Hebrew and Yiddish language scene in Berlin in those years.

Heschel spent the second half of his short life in the United States, where he became a leading figure of a type of neo-Hasidism only possible in that country.²⁰ In fact, Heschel was by no means the only Eastern Jewish religious intellectual who was to leave his mark on the development of Jewish life in the United States.²¹ The lives of all those Jews who had been deeply influenced by Eastern Europe in terms of culture, language, and religion and then found themselves in the United States

were characterised by a deep antagonism. On the one hand, they had been left with no other alternative but to adhere to modern western culture, while on the other, they considered it essential that they remain true to their experiences of childhood and youth. The change in their geographical position, which went far beyond the external, required that they re-invent this past. Heschel, who wrote in English just as fluently as he did in Hebrew and Yiddish, felt that he was no longer in a position to pursue this way of life, although he was an observant Orthodox Jew and undertook his own efforts to modernise Hasidism. During the 1950s, a student who Heschel had expressly recommended spend the Sabbath with the strictly Orthodox Satmar Hasidim in the Williamsburg neighbourhood of New York City asked his teacher:

why, if he envied me my weekend there, as he repeatedly said, he did not go to live in Williamsburg himself. "I cannot," he replied. "When I left my home in Poland, I became a modern Western man. I cannot reverse this."²²

This modernity found unique expression in Heschel's piety and the fact that, alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., he became one of the leaders of the civil rights marches and anti-war demonstrations. During his later life, Heschel's outward appearance, long time after immigrating to the United States, seemed no different than that of the Satmar Hasidim among whom he no longer wished to live. His face, which was overshadowed by a broad-brimmed hat, was framed by long hair and a long beard. However, the road to modern American life had led through Weimar-era Berlin, where he had eagerly absorbed existential philosophy, a philologically correct knowledge of Judaism, and a radically rejuvenated Yiddish literature, before transforming them for his own creative impulses.

²⁰ Friedman, *You Are My Witnesses*, pp. 8-14.

²¹ Hillel Goldberg, *Between Berlin and Slobodka. Jewish Transition Figures from Eastern Europe* (Hoboken 1989).

²² Friedman, *You Are My Witnesses*, p. 9.

Emmanuel Levinas

Unlike Buber and Heschel, Levinas, who was born in 1906 in Kovno (Kaunas), a centre of anti-Hasidic, rationalist Talmud scholarship, never wore a beard. Levinas's parents considered themselves to be "Russian Jews". They occasionally spoke Yiddish with one another, but only Russian with their children. Levinas later referred to works by Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky and the rationalist school founded by the Gaon of Vilna, the leading anti-Hasidic academic figure of the 18th century, as the formative influences of this "Russian" childhood. Levinas found a role model in the rationalist Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner, a student of the Gaon of Wilna, who despite his general anti-Hasidic stance contemplated the tradition of Jewish mysticism and combined personal piety, rational argument, and deliberative thoroughness.²³

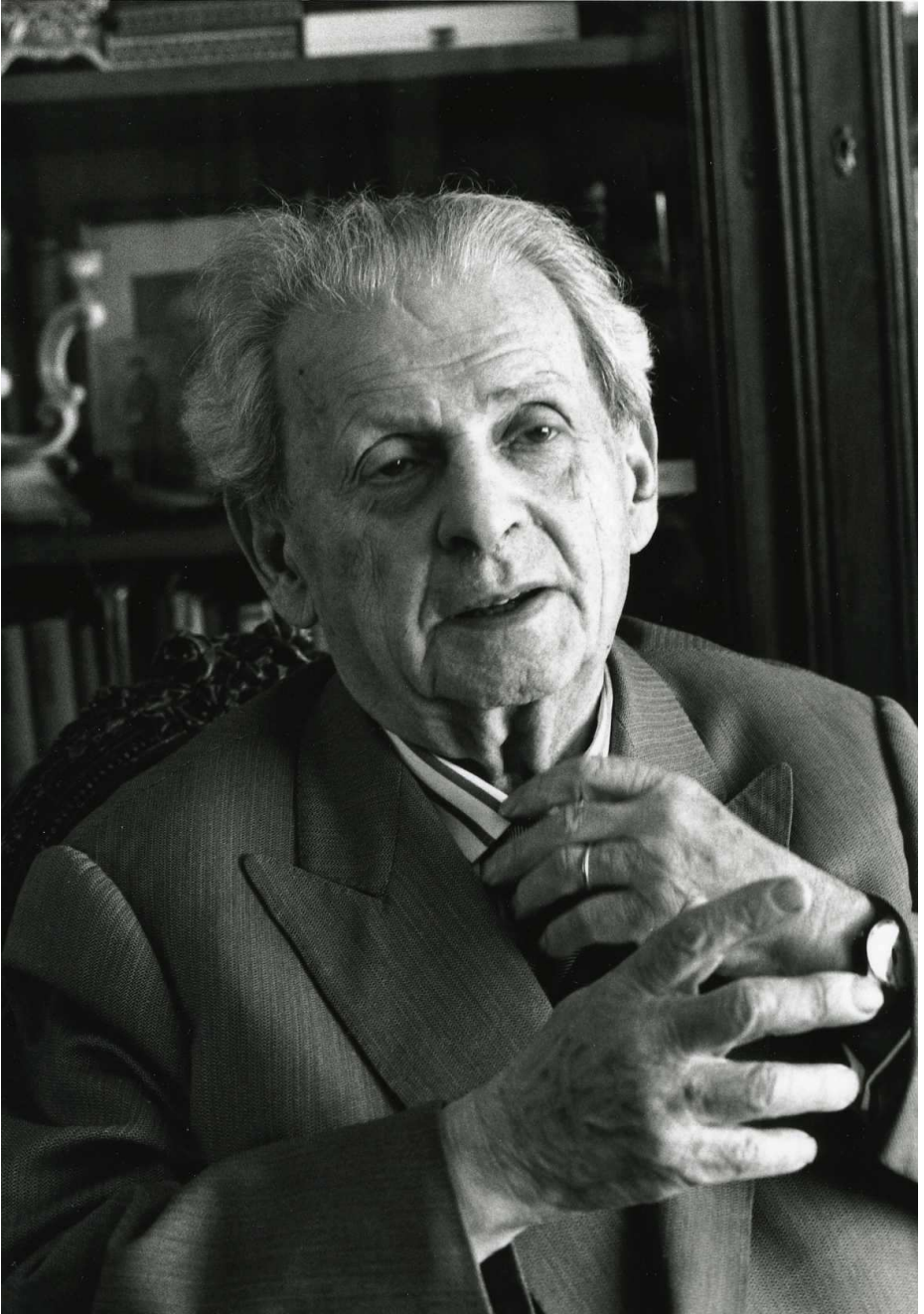
Levinas's family was forced to flee when Kovno was occupied by German troops in 1915, ultimately finding a home in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Levinas, who had led a sheltered childhood and had learned Hebrew as a small boy, enrolled at a Russian gymnasium in 1916 despite restrictions on the number of Jewish pupils. Starting in 1919, he attended a Jewish lyceum in Kaunas, where he was impressed by the teachings of the head teacher, an enlightened German Jew who had a particular weakness for Goethe.²⁴ After taking his school-leaving examination in Lithuania, Levinas also travelled to the west, but did not remain long in Berlin, or Leipzig, which he had visited. Instead, in 1923, at the age of 18, he matriculated at the University of Strasbourg, France, where he studied under Maurice Halbwachs, among others, paying particular attention to psychoanalysis. In 1928-1929, Levinas followed the reputation of Edmund Husserl and moved on to the University of Freiburg. While there, he also completed two seminars under Martin Heidegger, whom he in turn followed to Davos in 1929 for a seminar lasting several weeks, the famous Hochschulwochen. Levinas was particularly interested in the notorious debate between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer, squarely siding with the former and making fun of his defeated adversary in a student cabaret at Davos. Levinas, who later regretted this performance, imitated Cassirer with a stammer when saying words such as "Humboldt" and "culture" and lampooned Cassirer's pacifism.²⁵

In the 1930s, Levinas worked for the Alliance Israelite Universelle, a Jewish educational and welfare organisation rich in tradition and was at the time actively involved in the Parisian intellectual scene. He was highly esteemed in particular for his excellent knowledge of Husserl and Heidegger. Naturalised as a French citizen, Levinas was drafted into the army in 1939, captured by the Wehrmacht, and held for more than four years at a POW camp where his Jewish origins were well known. Soon after his release from captivity, he learned that his father, mother, and two brothers had been murdered in Kovno by Lithuanian nationalists during the German occupation.

²³ Emmanuel Levinas, "'In the Image of God', according to Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner", in *ibid.*, *Beyond the Verse. Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, Gary D. Mole, trans. (Bloomington, IN, 1994), pp. 151-167.

²⁴ Marie-Anne Lescourret, *Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris 1994), p. 37-38.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

*Emmanuel Levinas*

Upon receiving this news, Levinas made a decision never to set foot on German soil again. As director of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, he published more philosophical texts and took up teaching in 1961, first in Poitiers, then in Nanterre, and finally in Paris at the Sorbonne. His semi-private Talmud courses, which found inspiration in philosophy, became a secret centre of learning for an entire generation of intellectuals, just as his contacts with the Catholic Church enabled him to pioneer a Jewish-Christian dialogue based on philosophy.

In 1976, already over 70, he gave up teaching at the university. Until his death in 1995, he worked in Paris as a highly sought-after spiritual teacher, whose reputation grew from year to year. Levinas, however, credited his own Jewish education not to the memory of the religious setting of his childhood, but to Monsieur Chouchani, a Sephardic Jew who was as obscure and fascinating as he was learned and irritating, a Talmud scholar who roamed the earth like the cliché of the Eternal Jew. The polyglot Chouchani was probably born in Marrakech and wandered between the continents without a home or fixed address before dying in Uruguay.²⁶

Levinas almost lived to be 90. The first 17 years of his life were spent in Eastern Europe, and he was never to return there. His intellectual career led him to Strasbourg, Freiburg, Davos, and Paris. In contrast to Buber and Heschel, the East European Jewish background that may have helped shape his views was not Hasidism, but Talmudic rationalism. Levinas was also deeply influenced by existential philosophy and its precursors: What Nietzsche was for Buber and Soren Kierkegaard was for Heschel, so Edmund Husserl and Heidegger were for Levinas. After 1945, Levinas was to dedicate his philosophical life to refuting Heidegger's un-ethical, indeed anti-ethical thought. Prepared intellectually by Russian literature, Talmudic rationalism, phenomenology, and existential philosophy, Levinas was ultimately able to develop his own Jewish thought in the narrower sense of the term after being inspired by Chouchani. Nevertheless, we can give credit to Levinas – unlike Buber and Heschel – for a clear appreciation of that which could be defined as “Eastern Jewry”.

Eastern Jewry?

In his treatment of Rabbi Volozhiner, Levinas begins by discussing the very different way the Jewish enlightenment, the Haskalah, initiated by Moses Mendelssohn and others, was received among the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe:

From the nineteenth century onwards they in fact found themselves progressively led towards studies that were different to those of the Torah, and towards forms of what are known as Western thought and life; a process into which Western European Jewry had voluntarily been entering since the eighteenth century. This movement towards so-called modern life really became apparent with the Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jews almost concurrently with the influence that can be attributed to the yeshivah of Volozhin. But while undergoing the seduction of the West and its rationalist culture, Eastern Judaism, for the greater part, remained immunized against the temp-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-145.

tations of pure and simple assimilation to the surrounding world. It refused to treat as secondary the spiritual world of its origins, and to doubt the complete maturity of traditional Jewish culture, even when it gradually distanced itself in its way of life and intellectual preoccupations from the strict rules handed down by tradition. This faithfulness to the Torah as culture, and a national consciousness determined by this culture, remained the distinctive feature of the Eastern Jew at the heart of a Western style of life. There were, admittedly, many demographic, social and political reasons for this. But among the causes of this steadfastness, it is also necessary to include the education received in the yeshivot like that in Volozhin by the elite of these Eastern Jews. The Judaism of the Talmudic schools – or the memory of this Judaism as it persisted in families – was to protect the Jewish masses from assimilation, as it protected the Hasidic movement from schism.²⁷

Levinas is to be amended by one exception, namely the sizable number of young Russian Jews, male and female, who in their struggle against tradition resolved to join the Bolsheviks, fought religious and Yiddish Jewry, and thus played no small part in the intellectual destruction of East European Jewish culture.²⁸

“Eastern Judaism”, as we also know from its representative thinkers, is the result of a double loss and double mourning, as well as the result of re-invention. This mourning has been most precisely expressed by Heschel, who described the painful path of transition into the modern age as follows:

When we were blinded by the light of European civilisation, we could not appreciate the value of the small fire of eternal light.... We compared our fathers and grandfathers, our teachers and rabbis, with Russian and German intellectuals. We preached in the name of the twentieth century, compared Berdichev to Paris, Ger [Góra Kalwaria] to Heidelberg. Dazzled by big city street lamps, we lost our inner vision. The luminous vision that for so many generations shone in the little candles was extinguished for many of us.²⁹

The re-discovery of that extinguished light, however, did not lead to its re-kindling. In fact, a new light was created.

Translated by Anna Güttel, Berlin

²⁷ Levinas, ““In the Image of God””, pp. 152–153.

²⁸ Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*.

²⁹ Quoted from Lilienthal, “Zeuge Gottes”, p. 365.

Anke Hilbrenner

Civil Rights and Multiculturalism

Simon Dubnov's Concept of Diaspora Nationalism

The Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnov was the first to ascribe to the Diaspora a major role in shaping Jewish identity. From his analysis of the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, he developed the concept of "nationalism without a nation-state": Diaspora Nationalism. The minorities in supranational states were to enjoy the same civil rights as the majority. Their cultural rights were to be guaranteed through the creation of autonomous communities. The field of nationalism studies has largely ignored Dubnov's work. But his concept is quite relevant to contemporary multicultural European societies.

Before 1917, the Russian Empire was home to the largest part of the Jewish Diaspora. Most of these Jews had come under Russian rule due to the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century.¹ At the start of the 19th century, the vast majority of the Tsar's Jewish subjects lived within the traditional setting of the Jewish shtetl in the Pale of Settlement, the group of western and southwestern provinces to which the Russia's Jews were confined.² Despite such restrictions on settlement and the isolated way of life prescribed by Jewish religious and communal law, there was at this time no substantial difference between the Jews and other subjects of the Russian Empire.³

The Russian Empire was a multiethnic entity, in which the population only grudgingly acquiesced to the efforts of the authorities to centralise and modernise the state, and in which the particularist and estate-based premodern order had by and large been retained. For that reason, the traditions of Jewish communal self-administration, which allowed the authorities access to the Jews only through Jewish religious leaders, was conform with the structures of the empire overall.

It was Catherine II (1729-1796) who had made an – unsuccessful – first effort to impose a rationalised, modern bureaucracy on various regions of her realm. Over the course of the 19th century, these efforts were intensified and, together with modernisation, urbanisation, acceleration, and industrialisation, led to the breakdown of traditional Jewish lifeworlds.⁴ This painful development, however, did not unfold evenly, but instead re-

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¹ John D. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews. The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia 1772–1825* (DeKalb 1986).

² See the map "Jews in East Central Europe ca. 1900" in insert I.

³ Manfred Hildermeier, "Die jüdische Frage im Zarenreich. Zum Problem der unterbliebenen Emanzipation", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 32 (1984), pp. 321–357.

⁴ For a critique of this term, see: Frank Golczewski, "Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa?", in Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt, Eckhard Hübner, eds., *Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa* (Frankfurt am Main 2005), pp. 13–28.

sulted in considerable conflicts within Jewish communities and between Jews and the non-Jewish neighbours. In the collective memory of Russian Jews, specific events facilitated this process, or at least allowed it to seem clearer in hindsight. The conscription of Jewish boys into military service under Nicholas I would be one example.

In Jewish memory, this regulation, which the authorities used as an instrument of acculturation,⁵ serves as an example of Russian anti-Jewish policies.⁶ However, these efforts paid off, and these conscripts grew up to comprise an early cohort of acculturated Jews within the Russian Empire. In the era of Great Reforms under Alexander II, the drive towards acculturation crested again.⁷ During this period, a policy of education and modernisation prevailed. As a reward for successful integration, the authorities held out certain privileges, such as the lifting of settlement restrictions.

The year 1881 marked a significant turning point in Russia's policy towards its Jews.⁸ After the assassination of Alexander II a wave of pogroms shook the Pale of Settlement until 1884. The pogroms – in traditional Jewish historiography – showed the Jews the futility of acculturation. The consequences of this violence were the rise of the Jewish national movement⁹ and the mass migration of Jews from the Russian Empire to Western Europe and beyond.¹⁰ Between 1881 and 1904, roughly 1 million Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe to the west. Of these, 700,000 came from the Russian Empire and the rest from Romania and Habsburg Galicia. Some 850,000 East European Jews moved to the United States, 100,000 settled in England, and only about 30,000 remained in the German Empire. Another 20,000 Jewish immigrants spread out across the rest of Western Europe. The year 1881 marked the end of Russian policies designed to modernise and integrate the empire's Jewish subjects; instead, disenfranchisement and discrimination were taken to extremes. Representatives of the “lachrymose school” – to use Salo Baron's term – which considers the experience of the Jewish Diaspora a bitter history of persecution and disenfranchisement, see 1881 as the start of a war against the Jews that lasted decades.¹¹ According to this interpretation, the authorities incited the Russian lower classes against the Jews. The year 1881 therefore signals the start of the era of pogroms in Russia, an era that runs through the Kishinev (Chişinău) pogrom of 1903, the pogroms that followed the mobilisation for the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, and the October pogroms of 1905, to the large number of Jewish deaths that took place during the First World War and the Russian Civil War.¹²

⁵ Adina Ofek, “Cantonists: Jewish Children as Soldiers in Tsar Nicholas's Army”, *Modern Judaism*, 13 (1993), pp. 277–308.

⁶ Simon Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 9 (Berlin 1929), pp. 188–197.

⁷ John D. Klier, “The Jewish Question in the Reform Era Russian Press, 1855–1865”, *The Russian Review*, 3 (1980), pp. 301–319.

⁸ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge 1981).

⁹ Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 10, pp. 119–225. For a critique of this construction, see Anke Khil'brenner, “Lichnyi opyt istorikov kak ‘stroitel'nyj material’ formirovaniia kollektivnoi pamiati: pogromy 1881 g.”, in Karl Ajmermacher a.o., eds., *Kul'tura i vlast' v usloviiakh kommunikatsionnoi revoliutsii. Forum nemetskikh i rossiiskikh kul'turologov.* (Moscow 2002), pp. 449–471.

¹⁰ David Berger, ed., *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and Its Impact* (New York 1983).

¹¹ Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 4 (New York 1957), p. 147.

¹² John D. Klier, Schlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms. Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge 1992).

Thus, 1881 stands not only for the politicisation of Russia's Jews, it is considered a milestone in the history of the Jewish-American Diaspora. Even if this interpretation is simplistic in searching for the reasons for Russian Jewry's political awakening only in the antisemitic policies of the Russian authorities and the anti-Jewish violence of the Russian population, it is primarily during the last decades of the 19th century that the development of ideologies and identities on the Jewish road to modernity became particularly dynamic. Less appreciated than the year 1881 – but no less important for Jewish history of ideas – is the year 1897, when several camps in modern Jewish politics assumed definite shape. The Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnov notes in his memoirs:

The year 1897 led to a change in the life of Russian Jewish society. The stagnation of society that had lasted 15 years now gave way to national and social movements. As a result of the Basel Congress, Zionist circles were set up everywhere. Herzl's young Zionism created a stir on the Jewish street, in circles and gatherings. At the same time, the Bund was formed, the organisation of the Jewish Social Democrats, which was forced to operate illegally under the then conditions of the police state. Amid these currents, an ideology broke new ground, which I took up in my *Letters on Old and New Judaism* and gradually developed.¹³

Simon Dubnov was born in 1860 in the traditional Jewish shtetl of Mstislavl' (today Mstislau, Belarus), then a part of the Pale of Settlement. In the 1880s, he made a name for himself in St. Petersburg as a Jewish journalist and literary critic who promoted the acculturation of Jews into their Russian environment. In the 1890s, he dedicated himself to researching Jewish history. In this context, he developed an understanding of history and the world that was profoundly influenced by Jewish nationalism. Accordingly, he became the history teacher and the national historiographer of the Russian Jews.

Dubnov's *Letters on Old and New Judaism* (1897–1902) can be considered the core of his ideology, which can be called "Diaspora Nationalism".¹⁴ This term was not coined by Dubnov. His concept of national history was based on what he referred to as a "sociological view" of Jewish history.¹⁵ He called the political programme derived from this concept "autonomism",¹⁶ which is also how Dubnov's contemporaries knew it. The analytical term Diaspora Nationalism refers to both, the historiographical concept and the political programme, and thus establishes the connection between history and politics characteristic of Dubnov's work. The ostensible contradiction between Diaspora and nationalism makes Dubnov's understanding of the world interesting. The notion Diaspora Nationalism reveals Dubnov's re-assessment of tradition-

¹³ Simon Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens. Erinnerungen und Gedanken. Materialien zur Geschichte meiner Zeit*, 3 (Göttingen 2005), p. 341.

¹⁴ Simon Dubnov, *Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve (1897–1907)* (St. Petersburg 1907). This 1907 compilation served as the basis of this analysis. An English edition of *Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve* – "Letters on Old and New Judaism" – forms a section of Koppel S. Pinson, ed. Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History Essays On Old And New Judaism* (Philadelphia 1958).

¹⁵ Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 1, pp. 8–23.

¹⁶ Dubnow, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", pp. 131-143.

al ideas – such as a positive understanding of the traditionally negatively connoted Diaspora – and makes equally clear his novel understanding of the concept of nationalism: Dubnov synthesises the promise of modernity with his reading of history into an understanding of nationalism that runs counter to the 19th-century European faith in progress, which despite, or precisely because of, his borrowings from pre-modern times, appears quite paradoxically to be modern.

Foundations: Diaspora Nationalism and History

In his Letters, Simon Dubnov rehabilitates the Diaspora, to which the Jewish people had been subjected since the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE).¹⁷ Contrary to the conventional tendency in Jewish intellectual history at the time, Dubnov did not understand the scattering of the Jews as God's punishment, but as a historical reality dating back almost 2,000 years. The Diaspora had significantly influenced Jewish life and had turned the "chosen people" into a collective personality, which Dubnov referred to as the "light to the nations". As Jewish national attributes had developed during the Jews' struggle for existence since Biblical times, for such an evolutionary thinker as Dubnov, the Jews were the most "developed" of all peoples and for that reason the most "historical" one.

By the standards of historiography at the time, this reading was revolutionary, for statehood was seen as the *sine qua non* of historicity. The foundation of Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism in the age of national historiographies was to refer to a people without a state as the "most historical" (*historicissimus*) of all peoples.¹⁸ The transnational and transterritorial lifeworld of the East European Jews within the heterogeneous communities of Eastern Europe is handed down in the leitmotiv of the Diaspora. Dubnov elevates it to the vision of a modern democratic future.

Despite the lack of a territory, Dubnov treats the Jewish nation like other national historiographers treat their objects of investigation, basing his analysis on the experience of the Jews in the multiethnic Russian Empire. He integrates the history of the Russian Jews, which he places at the centre of his work, into two larger frames of reference: He vertically anchors the history of the Russian Jews in 4,000 years of Jewish national history, while horizontally interpreting it in 19th-century Eastern Europe, where numerous stateless nations were struggling for their right of self-administration.¹⁹

19th-century Eastern Europe was characterised by various processes of national awakenings, which were subjecting the three large multiethnic empires – the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian – to centrifugal forces. Dubnov referred to these national awakenings as the nationalisation (*natsionalizatsiia*)²⁰ of minorities. These processes

¹⁷ Anke Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus. Zur Geschichtskonstruktion Simon Dubnows* (Göttingen 2007), pp. 119–131.

¹⁸ Dubnov, *Grundlagen*, p. 41.

¹⁹ Benjamin Nathans, "On Russian-Jewish Historiography", in Thomas Sanders, ed., *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* (New York 1999), pp. 397–432, here, p. 411.

²⁰ On the concept of *natsionalizatsiia*, see Dubnov, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", pp. 131–143; Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, p. 93.

spanned all the stages of national movements from their intellectual beginnings (the Jews), to mass movements and uprisings (the Poles), and the formation of states (the Serbs). For Dubnov, Russia's Jews were just another one of these minorities. Accordingly, the multiethnic Russian Empire became the general framework of his construction. Unlike the existence of that part of the Diaspora subjected to the homogenising pressures of the nation-states of Western Europe, the situation of the Jews in the Russian Empire amid such a diverse menagerie of religious and ethnic minorities could be better characterised as autonomous national life. In this sense, the Jews were an "imperial population".²¹

Dubnov's historicism took the East European Jewish experience and created from it a vision of the Jewish people's future. Derived from this historical experience, Dubnov's goal was not a nation-state (not even a Zionist one) but a form of national life based on self-determination for extremely diverse peoples within supranational states.

For Dubnov, state and nation were separate matters. He described the individual and its relationship to nation and state by referring to a dualist principle. According to him, the nation was derived from the inner connection of individuals to a collective body. The state, however, was an "artificial", "legal", or "socio-political" institution held together by an "external bond".²²

If the national community was responsible for the organisation of its education, culture, and edification, then the state was to guarantee individual civil rights. The individual was a part of the state in the sense that there was a legal bond guaranteeing individual rights and imposing certain duties. At the same time, the individual was an organic component of the collective body of the nation, which influenced the individual's culture and conveyed the feeling of rootedness and belonging. Under these conditions, nation and state did not have to be one and the same thing.

Against the backdrop of the multiethnic Russian Empire, the formation of new nation-states in Eastern Europe threatened Dubnov's vision, because nation-states encouraged a certain "national egotism"²³ among the most populous nation. It was for this reason that Dubnov, drawing on the historical experience of the Diaspora, created a vision of coexistence among various autonomous peoples, of a peaceful and free Eastern Europe beyond the "prisons of nations".

According to Dubnov, the institution that was to mediate between the members of the collective body was not the state, but the community. In the history of the Diaspora, the community is of special importance.²⁴ It enabled continuity and stability of Jewish life in the absence of a state and was therefore a key prerequisite of Jewish life in the Diaspora.²⁵ As such, the community is denoted by the Hebrew term *kehilla*. The *kehilla* kept up the most important institutions of Jewish life for the individual: the ceme-

²¹ Dan Diner, "Editorial", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 1 (2002), pp. 9–14, here p. 11; Anke Hilbrenner, "Jüdische Geschichte", *Digitales Handbuch zur Geschichte und Kultur Russlands und Osteuropas* <http://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/2055/1/Hilbrenner_JuedGeschichte.pdf>, Ch. 2.2. "Imperiale Bevölkerung".

²² Dubnov, *Grundlagen*, p. 44.

²³ Dubnov, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", pp. 116–130.

²⁴ Hilbrenner, "Jüdische Geschichte".

²⁵ Verena Dohrn, "Die jüdische Gemeinde (kehilla) und die Stadt unter russischem Recht", in *Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa*, pp. 65–84; Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia 1844–1917* (Jerusalem 1981).

tery, the synagogue, the ritual bath, an authority offering protection from the outside world, and a legal body that ensured adherence to religious law and could be consulted in the event of problems. The communities assumed the functions of maintaining general order, raising taxes, administering justice, regulating the economy, providing education and social services, and organising cultural life. In the communities, the Jewish population was able to maintain its existence relatively independent of the surrounding majority population. The community authorities were elected, but the structure of the community was nonetheless oligarchic and patriarchal. The politically connoted term *kahal* was used to refer to the community authorities.

The *kahal* supervised the community and in return offered physical and legal protection. The most effective means available to the communal authorities for maintaining social discipline was the *kherem*, or ban, which could be used as a form of punishment. Furthermore, the community presided over the right to settle and to lease land, the *hazakah*. The community's contacts with the outside world were handled by an intercessor, the *shtadlan*.

In Eastern Europe, the community and Jewish life remained stable well into the 19th century, even if religious divisions, pogroms, economic problems, and state bans triggered severe crises at various times. Because the entire system of communal self-administration was founded on religious law, the community was thrown into an existential crisis by secularisation. At the outset of the modern era, the Jewish community was subjected to criticism from nearly all sides. Adherents of the Jewish Enlightenment, and later Jewish Socialists, denounced the way, the Jewish authorities ruled the communities as oligarchic, patriarchal, and exploitative.

Antisemites suspected that the community was in fact a "state within a state", with whose help non-Jews were exploited.²⁶ These communities, which in the minds of anti-Jewish conspiracy theorists were united in a large and secret "world kahal", worked in turn for a "worldwide Jewish conspiracy". In their efforts to modernise the state, the non-Jewish authorities attempted to dissolve the community as a remnant of the estate-based system. Only religious Jews refrained from calling the community into question.

The Diaspora Nationalists for their part saw in this institution a suitable instrument for leading Jews of the Diaspora into modernity.²⁷ Simon Dubnov was the first to rehabilitate the community, which he referred to using the political term *kahal*. To him, it was a "substitute for government, for a state, and for a citizenship"²⁸ as well as a territory of the Diaspora.²⁹ The community became the supporting element of Dubnov's vision of Jewish national life in the Diaspora. Through it, the individual would partake of his cultural and national rights. Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism was accordingly a dual concept in the political sense as well. As a citizen, the individual realised his civil rights and duties and, as a member of the community, was a part of the nation and participated in its cultural and autonomous life. At the state level, the nation was

²⁶ One source for this is the apostate Jakob Brafman's work of antisemitic slander, *Kniga Kagala*, 1-2 (St. Petersburg 21882) (1869); Jacob Katz, *A State Within a State. The History of an Anti-Semitic Slogan* (Jerusalem 1969).

²⁷ Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, pp. 167–186.

²⁸ Dubnov, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", p. 138.

²⁹ Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, pp. 133–147.

in turn to be represented in an assembly of communities consisting of delegates sent by the individual communities.

Equal rights and a national life in the Diaspora mediated by the community was the central message of the political ideology Dubnov called autonomism. Autonomism was, so to speak, the “political arm” of his understanding of history. It was represented in the Russian democratic movement of 1905 by the People’s Party, the *Folkspartey*.³⁰

Politics: Diaspora Nationalism in the Democratic Movement of 1905

The politicisation of Russian Jews gained enormous momentum through the revolution and the democratic movement of 1905.³¹ After the disastrous course of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and the brutal dispersal of demonstrators in the Bloody Sunday incident (January 22, 1905), the number of people calling for the modernisation of the Russian Empire grew steadily. The liberal opposition advocated primarily a constitution and a parliament. The peasants were still dissatisfied with the implementation of agricultural reforms. In the cities, the nascent working class was beginning to organise.

It was in this setting that the radical forces of the intelligentsia also began to agitate. Liberals and radicals agreed on some issues concerning social modernisation, for example, women’s rights. In addition, problems with the nationalities on the empire’s periphery were severely destabilising the Russian Empire. The nationality question was one of the great unsolved problems in the tsarist “prison of nations”. Poles, Ukrainians, Finns, the peoples of the Caucasus, and many others among Tsar Nicholas II’s non-Russian subjects used the revolutionary unrest, which first broke out in the empire’s major population centres, in order to demand their right to national self-determination.³²

In their search for allies, the Great Russian opposition movements accommodated in part the national demands of the non-Russians. Almost all parties that had come into existence after the October Manifesto of 1905 and the promise of parliamentary representation, including those that had previously operated in the underground, were aware that any post-revolutionary “new order” would have to solve the nationalities question. During the Revolution of 1905, the political public had become sensitised to concepts such as “civilised nation”, “national rights”, “language rights”, and “national education”. Russia’s Jews were also able to profit from this. According to their own self-perception, they were one nation among many, and the Great Russians also saw them as such. Therefore, it was also time for the Jewish nation to claim their right to self-determination. The Jews were thus part of the all-Russian democracy movement, with the Jewish general public being as differentiated as the opposition in general.³³

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 193–206.

³¹ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905. A Short History* (Stanford 2004).

³² Andreas Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (München 2001), pp. 268–277.

³³ Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 10, p. 387.



Simon Dubnov, Odessa 1913

In this context, Simon Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism, nominally only on the periphery of the political spectrum, became a driving force behind the entire Jewish emancipation movement. In response to the political disenfranchisement of the Jews, which had steadily assumed new dimensions since 1881, and the anti-Jewish violence since the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, which had intensified due to mobilisation for the Russo-Japanese War and the revolutionary unrest, the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights for the Jewish People in Russia* (Soiuz dlia dostizheniia polnopraviiia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii) was founded in Vil'na (Vilnius) in 1905. In Yiddish, the members of this association were ironically called the "attainers" (dergreykher).³⁴ The *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights* became part of the *Union of Unions* and thus an institutional part of the all-Russian democracy movement of 1905.

Dubnov incorporated the right to national cultural self-determination into the programme of the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*. This was to be realised through the autonomy of communities and the recognition of Jewish schools as well as the national languages of Yiddish and Hebrew. His theory of autonomism became the political programme of the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*. Initially the Jewish and the all-Russian democracy movements sought to create a united front. However, over the course of the revolution, from 1905 to 1907, differences within the Union for the Attainment of Full Rights became ever more clear.

The differentiation of the Jewish political movement into several parties with different political concepts was part of the general politicisation of Russian society. The Jewish social democrats of the *General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia*, best known as the *Bund*, soon broke with Dubnov's ideology. Unlike the Bundists, Dubnov was convinced that the nationalities question, and not class antagonisms, was the most pressing problem facing Russian Jewry and Russian history. Although the Bund continued to adhere to the principle of national cultural autonomy, it distanced itself from the bourgeois liberal views that Dubnov articulated in the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*.

At their party congress in Helsingfors (Helsinki) in November 1906, the Zionists also renounced the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*. They put forward the vision of a Jewish state in Palestine in order to adequately represent their voters' concerns in the Russia Empire. However, they retained Dubnov's national programme for the Diaspora, which they now called "work in the present".³⁵ When the Zionists founded their own party, the anti-Zionists around Maxim Vinaver felt compelled to do the same. They organised themselves in the *Jewish People's Group*. From the rubble of the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*, which for two years had represented Jewish national interests in a time of political change, there emerged Dubnov's *Folkspartey*.³⁶

The differentiation of Jewish national politics into various currents ran parallel to that of the all-Russian democratic movement. At this point, the anti-tsarist forces broke up

³⁴ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 162–168; G. R. Aronso, "V Borbe za grazhdanskii i natsional'nye prava (Obshchestvennye techeniia v russkom evreistve)", in Soiuz russkikh evreev, ed., *Kniga o russkom evreistve. Ot 1860-ch godov do revoliutsii 1917 g.*, (New York 1960) (reprint: Jerusalem and Moscow 2002), pp. 211–238, here: p. 226f; Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *The Tsars and the Jews. Reform, Reaction and Anti-Semitism in Imperial Russia 1772–1917* (Chur a.o. 1993).

³⁵ Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (New York 1987).

³⁶ Semen Dubnov, *Volkspartei. Evreiskaia Narodnaia Partiia* (S.-Peterburg 1907), p. 8f.

as well. In 1905, a series of political parties representing various political directions were founded. This division of revolutionary forces enabled the triumph of the autocracy, which reinstated the old order. Even though the tsarist authorities granted only a “pseudo-constitutionalism”, the Duma and the parties represented there became a stage for rehearsing political participation.³⁷

In the programme of the *Folkspartey*, Simon Dubnov demanded that the national rights of the Jewish people be guaranteed from the local to the state level through self-administered communities:

In our autonomy programme, the *Folkspartey* proposes to utilise the idea of communal self-administration, which has been sanctified by the historical experience of many generations.... The cell of self-administration in our times can only be a free community of the people with a democratically elected leadership that administers its cultural institutions, cooperatives, and welfare organisations.³⁸

The Jewish community was to be represented at the overall state level by the *Union of Jewish Communities* (Soiuz evreiskikh obshchin). This body would have had the task of guaranteeing the freedom to use the national language and the autonomy of the schools.³⁹ By using the Russian term *obshchina*, Dubnov picked up on Russian concepts of community. By choosing *Union of Jewish Communities* for the name of the national assembly on the all-Russian level, Dubnov also recalled the unions of the democracy movement of 1905. Furthermore, the *Folkspartey* completed its turn towards the use of Yiddish, even though it refrained from making any absolute claims in language policy. From 1905 until the end of his life, Russian was Dubnov’s preferred language. His own position was that all of the languages spoken by Jews were in fact Jewish languages. Nonetheless, the party programme was printed in Yiddish in the Petersburg daily *Der fraynd*.⁴⁰

The *Folkspartey*, however, did not meet with political success. All of the Jewish parties that had emerged from the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights* had integrated Dubnov’s national demands into their programmes. With that, his autonomy programme enjoyed unparalleled success in the East European Diaspora. However, his party became superfluous.

At the end of 1911, the *Folkspartey* was reorganised under the name *United National Group*. Among the new members was the Jewish narodnik (radical populist) and future social revolutionary S. An-skii. As a result, the left gained in influence. The importance of Yiddish as a national language was more strongly articulated. And the *United National Group* was also sympathetic to the systematic colonisation of Palestine.⁴¹

The First World War at the latest pushed Dubnov’s vision of an autonomous Jewish life in a modern “multinational state” to its limits. On the one hand, Jewish soldiers of

³⁷ Max Weber, *Russlands Übergang zum Scheinkonstitutionalismus* (Tübingen 1906).

³⁸ Dubnov, *Volkspartei*, p. 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ “Di folks-party”, *Der fraynd*, (12 February 1907).

⁴¹ Sophie Dubnov-Erich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov. Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History* (Bloomington 1991) [1950], p. 157.

the various warring parties died in the struggle. Jews killed Jews. On the other hand, the war became a tragedy for Jewish civilians, above all in the Russian Empire: The eastern front ran through the Pale of Settlement throughout the war. The Russian government suspected the Jews of collective disloyalty and expelled them from the army rear areas. Once again, the Jews of the Russian Empire were not treated as citizens. Amid this calamity, it was clear that within the multiethnic Russian Empire only Russians were considered loyal subjects. Jews fell victim to violent attacks by soldiers of all warring parties, above all, however, by their own neighbours: Russians, Poles and Ukrainians.⁴²

The First World War, and then the Russian Civil War constituted a major disaster for the Jews.⁴³ Since 1881, the situation of Russia's Jews had deteriorated steadily. The lack of perspective and the experience with constant insinuations of disloyalty showed Dubnov that a national and egalitarian existence was impossible for the Jewish people within the Russian Empire. From then on, he took part in the struggle for an international solution to the question of an autonomous national existence for the Jewish people. Dubnov understood the horrors and destruction of the First World War as the end of the old Europe. The East European Jewish Diaspora was home to his historical and political vision of Diaspora Nationalism. The end of Europe therefore seemed to him the end of the world:

After many centuries of civilisational development, we are today in a period of chaos, which is giving birth to a new world. Will this world be better or worse than the preceding one? Are we experiencing the downfall of European civilisation or the dark hour before the break of dawn?⁴⁴

The old Eastern Europe, with its multiethnic empires and transnational and transteritorial population groups, was lost. Instead, Eastern Europe adopted from the west the myth of the nation-state as the path to modernity. Dubnov's vision of a modern Jewish Diaspora Nation in a supranational state system had been overtaken by events. In the new Europe, his theory of autonomism, which had been developed under the conditions of the Russian Empire, seemed nothing more than an anachronism.

Diaspora Nationalism in a New Era

After 1917–1918, the Russian Jewry that had formed the basis of Dubnov's political vision did in fact no longer exist. Many of the Russian-speaking Jews had left the former multiethnic Russian Empire. Others had become Polish, Lithuanian, or Latvian Jews through the restructuring of East Central Europe. The establishment of nation-states on the territory of the former multiethnic empires was understood to represent

⁴² Eric Lohr, "The Russian Army and the Jews. Mass Deportation, Hostages, and Violence during World War I", *The Russian Review*, 60 (2001), pp. 404–419.

⁴³ Oleg Budnitskii, *Russiiskie evrei mezhdru krasnymi i belymi, 1917–1920* (Moscow 2005); Dubnov, *Weltgeschichte*, 10, pp. 509–518.

⁴⁴ Preface to the 1923 Russian edition of Simon Dubow's "Neuerster Geschichte", cited after: Verena Dohrn, Anke Hilbrenner, "Einführung: Simon Dubnow in Berlin", in Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3, pp. 11–48, here: p. 26.

the “modernisation” of Eastern Europe. The respective majority population in each of these new states celebrated this epochal change as liberation. But while the turning point of 1917 had eliminated the multiethnic empires, the problems of many East European peoples were exacerbated.⁴⁵ The minorities within the borders of the new nation-states became the target of homogenising pressure from the new capitals.⁴⁶

As a result of this “modernisation”, there emerged a Europe full of “irredentisms, revanchisms, and an overwhelming desire [to get rid of] the disruptive, the non-belonging, the Other”.⁴⁷ This new, seemingly modern Eastern Europe defied Dubnov’s understanding of the pioneering transnational and transterritorial historical reality of the Russian-Jewish Diaspora. Nonetheless, Diaspora Nationalism experienced a kind of revival during the interwar period. In Lithuania, Dubnov’s ideas on Jewish autonomy were realised by means of a complex system of legally recognised *kehillot* (communities) during the first years of independence.⁴⁸

From these communities, a Jewish national assembly was elected. Together with the minister for Jewish affairs, this assembly, which existed from 1920 to 1924, was to administer the institutions of autonomy. The rights and duties of the communities were recorded in the *kehillot*-statute of 1920. The communities, which elected their authorities on the basis of democratic principles, were to collect taxes and plan a budget for religious affairs, welfare, social aid, and educational institutions. Every Lithuanian who was registered as a Jew in his personal documents was automatically a member of a Jewish community. However, as early as 1923, the heyday of Jewish autonomy in Lithuania was already coming to an end.⁴⁹

In reconstituted Poland, the political authorities wasted no time in turning on their non-Polish minorities.⁵⁰ Here, individual personalities and influential Jewish parties contributed to the spread of Dubnov’s concepts of autonomy. As had been the case within the Russian party landscape after 1905, it was mainly the Zionists and Bundists from Poland’s formerly Russian lands who seized the political initiative among the country’s Jews. Both had integrated Dubnovian concepts of autonomy into their programmes before the First World War. Among the Jewish Social Democrats from the Bund, Dubnov’s ideas remained secondary to class antagonism, although the Bund had a clear Yiddishist orientation and represented national-cultural autonomy for the

⁴⁵ Dittmar Dahlmann, Anke Hilbrenner, eds., *Zwischen großen Erwartungen und bösem Erwachen. Juden, Politik und Antisemitismus in Ost- und Südosteuropa 1918–1945* (Paderborn 2007).

⁴⁶ Karl Schlögel, “Planet der Nomaden”, *Die Mitte liegt ostwärts* (München, Wien 2002), pp. 65–123, here, p. 86; Dan Diner, *Das Jahrhundert verstehen. Eine universalhistorische Deutung* (München 1999), pp. 79–135.

⁴⁷ Schlögel, *Planet*, p. 86.

⁴⁸ Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life*, p. 143.

⁴⁹ Eglė Bendikaite, “Zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit: Die Politik gegenüber den Juden in Litauen in der Zwischenkriegszeit”, in Dahlmann, Hilbrenner, *Zwischen großen Erwartungen*, pp. 101–120, pp. 105–106; Matthias Niendorf, “Stationen jüdischen Lebens in Litauen”, in Engel-Braunschmidt, *Jüdische Welten*, pp. 101–126, pp. 118–119; Šarūnas Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925*, (Vilnius 2003). See the articles by Bendikaite and Steffen in this volume, pp. 171–178, and pp. 199–217.

⁵⁰ Albert S. Kotowski, “‘Polska dla Polaków’: Über den Antisemitismus in Polen in der Zwischenkriegszeit”, in Dahlmann, *Zwischen großen Erwartungen*, pp. 77–100; Klaus-Peter Friedrich, “Von der *żydokomuna* zur Lösung einer ‘jüdischen Frage’ durch Auswanderung: Die politische Instrumentalisierung ethnischer und kultureller Differenzen in Polen 1917/1918 bis 1939”, in *ibid.*, pp. 53–76, here: p. 59.

Jewish working class.⁵¹ Among the Zionists, Diaspora Nationalism was still called “work in the present”.⁵²

In addition, the *Jewish People's Party*, known as the *Folkisten*, was active in Poland. This party was founded in 1917 as an offshoot of Dubnov's *Folkspartei*. The *Folkisten* were seen as a petit-bourgeois party that appealed mainly to artisans and merchants. Especially in the first years after the war, the *Folkisten* were considered a significant political force. While they had fewer followers than their competitors, they had numerous writers, journalists, and intellectuals among their ranks. They consequently controlled a number of newspapers whose readership far exceeded their actual following. However, their success was limited to Vilnius and Warsaw. Furthermore, the party split in 1926 due to differences between local politicians, namely Noach Pryłucki, a publisher in Warsaw, and Tsemach Szabad, a doctor in Vilnius. As a result, the *Folkisten* in Vilnius leaned more strongly towards the Zionists.

Within Poland's political spectrum, the role of the *Jewish People's Party* remained marginal. The reasons for this seem to lie in part in the lack of unity and in part in the presence of Diaspora Nationalism's basic principles in the programmes of its more successful competitors.⁵³

A *Jewish People's Party* also existed in the Weimar Republic. However, this party represented a highly diluted form of Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism. The different programmatic contents of the various people's parties had to do with the different self-perceptions of the Jews in Eastern and Western Europe. German and East European Jews did in fact differ radically from one another with regard to their feeling of belonging to Jewry, on the one hand, and to the country they inhabited, on the other.

Most East European Jews understood themselves as a part of the Jewish nation, which was a minority in the countries of Eastern Europe. By virtue of their nationality, they felt connected to the Jewish people within the worldwide Diaspora. Since Emancipation, the German Jews had considered themselves to be “citizens of the Jewish faith”. Their loyalty extended to their German homeland; they felt themselves to be part of the German nation and not the Jewish nation, which was spread around the world. To them, Judaism was a confession. They sought to solve their problems as Germans, not as a part of an all-Jewish collective, and they answered German-Jewish questions exclusively for themselves as citizens of Germany. Their answers frequently had no validity for “foreign” Jews, with whom they may have shared a common faith, but not a common ethnicity.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the *Jewish People's Party* in Germany picked up on East European ideas and was therefore especially attractive to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.⁵⁵

With the triumphal procession of the principle of the nation-state in East Central and Eastern Europe, the concepts of identity of West European Jews appeared to prevail.

⁵¹ Gertrud Pickhan, *‘Gegen den Strom’. Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund ‘Bund’ in Polen 1918–1939* (Stuttgart and Munich 2001); Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin et al. 1983), pp. 280–284.

⁵² Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland. The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven and London 1981), especially p. 24, 33.

⁵³ Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life*, p. 143; Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*, pp. 287–288.

⁵⁴ Yfaat Weiss, *Deutsche und polnische Juden vor dem Holocaust. Jüdische Identität zwischen Staatsbürgerschaft und Ethnizität 1933–1940* (München 2000), pp. 125–134.

⁵⁵ Michael Brenner, “The Jüdische Volkspartei – National-Jewish Communal Politics during the Weimar Republic”, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 35 (1990), pp. 219–243.

This and the Sovietisation of the tsarist empire stripped Simon Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism of its future potential. But Dubnov adapted his vision of autonomous Jewish life in the Diaspora to the conditions of an interwar Europe based on nation-states. He modified his transterritorial and supranational autonomy programme. The all-Russian Jewish national assembly was replaced by the League of Nations, which was to guarantee the rights of national minorities. He invoked the Versailles Minority Treaties, in which the ethnic minorities were recognised and the League of Nations guaranteed their protection. In addition, he demanded the creation of an international Jewish organisation, which would appear for this body to defend the rights of the Jews in the various nation states. At a 1927 Zurich conference on minority rights, he was able to introduce his modern Jewish Diaspora Nationalism to an international audience.⁵⁶

Diaspora Nationalism: An Anachronism?

However, when confronted with the gathering crisis of the new East Central and South-eastern European states, the League of Nations remained ineffective as an instrument of the new Europe. The newly established nation-states turned on their structural heterogeneity, which had remained a feature of East Central and Southeastern Europe. The Jews, who represented this historically developed, structurally rooted diversity in a special way through their transterritorial and transnationally formed lifeworlds, were the first victims of these homogenising efforts. The ethno-national, religious heterogeneity of Eastern and Southeastern Europe ran counter to the allegedly modernising potential of the nation-state. Nonetheless, the principle of the nation-state was implemented. Thus the great seminal catastrophe of the First World War led to a crisis-ridden interwar period, which reached its climax in the genocides of the war years carried out or incited by the Germans during the Second World War.

Ultimately, the Second World War brought a violent end to the ethno-national and religious heterogeneity of large parts of Eastern Central and Southeastern Europe. The prewar fiction of ethnically homogenous nation-states thus became postwar reality.⁵⁷ The annihilation of European Jews by National-Socialist Germany claimed most of its victims from among Eastern Europe's Jews. Precisely the East European Diaspora, which had been of such fundamental importance for the political ideology of Diaspora Nationalism, was annihilated in the Shoah. Simon Dubnov, the spiritual father of Diaspora Nationalism, was himself murdered in the Riga ghetto in December 1941.⁵⁸

The Shoah destroyed the lives and lifeworlds of the East European Jews. The survivors immigrated to the United States, Latin America, and Israel, where they encountered new possibilities for identity. Jewish difference and otherness, as implied by Diaspora Nationalism, were considered dangerous and undesirable in light of what these new immigrants had experienced and survived. Not only was the political significance of Diaspora Nationalism marginalised after 1945, so was its treatment in historiography.

⁵⁶ "Die Jüdische Rechtsschutzkonferenz", *Jüdische Rundschau*, 23 August 1927; "Professor S. Dubnow über die Aufgabe der Konferenz zum Schutze der jüdischem Rechte, Berlin, 5. Juli 1927", *Jüdische Telegraphen Agentur*, (6 July 1927).

⁵⁷ Anke Hilbrenner, Dittmar Dahlmann, "Einführung: Antisemitismus und Ausgrenzung der Juden in Ost- und Südosteuropa in der Zwischenkriegszeit", in idem, eds., *Zwischen großen Erwartungen*, pp. 7–11.

⁵⁸ Anke Hilbrenner, Nicolas Berg, "Der Tod Simon Dubnows in Riga 1941. Quellen, Zeugnisse, Erinnerungen", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts*, 1 (2002), pp. 457–472.

Modern nationalism studies makes no mention of Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism. The paradigm of "state" seems to be too central to 19th- and 20th-century national thought for an alternative concept to be considered. What is distinct about Dubnov's understanding of history is that he did not tailor his national history to ideas of a clearly delimited, homogeneous nation-state, but to the reality of the Jewish people as a plural transterritorial nation in the Diaspora. The development of history as a modern academic discipline in the 19th century paralleled – by no coincidence – the rise of the concepts of "nation" and "state", in which the idea of developed civilisation was expressed.

The absence of homogenous nation-states appeared to contemporaries and historians of the 20th century as characteristic of a typical feature of East European backwardness. Making this "backwardness" a point of departure for a modern vision of self-determination for the Jewish people was difficult to convey not only within the discipline of general history, but also within Jewish Studies. Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism as the essence of the eastern Jewish experience attracted scant attention within Jewish historiography as well.⁵⁹

This disregard of East European Jewries within Jewish historiography may well have to do with the fact that Jewish history had traditionally understood itself to be primarily a history of ideas. The rise of modern Jewish historiography is inextricably linked to the "science of Judaism" (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*), which developed in Berlin in the first half of the 19th century. Ismar Schorsch considers the translation of Judaism into rational terms to be a process of "westernisation": The "science of Judaism" allowed the concepts, ideas, and values of an ancient oriental religion to be translated into "western" categories. This translation led to a different understanding of Judaism and new possibilities of Jewish self-perception in modernity. The "westernisation" of Ashkenazi Judaism through the "science of Judaism" was, according to Schorsch, the essence of the intellectual Jewish renaissance in the 19th century.⁶⁰ In this "westernisation" process, the East European Jewish experience was almost inevitably ignored.

This optimistic assessment of western modernity also had an impact on the famous Jewish social historian Salo Baron, who, like Dubnov before him, also championed a positive appraisal of the Diaspora. Baron, however, had no sympathy for Dubnov's call for the right of difference. For Baron, the Jews were part of a modern society; their self-evident right was to insist on equality and not on their otherness.⁶¹ While Dubnov claimed the right of difference for the East European Jews, Baron, only a few years later, understood American Jews to be a part of the American people. Baron influenced subsequent generations of historians. So it hardly comes as a surprise that one of his students, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, mentions Dubnov only in passing in his own work on modern Jewish historiography.⁶²

That is to say, although Dubnov had developed a Jewish view of history that legitimised the Diaspora in historical terms, he remained marginalised in the historiograph-

⁵⁹ For exceptions to this rule, see: Robert M. Seltzer, *Simon Dubnow: A Critical Biography of his Early Years* (Ann Arbor 1973); Avraham Greenbaum, Kristi Groberg, eds., *A Missionary for History. Essays in Honor of Simon Dubnov* (Minneapolis 1998); bibliography in Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, pp. 11–35.

⁶⁰ Ismar Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 28 (1983), pp. 413–437, especially p. 413.

⁶¹ Salo W. Baron, "The Modern Age", in Leo W. Schwarz, ed., *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People* (New York 1956), pp. 315–483, pp. 358–359.

⁶² Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Erinnere Dich! Jüdische Geschichte und jüdisches Gedächtnis* (Berlin 1996).

ical discourse that took place in the defence of the Diaspora. It seems less extraordinary that the Zionist historiography of the “Jerusalem school” would want to have nothing to do with Dubnov’s concept of Diaspora Nationalism. From the Zionists’ point of view, the inescapable conclusion of Dubnov’s concept of nation would be to recognise the need for a nation-state. However, Dubnov never did so.⁶³

Only after the division of Europe had come to an end in 1990 did it become clear that the historical reality of Eastern Europe stood in opposition to the western tradition of homogenous nation-states and their self-perception as the Latin occident. The East European heritage includes heterogeneity and diversity, cultures of Diasporas, migration and minorities that insist on their rights to difference. The nation-state, as a homogenising force with its offers of assimilation, cannot do them justice.

Alternative political concepts will have to meet these challenges. The Jewish experience can offer a novel approach to the problems of the present. However, it also heightens our understanding of the European past. Dan Diner has rightly pointed out that Jewish history has a pioneering role within historiography. It is precisely the transnational and transterritorial character of Jewish history that does justice to Eastern Europe’s history of heterogeneity and difference.⁶⁴

By his “sociological view” of history, Dubnov does not understand history as a narrative of state action or great personalities. He puts the weak and powerless at the centre of his work. His narrative emphasises that those belonging to minority groups have the right to be different and to live differently. Their needs are not subordinate to the supposedly overriding interests of the majority. Surprisingly, this approach does justice to the modern individual and his diverse identities, which can change depending on the situation.

Dubnov’s approach corresponds to the heterogeneous system of communities and regions of Eastern Europe. The Cold War long obscured our view of these complex societies. It was only with the break up of the multinational states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia that ethno-political conflicts flared up once again and revealed their ethnic, religious, and social dimensions. Crisis management based on the idea of a modern, homogenous nation-state will fail. In particular, such concepts cannot be applied to the former border regions of the multiethnic empires, such as the Caucasus and Southeastern Europe with their own “imperial populations”, which in some ways recall the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Diaspora Nationalism has become the subject of newfound interest.

Translated from German by Jonathan Lutes and Luisa Zielinski

⁶³ Uri Ram, “Narration, Erziehung und die Erfindung des jüdischen Nationalismus”, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 2 (1994), pp. 151–177.

⁶⁴ Dan Diner, “Zweierlei Emanzipation. Westliche Juden und Ostjuden gegenübergestellt”, in *Gedächtniszeiten. Über jüdische und andere Geschichten* (München 2003), pp. 246–262.

Jascha Nemtsov

“The Scandal Was Perfect”

Jewish Music in the Works of European Composers

Well into the 19th century, Jewish music went largely unnoticed in European culture or was treated dismissively. Russian composers wrote the first chapter of musical Judaica. At the start of the 20th century, a Jewish national school of music was established in Russia; this school later influenced the work of many composers in Western Europe. Since the Holocaust, Jewish music is understood less as folk music, it has become a political and moral symbol.

The parties of the Hasidim where they merrily discourse on talmudic problems. If the entertainment runs down or if someone does not take part, they make up for it by singing. Melodies are invented... a wonder-rabbi... suddenly laid his face on his arms, which were resting on the table, and remained in that position for three hours while everyone was silent. When he awoke he wept and sang an entirely new, gay, military march.

Franz Kafka, 29 November 1911¹

What particularly impressed Kafka at a gathering of a Hasidic community at their rabbi's home is typical for traditional Judaism: Religion and music are so tightly intertwined that reading and praying are conducted only in song.

The first Hebrew grammar, *De accentibus et orthographia linguae Hebraicae*, by the Stuttgart humanist Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), was published in Alsatian Hagenau in 1518. Reuchlin focused on the Hebrew Bible and included as well the motifs – Biblical cantillations – with which it was chanted by the European (Ashkenazi) Jews. This marked the first appearance of these motifs outside the Jewish community as well as the first time that they were transcribed into European musical notation.² Music that had hitherto fulfilled only a ritual purpose thus became the subject of academic discourse. However, Reuchlin did not confine himself to providing exact reproductions of the motifs. He had them arranged as four-part chorale pieces. In accordance with the madrigal style common at the time, the melody was located in the part of the tenor. Reuchlin sought to encourage his readership to study and to perform

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¹ *Diaries of Franz Kafka*, Joseph Kresh, trans. (New York 1949).

² The transcriptions were provided by Johannes Böschenstein (1472–1540).

the cantillations. Adapted to contemporary style, the motifs were to appear more accessible to a cultivated readership.³ As a result, these arrangements, which were created by Reuchlin's pupil Christoph Schilling together with a musician called Glareanus, also became an aesthetic phenomenon. Thus, Jewish music found its way into European cultural awareness.



*Motifs from the Bible cantillations in Reuchlin's
De accentibus et orthographia linguae Hebraicae*

Some time would pass, however, before Jewish traditional music was accepted and taken seriously by European composers. The interest shown by humanists and church reformers in the Hebrew Bible as a primary source for the renewal of the Christian faith during the 16th- and 17th-century was followed by the Enlightenment in the 18th century. At this time, more than ever before, the Jewish religion was considered an assortment of uncivilised mystic beliefs, while the Jews themselves, with their separate way of life, seemed to be the epitome of dark “obscurantism” and backwardness. The idea of universal, natural human rights, which were supposed to be valid for Jews as well, was therefore accompanied by a contemptuous and hostile attitude towards all forms of genuine Jewish culture, including Jewish music. Adherents of the Enlightenment, non-Jewish and Jewish alike, called on the Jews to “improve” themselves, in order to become more “acceptable” to society at large. This was the basic prerequisite for overcoming the isolation of the Jews and for integrating them into society. Accordingly, efforts were directed not only at researching traditional Jewish culture, but to a far greater extent, at adapting it to the Christian environment and abolishing it as an independent phenomenon. Thus, the musical works that accompanied the religious reforms during the Jewish Enlightenment in Western Europe leaned to a large extent on church music.

³ Hanoch Avenary, *The Ashkenazi Tradition of Biblical Chant between 1500 and 1900* (Tel Aviv 1978), pp. 11-13.

During the 19th century, Jewish music in Western Europe was generally treated with disdain. It was regarded as being completely alien and inferior to European culture. In the words of Richard Wagner:

Who has not had occasion to convince himself of the travesty of a divine service of song, presented in a real Folk-synagogue? Who has not been seized with a feeling of the greatest revulsion, of horror mingled with the absurd, at hearing that sense-and-sound-confounding gurgle, jodel and cackle, which no intentional caricature can make more repugnant than as offered here in full, in naïve seriousness?⁴

In addition, Jewish music was considered as a whole to be devoid of originality. Well into the 20th century, Jewish folk music was generally regarded as a patchwork of musical fragments from songs by other peoples. It goes without saying that such prejudices did not exactly help promote the serious study of Jewish traditional music.

Only a few remarks of important musicians who encountered Jewish music without prejudice have been handed down to posterity. One of them is Franz Liszt. In 1859, his book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* appeared in Paris.⁵ Oddly enough, Liszt promptly dedicated the second chapter to another topic, calling it “The Opposite of the Gypsy: The Israelite”. This chapter contains remarkable passages that bear witness to Liszt’s sympathy for and interest in the Jews, their history, and their culture:

We had one single opportunity to get an impression what Judaic art could be like if the Israelites would reveal all the intensity of the feeling alive in their being in the form of their own soul. We became acquainted with Cantor Sulzer⁶ in Vienna.... In order to hear him, we went to the synagogue where he was the musical director and cantor. We have seldom experienced such an overwhelming vibration of all strings of the worship of God and human sympathy as on this evening. In the glow of candlelight resembling stars in the ceiling, a bizarre choir of somber, guttural voices – as though every breast was a dungeon from whose depths the voice rang in order to praise the God of the Ark of the Covenant from misery and confinement, to call him with an enduring faith, full of certainty of redemption from endless slavery.... It was impossible not to join in with all sympathy of the soul in the great call of this choir, which carried the weight of so many thousands of years of tradition and divine blessings, so much indignation and castigation and such unshakable hope, as if on huge shoulders.⁷

⁴ Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Berlin 1934), p. 21. Available in English in *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, William Ashton Ellis, trans. (Lincoln 1995), a compilation of works translated in the early 1900s. This translation of Wagner’s essay is also on-line at <<http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagjuda.htm>>.

⁵ In English as Franz Liszt, *The Gypsy in Music. The Result of the Author’s Life-long Experiences and Investigations of the Gipsies and Their Music*, Edwin Evans, trans. (London 1926).

⁶ Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890) was cantor of the synagogue in Vienna.

⁷ Franz Liszt, “Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn”, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, III (Leipzig 1910), pp. 18–19. The translation here is taken from the liner notes of Jascha Nemtsov, *Klavierwerke*, OehmsClassics 2008. As a young musician, Sulzer was during the 1820s also

Despite such individual expressions of sympathy, it was at this time still completely unthinkable to quote authentic Jewish music in classical works or to imitate its stylistic features in a similar manner, as Liszt did with Gypsy music in his “Hungarian Rhapsodies”.⁸ Even in those works that explicitly drew on Jewish themes, no hints of Jewish music were to be heard. A poignant example is Jacques François Élie Fromental Halévy’s opera “La juive” (1835) based on a libretto by Eugène Scribe. Halévy, a French Jew born as Elias Lévy, dedicated a large part of his opera to depicting Jewish life and Jewish personalities, but these are characterised in a conventional European style.

Jewish Elements in the Music of Russian Composers

The first chapter of *Judaica* in classical music was written by Russian composers in the mid-19th century. At the time, the perception of Jewish culture in Russia was very different to that of Western Europe. Until the end of the 18th century, when large areas of Poland and Lithuania were incorporated into the Russian Empire, there had hardly been any Jews in Russia. The lack of any real-life experience with Jewish people helped fuel the wildest prejudices, which were encouraged by popular Christian beliefs. Russian antisemitism was given an additional boost in the second half of the 15th century during the long struggle against the sects known as “Judaisers”. Whereas the emancipation and assimilation of the Jews continued in Western Europe, the legal segregation of Russia’s Jews from the rest of the population lasted well into the 20th century.

On the other hand, a pronounced idealisation of Biblical Jewish culture had become established in Russian literature. The semi-legendary Hebrews of antiquity and the very real, yet extremely alien and “repulsive” Jews of the Polish and Lithuanian *shtetls* represented two extremes, which were to influence the way the Russians dealt with Jewish culture for a long time. In the Russian perception of the Jews, a clear discrepancy can therefore be observed during the 19th century: On the one hand, the Jews were regarded as being a great and important people, bearers of prophetic ideals of justice, fear of God, and freedom, while on the other hand, they were a wretched, homeless, and above all despised people that was being punished for the sins of their forefathers, while at the same time adhering to their errant ways.

Accordingly, two names were established for Jews: “*evrei*” for the “noble”, antique Hebrews and “*zhid*” for the ugly contemporary Jews.⁹ In this context, Russian com-

friends with Franz Schubert, who set to music Psalms 92 for Sulzer’s collection of synagogue music *Schir Zion*. This work – like the works of all of the other composers Sulzer commissioned – contains no elements of traditional Jewish music.

⁸ In popular literature on music, it is repeatedly told that Beethoven quoted the well-known melody of “*Kol nidre*” in the sixth movement of his String Quartet, op. 131. This “quote” is connected to a work allegedly commissioned by Sulzer – but never carried out – for his collection *Schir Zion*. Because Beethoven uses only the melody’s first three notes, this can hardly be called a quote. A similar combination of tones is to be found in many works by classical composers.

⁹ The word “*zhid*” came to Russia from Poland, where it is a neutral term to describe Jews. During the second half of the 19th century, the word was generally used in a neutral manner in Russian literature. Later, it increasingly gained a pejorative connotation. In modern Russian, it is used solely as an insult. Since the end of the 19th century, the word “*evrei*”, which

posers produced numerous works that focused on Jewry and were generally given titles such as “Hebrew Song” (*Evreiskaia pesnia*) or “Hebrew Melody” (*Evreiskaia melodia*). Unlike their colleagues in the West, however, Russian composers tried from the start to employ special musical means in order to express the “Hebrew” element. The “father” of Russian music, Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), created the first of these works. His “Hebrew Song” (*Evreiskaia pesnia*) was written in 1840 as part of the stage music for the tragedy “Count Kholm’ski” (*Kniaz’ Kholm’ski*) by Nestor Kukol’nik (1809-1868). In the play, the song was linked to a Jewish woman by the name of Rachel, in whom the protagonist initially falls in love before abandoning her. This was probably the first work of classical music that consciously integrated elements of the Jewish musical tradition. Here, the “Jewish” element is indicated by the insistent *appoggiatura* in the vocal part, which imitates the *glissandi* (also known as *krekhths* or “sobbing”) of singing in synagogues and Klezmer music, a detail that was certainly based on the composer’s personal listening experience:



The text, an imitation of the “Hebrew Melodies” by Lord Byron, looks at first sight like a Zionist agenda, as it is about the return to the “old homeland, Palestine”. However, on closer inspection, it can be seen that Kukol’nik was also very familiar with the messianic strains of the Jewish faith: “The bones of our fathers await the time of renewal; night will be redeemed by the day of return.”

Kukol’nik’s tragedy was dropped as a failure after just three performances in 1840, but Glinka incorporated the “Hebrew Song” into his song cycle “Farewell to Petersburg” (*Proshchanie s Peterburgom*). Glinka’s piece became a model for several vocal works by other composers. These included the famous members of the Mighty Handful, especially Modest Musorgskii (1839-1881) and Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov (1844-1908), as well as other lesser-known composers, such as Sergei Vasilenko (1872-1956) or Gennadii Korganov (1858-1890). Many of these “Hebrew” works are also linked to Byron’s “Hebrew Melodies” in arrangements by Russian writers.

Another important source of inspiration was the Song of Solomon. Thus, Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov and Korganov each set to music the same text by poet Lev Mei (*Vstan’, soidi! Davno dennitsa...*), an arrangement of the Song of Solomon. Lev Mei (1822-1862) tackled the themes of the Old Testament in a different way than almost all of the other 19th-century Russian poets. These themes included primarily the verses of love in the Song of Solomon and the struggle for liberation waged by the Israel-

was originally comparable to Hebrew and referred to the Judaism of antiquity, has been used in Russian as the standard term for “Jew”.

ites. His cycle “Biblical Motifs – Hebrew Songs” (Bibelskie motivy – Evreiskie pesni) contains 27 poems alone. Unlike other Russian poets who handled similar subjects, Mei was the only one to make a connection between the noble “Hebrews”, evrei, and Russia’s oppressed Jews, zhidy, and to express this with extraordinary poetic force in his poem Zhidy (1860):

Жиды, жиды! Как дико это слово!
 Какой народ!... Что шаг, то чудеса...
 Послушать их врагов — ревниво и сурово
 С высот жидам грозят святые небеса...
 Быть-может — и грозят, но разве только ныне.
 Где вера в небеса, там и небесный гром,
 А прежде без грозы народ Свой вёл в пустыне
 Сам Бог, то облаком, то огненным столпом.
 Теперь презренной нет, проклятей нет народа,
 Нет ни к кому такой, как к ним, жидам, вражды,
 Но там, где понят Бог и понята природа,
 Везде они — жиды, жиды, жиды!

Jews, Jews! The very word is unusual!
 What a people!.. Wonders at every turn...
 To listen to their enemies - the sacred heavens
 From on high torment the Jews jealously, harshly...
 Perhaps – they torment them, but really only today.
 Those who speak to the heavens also feel their wrath.
 Yet it was God himself, first as a pillar of fire,
 Then a cloud, who led his people through the desert.
 Now they are despised, cursed by all the other nations
 Wherever they turn, enmity always follows
 But where God is pondered and nature also studied,
 They will be found close at hand – Jews, Jews, Jews!

This poem with its admiration for the Jewish people from a decidedly Christian perspective is just as rare in 19th-century Russian poetry as Mei’s efforts to find a particularly oriental style in his arrangement of the Song of Solomon. Similar efforts were made by composers who put his texts to music. While the lavish ornaments in Rimskii-Korsakov’s song (op. 8, no. 4) create a rather unspecific “oriental” impression and recalls his symphonic suite “Scheherazade”, the song of the same name by Korganov is in musical terms more precise. The “Jewish” elements include not only a mode with two augmented seconds but also the characteristically falling, oft repeated second intervals in the melody. By contrast, the ornaments are inserted more subtly:



Other splendid examples of musical “Judaica” inspired by Mei’s poetry are Rimskii-Korsakov’s “Hebrew Song” (Spiliu, no serdtse moe... / I sleep, but my heart...) op. 7, no. 2, and another work by the same name written by Modest Musorgskii, who was inspired by another poem by Mei (Ia tsvetok polevoi / I am a small wild flower). Here, both composers were able to incorporate essential features of Jewish music without having to draw on authentic melodic material: Rimskii-Korsakov begins the song with a long, unaccompanied vocal passage, which sounds like improvisation. Musorgskii’s finely harmonised song makes systematic use of modal progressions (moving, in the example below, from E to E sharp, C to C sharp):



Perhaps even more noteworthy is the melodic structure in the piano introduction to Musorgskii's song, which consists of brief, related motifs restricted to a narrow scope. The example given is actually nothing more than the sixfold repetition of the same motif in different variations. A melodic structure of this type is very typical of Jewish synagogue music and folk songs. That Musorgskii was well acquainted with the content of synagogue music is also shown by the fact that the song's vocal part for the most part uses set pentatonic phrases in the melody.

In recent years, the view that Musorgskii was a fervent antisemite – encouraged primarily by the work of Richard Taruskin – has become established in the literature. Taruskin even refers to him as “Russia's most conspicuously anti-Semitic composer”.¹⁰ Taruskin's verdict is based essentially on quotes from Musorgskii's letters to his mentor Miliĭ Balakirev. There, Musorgskii called Jews, including musicians of Jewish origin, *zhidy*. Naturally, Musorgskii also shared many of the antisemitic prejudices of his times and the environment in which he lived (until 1858 he was a member of the officer corps). This was particularly true for his youth, when he was under the strong influence of Balakirev, whose reactionary, antisemitic stance was generally known.¹¹ However, if one disregards the use of the word *zhid*, Musorgskii's letters not only reveal prejudices and antisemitic clichés, but also a long-standing, deep interest Jewish culture and music. Thus, Musorgskii wrote in a letter dated 26 January 1867 that the Jews had been more successful in preserving their native culture than the Czechs and were sincere in their enthusiasm for the sounds of their own folk music, which “has been handed down from generation to generation... I have seen this several times”. In 1879, during his final concert tour as accompanist for singer Daria Leonova, Musorgskii reported on his visits to the synagogues in Odessa, where he listened to liturgical singing.¹² His

¹⁰ Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky. Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton 1993), p. 383.

¹¹ Balakirev's antisemitism had its limits, as an episode provided by composer Mikhail Gnesin shows. In 1884, during a visit to Poland, Balakirev met by chance a 13-year-old musically gifted Jewish boy by the name of Efraim Shkliar: “Balakirev asked the boy whether he could go to Petersburg to study. He answered that he would have to ask the rabbi first. ‘Then go and ask your rabbi.’ However, the boy wanted to know whether could eat kosher in Petersburg, etc. Balakirev answered: ‘If the rabbi allows you to go, you can live in my apartment, and I will give you kosher food.’ The boy spoke with the rabbi, and he blessed him for the trip. He then in fact lived with Balakirev and received kosher food.” Shkliar was later accepted into Rismkii-Korsakov's composition class. According to Gnesin, “Shkliar continued to listen to Balakirev's suggestions and maintained good relations with him. Shkliar composed many choral and solo works, among them several of high quality. These include his song “Yerushalaim”, which passed through Balakirev's censorship office for the arts.” See Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 2,954, pt. 1, delo 884, folio 4, “Mikhail Gnesin, presentation at the founding meeting of the Society for Jewish Music in Moscow”, (October 8, 1923).

¹² Musorgskii to Vladimir Stasov, 10 September 1879.

letters to Balakirev in particular often convey the impression that Musorgskii felt almost forced to use antisemitic remarks in order to conceal the interest in Jews that he repeatedly expressed. His later letters to respected Russian critic Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906) are largely free of this “salon antisemitism”.

As early as 1863, a young Musorgskii had criticised the opera “Judith” by the “zhid” Aleksandr Serov, whose mother was of Jewish origin, because he failed to use any authentic stylistic elements to characterise the Biblical Jews.

It [“Judith”] has many shortcomings that I would call musical anachronisms. For example, the Jews there (I hear it repeatedly) utter without ado Catholic organ seconds... It is time to stop converting the Jews to Christendom [in musical terms].

Musorgskii’s highest principle, as he never tired of saying, was truth in art. This truth did not mean superficial naturalism, but instead a deep penetration into the essence of different manifestations of life by studying them intently before “translating” them into his wilful musical language.

Jews were at the centre of his artistic interest several times, not only as the *evrei* of antiquity (in the opera “Salambo”, the choral works “The Destruction of Sennacherib” and “Jesus Navinus”, or the “Hebrew Song”), but also as modern *zhidy*, whom he attempted to portray as authentically as possible. A masterpiece of this interest is “‘Samuel’ Goldenberg and ‘Shmuyle’” from “Pictures at an Exhibition”. Musorgskii was inspired by two paintings by Victor Hartmann. As Stasov reported, the paintings were done “during a journey made by Hartmann with real figures as their subject... Musorgskii was so delighted by the expressiveness of these miniatures that Hartmann immediately gave them to his friend as a present.”¹³

For Taruskin and other authors, this piece is a prime example of musical antisemitism. The title alone is said to express antisemitic views:

The use of quotation marks points up the fact that the two *zhidy* have the same first name: one Germanized, the other in the original Yiddish. They are in fact one *zhid*, not two. The portrait is a brazen insult: no matter how dignified or sophisticated or Europeanized a *zhid*’s exterior, on the inside he is a jabbering, pestering little “Shmuyle”.¹⁴

However, Taruskin’s “brazen insult” is just as brazenly construed as is his theory of “one *zhid*, not two”. Furthermore, the Hebrew name Shmuel is not necessarily Yiddish, nor is Samuel an exclusively “Germanised” or “Europeanised” form. It was also used in Poland. Incidentally, Hartmann’s paintings of the two Jews were produced in Sandomierz, at that time in Russian Poland. The title merely indicates that the wealthy Goldenberg has arrived in non-Jewish circles, while the poor Jew still uses the traditional Yiddish form of his name. The piece “‘Samuel’ Goldenberg and ‘Shmuyle’” is neither antisemitic nor philosemitic, but rather an astonishingly realistic portrait of both Jewish types.

The St. Petersburg musicologist Evgeniia Khazdan recently reported the discovery of a previously unknown handwritten document by Musorgskii in the archive of the

¹³ First published in the magazine *Muzykal’nyi sovremennik*, (Petrograd, October 1916), p. 20.

¹⁴ Taruskin, *Musorgsky*, p. 382.

Institute of Russian Literature. This document contains the transcription of a melody labelled “Jewish”, which is strikingly similar to the theme of Samuel Goldenberg. According to Musorgskii’s handwritten notes, this melody had been passed on him by the sculptor Il’ia Gintsburg (1859-1939). The melody is in the traditional Jewish mode *Mi sheberakh* (May he who blessed), which is widely used in the synagogue and folk songs.¹⁵ Shmuyle’s theme, right down to the last detail, also represents an imitation of the Jewish singing style, which is rich in glissandi and ornamentation. Musorgskii’s realism, however, is far more than simply a realistic representation. He includes a symbolic level: It is no coincidence that the music that characterises the poor (and possibly begging) Jew evokes associations with the musical image of the character Iurodivyi (God’s fool) in the opera “Boris Godunov”, while the forceful theme of Goldenberg seems an expression of power and violence.

By studying authentic Jewish music and incorporating elements of it into their works, Musorgskii and other Russian composers in the 19th century were acting as a counterforce to widespread Russian antisemitism, which stigmatised and despised Jewish culture as a whole. Musorgskii’s choral work “Jesus Navinus” used for a Biblical subject an authentic Hasidic melody, which the composer had apparently heard from his hosts in a Jewish shtetl while billeted there as an officer.¹⁶ With that, Musorgskii also overcame the traditional divide between the “evrei” and the “zhid” in Russian art. The “Jewish” compositions of the Russian classics thus paved the way for the establishment of a separate Jewish national school of music: the New Jewish School.

The New Jewish School

In 1908, a Society for Jewish Folk Music was founded in St. Petersburg. Its members included important composers such as Mikhail Gnesin (1883-1957), Solomon Rosowsky (1878-1962), and Lazare Saminsky (1883-1959), among others. This group of composers developed for the first time ever a national Jewish style, which integrated elements of Jewish folk and synagogue music into European classical music. This direction became known as the New Jewish School. Although the society was founded just 100 years ago, its activities were generally treated in the literature as a type of mythological phenomenon. It was known that the society achieved something new and important in its few years of existence, but hardly anybody knew exactly what this was. Only recently has it been possible to reconstruct the history of the society using a broader foundation of source material.¹⁷

It was a piano student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory who first had the idea of founding such a society. His name was Leo Nesvizhskii (later Ephraim Abileah, 1881-1953), known to his peers as “little Herzl” (a shtikl Herzl), for he was already a convinced Zionist at a time when most young Jewish intellectuals still showed little

¹⁵ Evgenia Chazdan, “Evreiskaia muzyka v vospriatii russkogo kompozitora (po pis’mam i avtografam M. P. Musorgskogo)”, in Pamiati Etingera: *Sbornik stat’ei* (Astrakhan 2007), pp. 154–166.

¹⁶ *Evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, 11 (St. Petersburg 1908–1913), col. 415.

¹⁷ Jascha Nemtsov, *Die Neue Jüdische Schule in der Musik* (Wiesbaden 2004).

interest in national issues. Even so, he succeeded in finding like-minded people. Lazare Saminsky later recalled:

A senior schoolmate in [Rimsky-]Korsakov's class Efraim Shkliar, an odd provincial full of inhibitions and fanatically Jewish, the indolent, verbose Rosovsky and Nesvishsky, a gifted pianist, all of them, ardent Zionists... formed a group aiming to foster Hebrew music. Only faintly interested then in things Jewish... I joined the group.¹⁸

The initial phase was difficult. There was at first a lack of clear ideas regarding the content of the work, but also a shortage of people able to implement them. The "ardent Zionists" were not necessarily predestined to lead the society they had called into being. As Mikhail Gnesin wrote at the time:

The attitude of the society towards the national element in music and its tasks in this context only gradually took shape during numerous meetings, at which the ultimate goal of the society became clear...

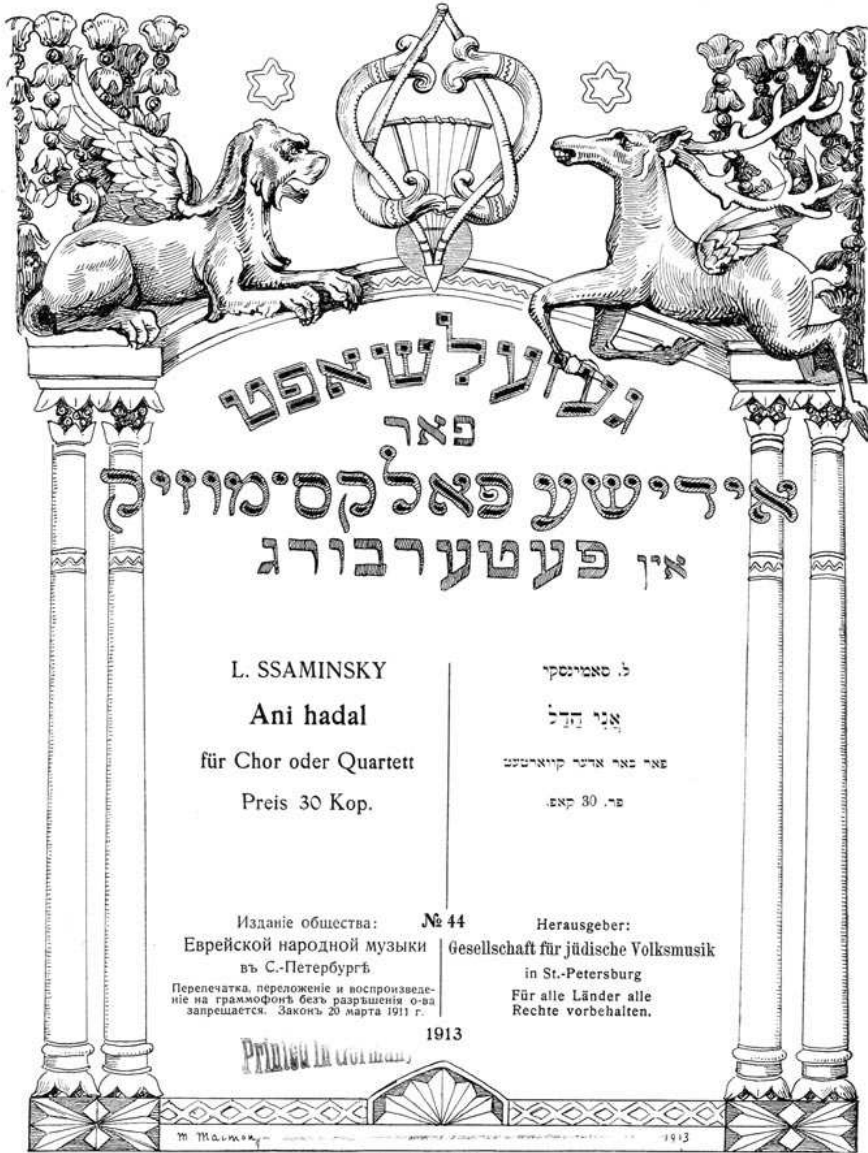
Initially, the aim was simply to honour the achievements of the Jews in music, and to propagate everything they produced. Gradually, it was understood that only music containing artistically rendered national elements should be sponsored and circulated.¹⁹

From today's perspective, the interest in folk songs, which was to define the activities of the society for the next two years, took on unusual forms. Folk melodies were collected and adapted, but the society was far from able to record, analyse, or publish them according to academic and ethnographic criteria. The sole task was to preserve the collected melodies according to the rules of classical harmony theory, in order to propagate them. To this end, they were "cultivated", i.e. furnished with simple chords and, in some cases, accompanying parts, and arranged in simple forms for the different kinds of instrumentation that were then customary among amateur musicians. This way of arranging folk songs was first used by the Moscow music critic and composer Joel Engel (1868-1927) and then adopted by the young composers in the society. This resulted in a genre that cannot be classified as folk or as classical music. Its academic value is minimal, as in many cases its artistic merit.

It was extremely difficult to create an artistically convincing product with limited means. Usually, what resulted was simply a type of "musical preserve". However, it was precisely these banalities that suddenly became popular among the Jewish public in St. Petersburg and the provinces: Memorable, often well-known melodies, a conventional musical language, and above all the feeling of being able to hear Jewish national music in a concert for the first time made them hugely popular within a short period of time.

¹⁸ Lazare Saminsky, "Autobiography", in *Musica Judaica*, II, (New York 1977-1978), pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ Mikhail Gnesin, "Vpechatlenia muzykanta. Koncert evreiskoi duchovnoi i narodnoi muzyki", *Evreiski mir*, 3 (21 January 1910), p. 55.



Moisei Maimon, cover page of the third series of publications by the Society for Jewish Folk Music in St. Petersburg (1913–1914)



El Lissitzky, cover page of the sheet music editions of the Moscow department of the Society for Jewish Folk Music (1918–1919)



Leonid Pasternak, cover page of the sheet music editions of the Moscow department of the Society for Jewish Folk Music

Some composers in the group soon became dissatisfied with this approach. A turning point was the society's annual concert on 10 March 1912. Before an audience of over 1,500 people, only new works that had been written in 1911 and early 1912 were performed. For the first time, compositions were presented that went far beyond the limits of an arrangement. On the one hand, these were pieces in which folk songs had provided the starting point for large, demanding concerto forms, while on the other hand, compositions were included that contained no quotes at all, but instead transformed the national Jewish musical idiom into a distinct, personal language. These included primarily the works of the highly talented Moshe Milner (1886-1953) and Joseph Achron (1886-1943), who had both only recently joined the society, but had already made a huge contribution due to their artistic potential. Milner's song "In kheyder" ("In religious school") and his chorus "Unsane toykef" ("Let us affirm the holiness of the day") were the first successful attempts to create Jewish classical music without quoting authentic folk material.²⁰

Achron's "Hebrew Melody" and "Ballad" were based on folk melodies, but instead of being "arranged", they were sublimated in a free fantasy form on a level of artistic merit previously unknown in Jewish music, without the national Jewish character getting lost. In the accompanying text to this concert, there surfaced a new and revolutionary thought that characterised this breakthrough in artistic achievement:

The task of the Society for Jewish Folk Music is to discover the treasures of the folk song and, where possible, to combine them with all of the achievements of modern musical culture. During its first phase, it collected folk melodies and rendered them in a simple fashion. However, this task soon seemed to the composers... inadequate. They therefore began to render the Jewish song in an artistic manner, and now the first efforts at free creation in the national spirit have been made.²¹

Here, the core principle of the New Jewish School was formulated for the first time: Jewish classical music as a synthesis of Jewish traditional music with European musical culture. This was not invented by any particular person, but was the result of a living creative musical process that took place in the Society for Jewish Folk Music.

An important role was played by the society's musical committee, which was headed primarily by Lazare Saminsky between 1909 and 1917. For the society's young composers, all of whom belonged to the musical committee, the regular meetings became a unique opportunity to play new pieces for one another, to analyse technical and stylistic problems, and to ask experienced colleagues for advice. An atmosphere of camaraderie prevailed, but criticism was also encouraged. Sometimes, these meetings turned into heated discussions, in which the next direction in Jewish music was debat-

²⁰ According to Gershon Svet, "Milner's pieces have become the foundation of the style of the so-called 'new Jewish School in music'", Gershon Svet, "Ervrei v russkoi muzykal'noi kul'ture v sovetskii period", in Gregor Aronson, et al., eds., *Kniga o russkom ervreistve 1917-1967* (New York 1968), p. 264.

²¹ Central State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg, Programme of the concert, fond 1,747, delo 285.

ed.²² The intensive exchange of opinions and the high artistic standards that characterised the music committee contributed to the incredibly rapid development of many of its composers.

By 1914, the society already had over 1,000 members. This number must have later grown: From 1914 to 1916, the society opened branches in Odessa, Rostov, Ekaterinoslav (today Dnipropetrovs'k), and Simferopol', in addition to the main office in St. Petersburg and the departments in Moscow and Kiev. In the first few weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution (7 November 1917), the society was able to continue its activities unhindered. However, at the start of 1918, the situation changed dramatically. The last concert that the Society for Jewish Folk Music was able to organise on its own was held in January 1918. During the months that followed, War Communism, the radical economic and political system in force between 1918 and 1921, led to the society's financial ruin.

In Soviet Russia, the Zionist idea, which had been tolerated under tsarist rule, was now subjected to severe repression. A new Society for Jewish Music, founded in Moscow in 1923, tended to the legacy of the St. Petersburg society during the 1920s, but was forced to adapt to these conditions. Jewish works containing religious or Zionist references were re-named or could not be performed. Even so, during the relatively liberal period of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s, the Moscow society succeeded in making significant progress in promoting the development of Jewish music. Many new works were written by established composers; at the same time, the society was able to recruit young talent. The composers of this second generation of the New Jewish School included Aleksandr Weprik (1899-1958), Grigorii Gamburg (1900-1967) and Zinovii Fel'dman (1893-1942).

However, the days of Jewish music in the Soviet Union were numbered. After the Moscow society was disbanded in 1931, few Jewish composers dared to address Jewish themes openly. Fel'dman, for example, composed military music.

Developments in Western Europe

While Jewish traditional music in Eastern Europe had already to some extent become a significant part of classical musical life at the beginning of the 20th century, in the West, it hardly featured on the concert stage. One exception is linked to the cantor Abraham Jacob Lichtenstein (1806-1880). This outstanding musician, who is not mentioned in any of the standard lexica, came from Friedland (today Pravdinsk) in East Prussia. Already at age nine, he was helping to shape worship services in the synagogue in Königsberg with his “expressive soprano voice and wealth of imagination”.²³ At 16, he received his first post in the Jewish community in Glogau. After brief stints in Frank-

²² Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 2,435, pt. 2, delo 184, Saminsky to Aleksander Krein, 16 April 1915; Rosowsky Archive 5/15, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, letter from Achron to Rosowsky, (Berlin 25 October 1923). “Oh, how we miss our musical committee here,” Achron wrote Rosowsky from Berlin on 25 October 1923, Rosowsky Archive, 5/16, Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

²³ Aron Friedmann, *Lebensbilder berühmter Kantoren* (Berlin 1918), p. 69, quoted from Sabine Lichtenstein, “Abraham Jacob Lichtenstein: eine jüdische Quelle für Carl Loewe und Max Bruch”, *Die Musikforschung*, 4 (1996), pp. 349–367, here p. 350.

furt an der Oder and in Schwedt, he was asked to be the cantor in Stettin, where he worked from 1833 to 1845. There, he met the composer Carl Loewe (1796-1869), the town's music director and precentor at the Jakobskirche. In the concerts conducted by Loewe, Lichtenstein not only sang as a soloist, but also played first violin in the orchestra. His "immense voice and excellent musical talent" were received enthusiastically by both concert audiences and members of the Jewish community.²⁴

Jewish liturgical songs, as performed by Lichtenstein, inspired Loewe's oratorio "The Song of Salomon" (*Das Hohe Lied Salomons*). In 1845, Lichtenstein was called to Berlin, where he worked until his death as cantor of the reform community. He also provided most of the melodic material for the synagogue compositions by Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894).²⁵ At the end of the 1870s, Lichtenstein became friends with Max Bruch (1838-1920), whom he also acquainted with synagogue music. Some of the melodies that Bruch heard from Lichtenstein would later form the thematic basis for Bruch's famous "Kol nidre" (1881) and "Three Hebrew Songs for Choir, Orchestra and Organ" (*Drei hebräische Gesänge für Chor, Orchester und Orgel*, 1888).²⁶

It was only in the 20th century, and partly under the influence of the Russian-Jewish group of composers, that West European composers also began to show a greater interest in the Jewish musical tradition. In 1910, Maurice Ravel, encouraged by the outstanding Russian singer and director of the Moscow House of Song, Marie Olenine d'Alheim (1869-1970), composed four arrangements of folk songs by different peoples, including a *Chanson hébraïque*.²⁷ The original was the Yiddish folk song (with Hebrew and Aramaic additions) "Mayerke, my son" ("Mayerke mayn zun"). All of these arrangements were written for a composition competition held by the House of Song.

Four years later, Ravel again turned to the Jewish musical idiom for his "Deux mélodies hébraïques". This time, the work was commissioned by the Russian singer Alvina Alvi, a soprano at the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg. The small cycle embraced the kaddish, popularly called the "prayer for the dead", and the Yiddish folk song "Die alte Kasche" (which appears in "L'enigme éternelle"). The fact that a West European composer was working with Jewish music was so unusual at the time that Ravel – as had been the case with Max Bruch – was often mistakenly thought to be Jewish. Unlike Bruch, whose "Jewish" works contained nothing that was Jewish aside from the thematic material, Ravel attempted to find authentic stylistic elements in his arrangements that would match the Jewish musical content. When Alexander Weprik visited him in Paris in 1927, they also discussed this issue. Weprik reported in a letter:

We then started talking about Jewish music. His two Jewish songs did after all play an important role for us Jewish composers. I told him quite openly how much value we attached to his two songs. But he, charming and pleasant as he was, referred to Rimskii-Korsakov and Musorgskii: "That's where they came from."²⁸

²⁴ Ibid; Abraham Zwi Idelsohn, *Jewish Music. Its Historical Development* (New York 1992), p. 276

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, p. 513.

²⁷ Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York 1995), p. 63.

²⁸ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, fond 2,444, pt. 2, delo 67, Letter from Alexander Weprik to Nadezhda Briusova (Paris, 18 October 1927).

After 1916, the Swiss-Jewish composer Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) in particular emerged in the West as a composer of Jewish musical works.

It is not my purpose, nor desire to attempt a reconstruction of Jewish music, or to base my works on melodies more or less authentic. I am not an archeologist. I believe that the most important thing is to write good and sincere music – my own music. It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible.²⁹

With these words, Bloch expressed his feelings towards Jewish music, feelings that clearly differed from the ideas of the St. Petersburg society. Bloch did indeed refrain from using any authentic Jewish melodies in his works, believing that he could create Jewish music purely by intuition. However, when one attempts to define what is Jewish about his music, it is above all the characteristic melodic and rhythmic elements of Yiddish folklore and synagogue music: the augmented second, the typical recitative-type melodic set phrases, ornamentations, and so on. In his “Jewish Song” for cello and piano (from the cycle “From Jewish Life”), he even uses in the cello part quarter-tone intervals from the Orient, which are frequently characteristic of traditional Jewish singing. What is also important in Bloch’s Jewish works are their highly expressive, emotionally charged nature and their free, rhapsodic forms – qualities that also came from synagogue music. What Bloch called his “intuition” or “inner voice” was in fact the same source that inspired the composers in St. Petersburg!

Ernest Bloch grew up in a tradition-conscious Jewish family in Switzerland. His grandfather was president of the Jewish community in Lengnau, and his father was trained as a rabbi, but ultimately became a bookseller. From his father and synagogue services, Bloch became familiar with Jewish music as a child. In 1912, when he began to compose in a Jewish style, he would certainly have been aware of the activities of the St. Petersburg society, not least through Leo Nesvizhskii, who like Bloch lived in Geneva and promoted the society’s repertoire. Bloch wrote numerous Jewish orchestral and chamber music works that quickly earned him an international reputation. Unlike most of the main figures of the New Jewish School, who were usually Russian Jews, Bloch kept his distance from Zionism. He concerned himself with the spiritual values of the holy scriptures and not the contemporary national aspirations of the Jewish people. The “Hebrew” direction in Bloch’s work peaked in 1933 with the liturgical composition “Avodath Hakodesh” (Sacred Service).

It has only recently become known that despite his Jewish origins and Jewish compositions, Bloch held markedly antisemitic views, as evidenced by documents published in 2005. Bloch not only shared Richard Wagner’s views in *Judaism in Music*, but in 1934 even expressed his admiration for Adolf Hitler in an interview for the *New York Times*: “The phenomenon of Germany is bigger than the treatment of the Jews. A movement as profound as the Lutheran Reformation is taking place. I greatly respect Hitler’s sincerity.” After the war, he complained:

²⁹ Quoted from Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel. From the Biblical Era to Modern Times* (Portland 1996), p. 287.

The “12-tone row,”³⁰ for me, is an imposture! ...all Jews, who have used the degeneracy of our time to cultivate it for their profit! After poisoning Europe, they have now come here, to this country [the United States], and poison it! We owe this to Mr. Hitler! A fine heritage. This goes with all the rest, with Atom bombs, and the next coming War.... R. Wagner was right in his ‘Judenthum’ – horribly sad — but true.³¹

Whereas Bloch was interested in the “Jewish soul”, but simultaneously hated the Jewish element, Juliusz Wolfsohn (1880-1944), who composed his first Jewish works around the same time, was more consistent. Wolfsohn came from a well-known Zionist family.³² His uncle, David Wolfsohn (1856-1914) was Theodor Herzl’s closest colleague and friend and his successor as the leader of the Zionist Organisation. He had, among other things, designed the white-and-blue flag of the Zionists, which was to become the national flag of the State of Israel. David Wolfsohn, who appears in Herzl’s novel *The Old New Land* as David Litvak, also became the guardian of Herzl’s children after his death. The Wolfsohn family came from the Pale of Settlement within the Russian Empire. Juliusz Wolfsohn had first studied at the conservatory in his home town Warsaw and at the Moscow conservatory, before perfecting his talent as a pianist under Raoul Pugno (1852-1914) in Paris and Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915) in Vienna. He then chose to remain in Vienna until he was forced to flee the Nazis in 1939.

Already at the turn of the century, Wolfsohn had taken an interest in Yiddish folklore, independent of the activities of the St. Petersburg society. Ethnographic and academic ambitions were just as alien to him as they were to the Russian Jewish composers. He, too, sought merely to popularise folklore in educated circles. Since Wolfsohn was not only an outstanding pianist, but had also developed a solid composition technique, his arrangements immediately revealed a superior quality. Wolfsohn composed large concertos paraphrasing Jewish folk songs, which were primarily to be used at his own performances. The folk melodies were integrated into a dramatic piano texture that did not even try to hide the fact that Liszt had been used as a role model. By 1920, he had completed twelve of these “Paraphrases on Old Jewish Folk Tunes” and a “Jewish Rhapsody”, which was also based on folk themes. As a critic from the magazine *Die Musik* wrote at the time:

Prof. Wolfsohn has written a gratifying – albeit not easy to conquer – piano work, which is just as distinguished by the depth of its feeling as by the pianistic attractions obtained from the thematic material. Psalm melodies and chorales, wedding dances and dinner table songs mesh like links in a chain, and when the wedding song eventually begins at the end, it is only natural – after the triumphant lifting up that it takes – that it is a joy which one experiences with one laughing and one weeping eye.³³

³⁰ The reference here is to the method of composition developed by Arnold Schönberg, the twelve-tone technique.

³¹ Klara Moricz, “Sealed Documents and Open Lives: Ernest Bloch’s Private Correspondence”, *Notes*, 1 (September 2005), pp. 74–86.

³² On Wolfsohn’s biography, J. Torbé, “Die Schöpfer jüdischer Musik. Juliusz Wolfsohn”, in *Die Stimme*, 238 (28 July 1932), pp. 7–8.

³³ *Die Musik* (Oktober 1924). The translation here is taken from the liner notes of Jascha Nemtsov, *Klavierwerke*, *OehmsClassics 2008*, which includes the world premiere of works by Juliusz Wolfsohn on compact disc.

While Wolfsohn, with his enthusiasm for Jewish folk music, was at first a curiosity in the West, the situation did change after the outbreak of the First World War. As a result of the refugees pouring out of Eastern Europe, the Jewish community in Western Europe grew enormously within a short period of time, particularly in Germany and Austria. By 1923, an estimated 50,000 Jews from Eastern Europe had settled in Vienna alone, raising the number of Jews living there to over 200,000. Most of the immigrants came from traditional environments and were completely different from the assimilated and established Jewish population. As a result, conditions in the Jewish community also changed, with supporters of the national idea gaining ground. As had been the case in Russia, this growing national consciousness was a prerequisite for a Jewish cultural renaissance that fundamentally changed “life in hitherto stagnant communities”.³⁴

During the 1920s, numerous Jewish political and cultural organisations, even sports clubs, were established in Central Europe. The Zionists were particularly active in this regard. They gained in influence from the late 1920s onwards, not least of due to the growing antisemitism in Germany and other European countries.

While the New Jewish School and its composers were subject to increasing repression in Russia, the German speaking world of the 1920s and early 1930s became their most important area of activity. Some of the main figures of the New Jewish School came to Berlin from St. Petersburg as early as 1922. There, they founded two Jewish music publishing houses: *Jibneh* (yibneh, meaning “[He] will build up”) and *Juwal* (Jubal, the first musician in the Bible). They not only published numerous compositions, but also successfully organised concerts featuring this music in Germany and abroad, thus making themselves a magnet for young Jewish composers searching for an authentically Jewish form of musical expression.

In 1928, the Society for the Promotion of Jewish Music (Verein zur Förderung jüdischer Musik) was founded in Vienna. This was to become another important centre for Jewish classical music, remaining in existence for ten years. After the National-Socialists came to power in Germany, it became the most important institution for the New Jewish School. The numerous concerts given by the Vienna society also presented new works by Viennese composers Joachim Stutschewsky (1891-1982), Israel Brandmann (1901-1992), and Juliusz Wolfsohn as well as the standard repertoire of the Russian Jewish group. While the earlier works of Jewish classical music drew primarily from Yiddish folklore and synagogue music, its composers now became increasingly interested in Jewish folk songs from Palestine, which seemed to embody a new, free attitude towards life.

The Viennese society and its members organised and coordinated an entire network of Jewish music, which, in addition to Austria, covered Hungary, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Italy, and Switzerland. Concerts, lectures, and seminars were organised; programme material and sheet music were provided to amateur orchestras and choirs. There were also several other music and cultural organisations with which the Vienna Society closely cooperated. Wolfsohn was justifiably proud of the fact that the Viennese Society for the Promotion of Jewish Music had become “to a certain extent the central office” in this field.³⁵ It is interesting to note that the language of communication was always German.

³⁴ “Austria”, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 3 (Jerusalem 1971), col. 896.

³⁵ Juliusz Wolfsohn, “Wie sieht es mit der neuen jüdischen Musik aus?” *Die Stimme*, 302 (28 September 1933), p. 9.



The first cover page of the publisher Jibneh (1922/23)

היה כנגן הסגנון ותהי עליו יד ה'

מ. גנסינ
M. GNESIN M. GNESIN

מנגינות עבריות
 לשירים של משוררים רוסים בלויית הפסנתר.
ЕВРЕЙСКИЕ ПЕСНИ | **HEBRÄISCHE LIEDER**
 НА СЛОВА РУССКИХ ПОЭТОВ | **ZU TEXTEN RUSS. DICHTER**
 ДЛЯ ГОЛОСА И ПЯТЯ . | **MIT KLAVIERBEGLEITUNG .**

1. **הבר רחל**
(כונני)

2. **אשרי האישה**
(מזיקי)

3. **על רכים פניה לה...**
(מזיקי)

1. ГРОБНИЦА РАХИЛИ <small>(ВУДИН)</small> 2. ЕДИНОЕ БЛАГО <small>(МАЙКОВ)</small> 3. О НЕЖНОМ ЛИЦЕ ЕЯ... <small>(МУРИЛИН)</small>	1. DAS GRABMAL RAHEL'S <small>(BUNIM)</small> 2. DAS EINZIGE GUT <small>(MAJKOW)</small> 3. DIE LOCKIGEN HAARE DEIN <small>(MURILIN)</small>
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op. 32. n.1-3.

הוצאת יבנה ירושלים * **PIBNE EDITION JERUSALEM**
 עניף בלין ח"ש
 ש. רובין
 Branch in Berlin 1923
 SCH. RUBIN
 יבנה

Schlomo Rubin, the second cover page of the publisher Jibneh (1923)

The Viennese society faced various difficulties from the start. Its events were never part of the general concert circuit, but were instead organised by Jewish institutions and Jewish artists for a Jewish audience. The results of this activity therefore depended directly on the level of interest and taste of the Jewish community in question. The more assimilation had progressed, the less likely it was that Jewish music would be popular. While constant attempts were made to attract the broadest possible spectrum of the Jewish population to the concerts, hardly anything was done to stir the interest of non-Jews. The organisers clearly took it for granted that concerts of Jewish music would only be attended by Jews. It was even noted as a kind of curiosity that several non-Jews once attended a concert.³⁶ This dependence on the Jewish public carried considerable risks for the development of the New Jewish School. The Jews were far more exposed to the frequent political and economic crises than the rest of the population. Every crisis of this nature therefore had severe consequences for musical institutions as well.

All of these activities came to a cruel end in the late 1930s. Some musicians such as Stutschewsky or Wolfsohn were able to emigrate in time, while others – such as Henrik Apte, director of the Society for Jewish Music in Cracow, or Berlin composer Arno Nadel – were killed in concentration camps.

After the murder of the Jews throughout most of Europe, Jewish musical culture was lost almost without trace. Most of the composers also disappeared from the public's cultural awareness. One example is the fate of Berlin composer Jakob Schönberg (1900-1956), one of the most talented of his generation. Jakob Schönberg, a distant relative of fellow composer Arnold Schönberg, had already shown an interest in the Jewish musical tradition in his early works. In the 1930s, he developed a highly original, personal style based on Jewish folk songs in Palestine. Following his emigration to the United States and his early death, his music fell into obscurity. His papers were only recently discovered in New York. The surviving scores available bear witness to an immense talent. The re-integration of Schönberg's works and those of other highly talented composers of the New Jewish School into today's cultural life would make an invaluable contribution to our musical life.

Jewish Music as a Symbol

It would be impossible to list here all the composers who felt attracted to the Jewish musical tradition during the 1930s. They included such well known composers as Paul Dessau (1894-1979), Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Stefan Wolpe (1902-1972), and Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951), who are not necessarily associated with Jewish music. The Jewish compositions of Arnold Schönberg in particular are characteristic of the development that was to follow. Schönberg, who was forced to leave Germany in 1933, and who demonstratively professed his Jewishness by formally reconvertng in exile in Paris, then became actively involved in the Zionist movement for several years and even sought to found a Jewish Unity Party. While the composers of the New Jewish School tried to create a Jewish style in classical music by using elements of traditional Jewish music, for Schönberg, these elements were completely irrelevant

³⁶ *Die neue Welt*, (16 March 1928).

where style was concerned. Schönberg did not seek a Jewish style, rather a moral and political tone. A Jewish melody, such as “Kol nidre”, is inserted into his musical language in a choral piece of the same name, or a prayer text, such as Sh'ma Yisroel, is treated in the cantata “A Survivor from Warsaw”, where they become symbolic quotes delivering an unmistakable and significant message.

Similar importance is accorded a traditional Jewish folk melody in the 7th Piano Sonata composed by Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944) in Theresienstadt ghetto. Ullmann, who came from an assimilated and baptised Jewish family, and who had no contact with Judaism before the war, only began to identify with Jewish culture in Theresienstadt. This newly won identity was for him, and many of his fellow sufferers, part of his moral resistance. Ullmann composed several works on Jewish themes in Theresienstadt and championed Jewish music as a critic and organiser of musical events within the ghetto.

The finale and climax of his 7th Sonata is the 5th movement, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folk Song”. The theme is the folk song “Rachel”, which was written in Palestine in the early 1930s by Yehuda Sharett, who set a poem by the Russian-Jewish poetess Rachel (Rakhel) Bluvshstein, 1890–1931) to music:

See, her blood flows in my blood,
her voice sings in mine,
Rachel, who tends the herds of Laban,
Rachel, mother of mothers.



Theme of the variations (from the manuscript of the 7th Piano Sonata)

The theme and the first variations are filled with melancholy and resignation. The 6th variation marks a change in mood. After the theme has almost dissolved, it suddenly sounds again, mirrored in rough bass tones (according to Ullmann’s anthroposophical concept, the mirror was a symbol of a doppelganger, the “antagonist”). The subsequent variations are a mental response to this intrusion of evil; the march-like rhythms already anticipate the apotheosis in the final fugue. In the fugue, the Jewish song is linked to three other symbolic quotes: the Protestant hymn “Now Let Us All Give Thanks to God”, the Czech Hussite song “Ye Who are Warriors of God”, and the Bb-A-C-B motif (B-A-C-H, in German notation), which is inserted three times at the dramatically most significant points. For Ullmann, this finale was an expression of his affiliation with

different cultural spheres that were important to him and at the same time an attempt to unite them in a world torn apart by hatred and violence. A few months after completing the 7th Sonata, Ullmann was murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Karl Amadeus Hartmann should also be mentioned here, a German composer who was one of the few to choose “inner emigration” during the Nazi era. His works were not performed, and he composed solely “for the bottom drawer”. He lived primarily on financial support from his in-laws. In 1933, he wrote his 1st String Quintet, whose most important theme represents a slightly altered quote from the Jewish Sabbath song “Elijah the Prophet” (Elijahu hanavi). He later used this melody again in the opera *Des Simplicius Simplicissimus Jugend*, written in 1934-1935.³⁷

In Eastern Europe, it was above all Dmitrii Shostakovich who recognised the symbolic nature of Jewish music at that time and used it in an entire series of works. An extended passage of Shostakovich’s memoirs, as compiled by Solomon Volkov, provides insight into the composer’s relationship to Jewish music:

I think, if we speak of musical impressions, that Jewish folk music has made a most powerful impression on me. I never tire of delighting in it, it’s multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic. It’s almost always laughter through tears. This quality of Jewish folk music is close to my ideas of what music should be. There should always be two layers in music. Jews were tormented for so long that they learned to hide their despair. They express despair in dance music. All folk music is lovely but I can say that Jewish folk music is unique.

Many composers listened to it, including Russian composers, Mussorgsky, for instance. He carefully set down Jewish folk songs. Many of my works reflect my impressions of Jewish music. This is not a purely musical issue, it is also a moral issue. I often test a person by his attitude toward Jews. In our day and age, any person with pretensions of decency cannot be anti-Semitic.³⁸

Love of Jewish music alone does not explain why Shostakovich made such extensive use of its elements in a certain phase of his work, or why he used these elements at all. In his compositional technique, he was not at all reliant on folk music. It is in fact most untypical for his personal musical language.³⁹ However, Jewish music was for him not just a “purely musical issue”, but above all “a moral issue”.

On 13 January 1953, a leading article entitled “Murderers – Doctors” appeared in the Soviet daily Pravda. A group of predominantly Jewish doctors was accused of planning to murder leading Soviet officials. According to Stalin’s scenario, the conviction and subsequent public execution of the alleged conspirators was to have provided

³⁷ Hanns-Werner Heister, “Das Fremde und das Eigene. Elemente jüdischer Musik bei Karl Amadeus Hartmann”, in Dresdner Zentrum für zeitgenössische Musik, ed., *Die Musik des osteuropäischen Judentums - totalitäre Systeme - Nachklänge* (Dresden 1997), pp. 100-102. See also Dorothea Redepenning, “Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz. Musik gegen Gewalt in Krieg”, in *Kluffen der Erinnerung. Rußland und Deutschland 60 Jahre nach dem Krieg* [= OSTEUROPA 4-6/2005], pp. 281-307.

³⁸ Dmitri Shostakovich, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, Solomon Volkov, ed. (London 1979), p. 154.

³⁹ Shostakovich usually decisively inserts folklore elements in an ironic, even sarcastic context.

justification for the mass deportation of the Soviet Union's Jews to Siberia, in order to "protect them from the anger of the people". The death of the dictator several weeks later foiled these plans, however.

The "Doctors Plot" became the climax and symbol of an antisemitic campaign that had already been underway in the Soviet Union for several years. This was the historical context in which Shostakovich's "Jewish" works were composed. The first was the 2nd Piano Trio (1944), which is dedicated to the memory of Ivan Sollertinskii (1904-1944), a musicologist and close friend of Shostakovich. At the same time, this work, which has an unmistakable Jewish feel in its finale, also has another level of meaning as a reaction to antisemitic persecution and foreboding of impending disaster. Personal suffering and mourning is thus identified with universal horror. Just how meaningful this "Jewish" finale was for Shostakovich is evidenced by the fact that he used its main theme many years later in his autobiographical 8th String Quartet (1960).

Most of the "Jewish" works by Shostakovich were written in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when antisemitism assumed openly macabre traits in the Soviet Union. However, the antisemitic campaign was simply channelling tendencies that had been developing in Soviet society over many years:

But even before the war, the attitude toward Jews had changed drastically.... The Jews became the most persecuted and defenceless people of Europe. It was a return to the Middle Ages. Jews became a symbol for me. All of man's defencelessness was concentrated in them. After the war, I tried to convey that feeling in my music. It was a bad time for the Jews then. In fact, it's always a bad time for them.... That's when I wrote the Violin Concerto, the Jewish Cycle, and the Fourth Quartet.⁴⁰

It is worth tracing how considerable the changes were in how Jewish music was received over just a few decades during the 20th Century. When Maurice Ravel wrote his arrangements of folk songs, he chose seven in all: a French one, a Flemish one, a Scottish one, a Russian one, a Spanish one, an Italian one, and a Jewish one – the aforementioned *Mayerke, mayn zun*. This last song did not attract a great deal of attention in the competition and was performed alongside the others without anyone regarding it as a particularly courageous or politically explosive act (for example, as a demonstration of support for the rights of Russia's oppressed Jews). In 1945, the Ukrainian-Jewish composer Dmitrii Klebanov (1907-1987) wrote his First Symphony, which – many years before Shostakovich dedicated his 13th Symphony to the same topic – he called "Babi Yar". The symphony was initially accepted by the authorities, but after the first rehearsals, it became clear that this work had no chance of being performed in a concert hall.⁴¹ The cultural functionaries responsible were outraged, because the composer had included elements of Jewish music in the work. According to the official version of events at Babi Yar, the Nazis had not murdered Jews at this Kiev ravine, but "Soviet people":

⁴⁰ Shostakovich, *Testimony*, p. 156. See also Ernst Kuhn, *Dmitri Schostakowitsch und das jüdische musikalische Erbe* (Berlin 2001).

⁴¹ The symphony was first performed during Perestroika.

What they [the functionaries] heard left them speechless at his impudence: the entire thematic material of the symphony was pervaded by markedly Jewish intonations. For the mournful apotheosis in the finale, the soprano sang a vocal passage in the synagogue style, which very strongly recalled the Jewish prayer for the dead (kaddish). The scandal was perfect.⁴²

In the 1930s, the composers of the Jewish national school were still at pains to create a Jewish music that would be treated equally in the “concert of nations”, a music that “from its own essence and shapes [would] resonate among the other peoples, a place in musical literature around the world”.⁴³

This aim was clearly not achieved, not only because the creators of this music and their audience were murdered in the Holocaust or were uprooted and scattered to the winds as a result of Nazi persecution. A new style of music composed against the backdrop of Jewish tradition was almost certainly doomed in the cosmopolitan music business of the postwar years anyway. Above all, however, after the Holocaust, the Jewish element lost its naturalness. Jewish music is no longer simply a folk style like all the others. It is charged with many additional connotations that go far beyond its original semantics. In the wake of the Holocaust, the Jewish element in music is not only first and foremost a symbol for the indescribable suffering and tragic fate of the Jews, it is also a symbol for victims of violence and for suffering per se. The folk elements have been displaced by moral and political overtones. The Jewish element in music – be it characteristic elements of works by composers of classical music or the modern Klezmer revival – no longer solely relates to Jews, but is open to the broadest possibilities of identification.

Just as it is difficult to foresee when “normality” will prevail in the way Jews and non-Jews in Europe associate with one another, it is also hard to imagine contemporary composers ever again being able to use elements of Jewish traditional music in an unselfconscious way, as was the case in Ravel’s time. However, the fact that Jewish music – as with national colour in general – has in recent years once again been acknowledged by composers of New Music is certainly a positive development.

Translated by Anna Güttel, Berlin

⁴² Irma Zolotovitsky, “Zufälliges und Nicht-Zufälliges in Šostakovičs ‘Jüdischen’ Kompositionen”, in Kuhn, *Schostakowitsch*, p. 110.

⁴³ Joachim Stutschewsky, *Mein Weg zur jüdischen Musik* (Vienna 1935), p. 34.

Marina Dmitrieva

Traces of Transit

Jewish Artists from Eastern Europe in Berlin

In the 1920s, Berlin was a hub for the transfer of culture between Eastern Europe, Paris, and New York. The German capital hosted Jewish artists from Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, where the Kultur-Liga was founded in 1918, but forced into line by Soviet authorities in 1924. Among these artists were figures such as Nathan Altman, Henryk Berlewi, El Lissitzky, Marc Chagall, and Issachar Ber Ryback. Once here, they became representatives of Modernism. At the same time, they made original contributions to the Jewish renaissance. Their creations left indelible traces on Europe's artistic landscape.

But the idea of tracing the curiously subtle interaction that exists between the concepts “Jewish” and “modern”... does not seem to me completely unappealing and pointless, especially since the Jews are usually considered adherents of tradition, rigid views, and convention.

Arthur Silbergleit¹

The work of East European Jewish artists in Germany is closely linked to the question of modernity. The search for new possibilities of expression was especially relevant just before the First World War and throughout the Weimar Republic. Many Jewish artists from Eastern Europe passed through Berlin or took up residence there. One distinguishing characteristic of these artists was that on the one hand they were familiar with traditional Jewish forms of life due to their origins; on the other hand, however, they had often made a radical break with this tradition. Contemporary observers such as Kurt Hiller characterised “a modern Jew” at that time as “intellectual, future-oriented, and torn”.² It was precisely this quality of being “torn” that made East European artists and intellectuals from Jewish backgrounds representative figures of modernity.

The relationship between tradition and modernity and the question of integration into society or dissociation from it were among the important topics debated by German

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¹ Arthur Silbergleit, review of Else Croner, *Die moderne Jüdin in the journal Ost und West*, 6 (1913), p. 443.

² Kurt Hiller, “Ausstellung der Pathetiker”, *Die Aktion. Wochenschrift für Politik, Literatur, Kunst*, 48 (1912), columns 1,514–1,516, quote from column 1,515.

Jews from the turn of the century onwards.³ At the end of the 19th century, the Jews living in Germany had developed various models of identity. The most common of these was “German citizen of the Jewish faith”. Assimilation was the only possible form of integration into society.

Although the 1871 Constitution of the German Empire gave Jewish men equal rights as citizens, Jews were never seen as fully integrated. The sociologist Georg Simmel, himself a converted Jew, described this position as that of a “wanderer” or “guest”, someone who “comes today and stays tomorrow”.⁴ Society’s attitude was in essence one of rejection, and this in turn strengthened the German Jews’ need for community. They set up Jewish associations, the most important of which was the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (*Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*), which was established in 1893 to provide legal assistance in the fight against antisemitism.⁵ Describing the atmosphere at his parents’ Berlin home at Christmas, the philosopher and historian Gershom Scholem underscored in his memoirs the contradictions inherent in a form of assimilation that preserved expressions of the Jewish faith: “Under the Christmas tree stood a portrait of Herzl in a black frame... After that, I left the house at Christmas.”⁶

The generation born into assimilated families around 1900 developed a desire to find their own Jewish identity, one that was not necessarily based on religion. This search took different forms, ranging from the transfiguration and aestheticisation of East European Jewry as an ideal community, to the political utopia of Zionism. In all its forms, this search was a way of creating identity, a rediscovery of tradition on the way to renewal.⁷ Within this context, The Jewish discourse about art that took shape at the turn of the century assumed a particular explosiveness.⁸

The Figure of the “Eastern Jew”

Martin Buber, who had studied both philosophy and the history of art in Vienna and Leipzig, recognised the important role of art in the Jewish people’s search for identity.

³ As early as 1896, Nathan Birnbaum had founded a journal with the title *Die jüdische Moderne*; Martin Buber’s journal *Der Jude* had the subtitle “Zeitschrift für jüdische Moderne”.

⁴ Georg Simmel, “Exkurs über den Fremden”, in idem, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (Leipzig 1908), pp. 509–512.

⁵ Avraham Barkai, “Wehr dich!” *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893–1938* (München 2002).

⁶ Gershom Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem. Jugenderinnerungen* (Frankfurt am Main 1997), p. 32.

⁷ Shulamit Volkov, “Die Erfindung einer Tradition. Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland”, in Volkov, *Das jüdische Projekt der Moderne. Zehn Essays* (München 2001), pp. 117–131.

⁸ “Eine neue Kunst für ein altes Volk”: *die Jüdische Renaissance in Berlin 1900 bis 1924* (exhibition catalogue) (Berlin 1991), pp. 8–22; Delphine Bechtel, *La renaissance culturelle juive en Europe centrale et orientale, 1897–1930: langue, littérature et construction nationale* (Paris 2002); Marina Dmitrieva, “Kunst und Judentum”, in Barbara Lange, ed., *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst in Deutschland 8: Vom Expressionismus bis heute* (München 2006), pp. 505–523, illustrations and text.



Nathan Altmann, „Jewish graphic art“ (Berlin 1923)



Illustration 2: Ernst Böhm, title page pf „Milgroyim“, 1 (1922)

For the specific qualities of the nation are expressed more purely in artistic creation; everything that is peculiar to this people, and to this people alone, the unique and incomparable in it assumes a tangible and living form in its art. This means that our art is our people's best avenue for finding themselves.... Zionism and Jewish art are two children of our rebirth.⁹

This factor became decisive not only for the development of secular Jewish art, but also for its instrumentalisation by Zionism for educational purposes. Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*, with their historical and fictional figures, gave rise to an interest among intellectuals in the world of East European Jewry.¹⁰ Readers attracted to Zionist ideas began to pay attention to the work of artists such as Ephraim Mose Lilien (1884–1925), who was originally from Drohobych, Galicia. Lilien's drawings of Jewish life combined the ornate lines of German *Jugendstil* with oriental motifs, and he worked both for the Munich journal *Die Jugend* and for socialist publications.

Lilien, who came from a poor family, but managed to work his way up, can be described as the founder of Zionist iconography. An ardent intermediary between intellectuals and wider Jewish circles, Lilien, together with Buber, played a decisive role in conceiving and shaping the journals *Ost und West* and *Jüdischer Almanach*. Lilien illustrated numerous books on Jewish topics and used the modern medium of photography to document Jewish life in Palestine. His strikingly sentimental art was very popular and created a visual stereotype of Jewish art.

For several artists and literary figures of Jewish descent, the First World War was a crucial experience in their relationship to Jewish culture. While serving on the eastern front, they encountered East European Jews, people who had been present as a literary construct invented by Buber, but had hitherto been absent in the consciousness of most German Jews in the form of real human beings with their own history and tradition. Now, however, new notions of identity and concepts of art emerged from these encounters.

This re-evaluation can be seen most strikingly demonstrated in the work of Berlin graphic artist Hermann Struck (1876–1944). In the sketches he drew while serving with the Supreme Command of All German Armed Forces in the East in Vilna (today Vilnius) and Kovno (today Kaunas), Struck captured on paper the landscapes of Lithuania and Belarus. More important, he drew portraits of the Jews in these regions. Struck then made lithographs of his sketches and published them in a book with the expressive title *The Face of East European Jewry* (*Das ostjüdische Antlitz*), which he wrote in collaboration with Arnold Zweig and published at Berlin Welt-Verlag.¹¹ The book was reprinted a number of times and became very popular. Struck's seemingly realistic sketches show people going about their everyday business. However, the

⁹ Martin Buber, "Von jüdischer Kunst" (1901), in idem, *Die jüdische Bewegung* (Berlin 1916), p. 63.

¹⁰ For examinations of the stereotypes that came to be associated with the idea of the "Eastern Jew" and of Buber, see the contributions in this issue by Steven E. Aschheim and Micha Brumlik (pages 61–74 and 89–100).

¹¹ Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (Berlin 1920). This volume was reprinted in 1988. An English translation – *The Face of East European Jewry* – was published in 2004.

dignity, majesty, and psychological depth of the representations, which consciously used the idiom of a tradition going back to Rembrandt, simultaneously summon up the idea of “genuine”, traditional Jews in contrast to the “rootless” Jews of modernity. And “rootlessness”, as we know, was also one of the most widespread antisemitic stereotypes of the time. The painter Ludwig Meidner commented ironically:

Struck etched Jews at prayer – Eastern Jews, but very neat and tidy, noble, and inconspicuous, so as to be acceptable to even the most liberal Berlin household. He portrayed them as Pechstein portrayed the Polynesians: as a far-off people with traditional customs.¹²

Struck had been born in Berlin, but his encounter with the Jews of Eastern Europe was easy for him, because he was himself Jewish and a member of the *Mizrachi* party, the religious wing of the Zionist movement. Struck also produced numerous etchings of leading Zionists. His portrait of Theodor Herzl became, like Lilien’s photograph, an icon of the Zionist movement. At the same time, he was a renowned graphic artist with a leading position in the German art world. His book *Die Kunst des Radierens* [The art of etching] was reprinted five times between 1909 and 1923. Struck’s studio was a meeting place for young Jewish artists from Germany such as Jakob Steinhardt and Ludwig Meidner, and artists originally from Eastern Europe such as Joseph Budko, Abraham Palukst, and Marc Chagall, who learned the craft of etching from Struck.

Struck belonged both to the “universal” art world and to Zionist circles. On the eastern front as well, he had acted as a mediator and translator between the Lithuanian Jews and the German military administration. He enjoyed the trust of both sides. In 1923, Struck emigrated from Germany to Palestine and settled in Haifa.

The First World War also changed the worldview and artistic vision of Jakob Steinhardt (1887–1968). Steinhardt’s confrontation with “Eastern Jewry” was more dramatic than Struck’s. He believed, for example, that he had discovered his ancestors in the Jews of Lithuania and even “recognised” his great-grandmother in one old Jewish woman.¹³ The woodcuts in his collection *Pessach-Haggada* (1923), which was made up of prayers, blessings, and commentaries for the Passover seder meal, combine in a new way traditional Jewish culture with a world marked by social upheaval, misery, and wars.¹⁴

The new European order established by the Treaty of Versailles, with the founding of new nation-states on the territory of the former multinational empires, also affected traditional areas of Jewish settlement. The Russian Civil War and the Polish-Soviet War as well as the pogroms that accompanied these conflicts set in motion large-scale waves of emigration, much of which rolled through Germany.

During the postwar years, interest in the world of the East European Jews grew to such an extent that Gershom Scholem spoke critically of an “aesthetic ecstasy”.¹⁵

¹² Letter to Franz Landsberger (1934), quoted in Gerda Breuer, Ines Wagemann, eds., *Ludwig Meidner. Zeichner, Maler, Literat 1884–1966*, 1, (Stuttgart 1991), p. 115.

¹³ Stefan Behrens, ed., *Jakob Steinhardt: Das graphische Werk* (Berlin 1987), p. 10.

¹⁴ Michael Brenner interprets this way of combining tradition with current events as an expression of the “struggle for authenticity in the modern age”, see Michael Brenner, *Jüdische Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (München 2000), pp. 182–194, quote from pp. 186–187.

¹⁵ Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, p. 85

Many saw the life of the Hasidic Jews as a shining example of a community organised on socialist lines. An attempt was made to turn the socialist ideas of Gustav Landauer, one of Buber's friends, into reality within a community affiliated with the *Jüdisches Volksheim* in Berlin's Scheunenviertel, where many East European Jews lived.¹⁶

The treatment of Jewish themes in art also aroused interest among educated, non-Jewish Germans. Indications of this could be found in exhibitions of work by Jewish artists in leading galleries such as Paul Cassirer's and Tannhäuser's and in the publications of Jewish artists with publishing houses and journals such as Paul Westheim's *Kunstblatt*. Private and public collections bought works by Jewish artists. There was a "Jewish Pavilion" at Düsseldorf's Exhibition for Hygiene, Social Welfare, and Physical Exercise (*Ausstellung für Gesundheitspflege, soziale Fürsorge und Leibesübungen, Ge-So-Lei*) in 1926 and at Cologne's International Press Exhibition (*Internationale Pressa Ausstellung*) in 1928. In comparison with assimilated West European Jews, the figure of the "Eastern Jew" took on idealised features, as in Struck and Zweig's *The Face of East European Jewry*.

The search for "the mystical and spiritual" was already present in Expressionism, but the Jewish artists from Eastern Europe put an even greater emphasis on it.¹⁷ The art historian Franz Landsberger wrote: "Mysticism flows more strongly through the East European Jew, he is more fervent."¹⁸ Starting in the late 1920s, scholarly works also addressed East European Jewish artists such as Lasar Segal, Marc Chagall, and Issachar Ber Ryback with this aspect in mind.¹⁹

In the postwar era, centres and circles of Jewish culture were created in Poland and Ukraine, in Russia and Austria, and just as important, they established and maintained contact with one another. One of the most important centres of secular Jewish culture was the *Kultur-Liga*, which was founded in Kiev in 1918 and functioned as an independent institution until 1920. The *Kultur-Liga* had branches in Romania, Lithuania, and Poland. Its activities were based on the idea of Jewish cultural autonomy.²⁰ After its complete subordination to the then ministry of education – the Soviet People's Commissariat for Enlightenment – in 1924, the *Kultur-Liga* lost its function as an independent centre of Jewish enlightenment. By then, however, some of its members had moved to Warsaw, where they were soon joined by the centre itself. After that, the *Kultur-Liga* moved to Berlin for a while. In the opinion of Peretz Markisch, a

¹⁶ The *Jüdisches Volksheim* was set up in 1916 by the Zionist doctor and educator Siegfried Lehmann and took the English "Settlement System" as its model. It was designed to offer Jewish immigrants from the East the possibility of training, see Brenner, *Jüdische Kultur*, pp. 204-205.

¹⁷ In a contribution to the catalogue for the exhibition *Jewish Artists of Our Time*, 25 July-20 August 1929, the French art critic Waldemar George argued that an "expression judaïque" could be identified in modern art: This art, he said, had been created by "wandering prophets, destroyers and great agitators", see Henri Brendlé, ed., *Jüdische Künstler unserer Zeit* (Zürich 1929).

¹⁸ Franz Landsberger, *Einführung in die jüdische Kunst* (Berlin 1935), p. 259.

¹⁹ Karl Schwarz, *Die Juden in der Kunst* (Berlin 1928); Ernst Cohn-Wiener, *Die jüdische Kunst. Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin and Leipzig 1929); Landsberger, *Einführung*.

²⁰ *Kultur-Liga. Khudozhnii avangard 1910–1920-kh rokiv* (Kiev 2007); Gillel' Kazovskii, *Khudozhniki Kul'tur-Ligi* (Moscow 2003).

Yiddish author who specialised in short stories and plays, Berlin was to become the site of the “Third Temple”.²¹

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (*Yidisher Visenshaftlikher Institut*) was founded in Berlin in 1925 with its headquarters in Vilna (then Polish Wilno). The activities of this institute transcended borders, just as its leading figures had become citizens of different states as a result of the new European order.

During the 1920s, Berlin became an important centre of communication and exchange between east and west. Political émigrés crossed paths with official Soviet envoys, representatives from the world of autonomous art became acquainted with left-wing revolutionary artists. Between 1921 and 1924, Berlin was vortex of interaction among East European Jewish literary figures such as David Bergelson, Der Nister, David Hofsteyn and Uri Zwi Grinberg, David Einhorn, and Moyshe Kulbak; scholars such as Max Weinreich, Simon Dubnow, and Elias Tscherikower; and artists such as Henryk Berlewi, El Lissitzky, Marc Chagall, and Issachar Ber Ryback. The city was home to important Jewish publishing houses – such as Schocken, Philo, Farlag Yidish, Welt-Verlag, Dvir, Stybel, Wostok, Klal, and Jüdischer Verlag – as well as to important organisations – such as the Union of Eastern Jewish Associations (*Bund Ostjüdischer Vereine*), the Jewish Cultural Union (*Jüdischer Kulturbund*), and the Eastern Jewish Artists’ Union (*Ostjüdischer Künstlerbund*).²² Chagall remarked that he had never seen so many miracle-performing rabbis as in Berlin in 1922, and had never seen so many Constructivists as on the terrace of the Romanisches Café.²³

Polish-Jewish Artists in Germany

East European artists were extremely mobile in the early 1920s. By participating in exhibitions and contributing to publications (in Jewish circles and the international art world), many of them succeeded in establishing contacts throughout Europe and building up networks. In 1919, Jankel Adler (1895–1949), a native of Russia’s central Polish lands who had already been active as an artist in Germany before the war, travelled to Łódź, where he became an active member of the Young-Yiddish (*Yung-yidish*) circle. He was particularly energetic in calling for a new Jewish art. Upon returning to Germany, he was part of the art scene in Düsseldorf, and in 1920, he served as a representative of the Polish delegation to the congress of the Union of Progressive International Artists (*Union fortschrittlicher Künstler*) and the International Art Exhibition (*Internationale Kunstausstellung*) at the department store Tietz. In his own work, Adler sought to combine modern form with Jewish tradition. His 1921 portrait of his parents, with its emphasis on the “Jewishness” of their features, is

²¹ Hillel Kazovsky, “The Phenomenon of the Kultur-Lige”, in *Kultur-Liga. Khudozhnii avangard 1910–1920-kh rokiv*, pp. 24–36, quotation from p. 24.

²² Renate Fuks and Leo Fuks, “Yiddish Publishing Activities in the Weimar Republic, 1920–1933”, in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 33* (New York 1988), pp. 417–434; Lutz S. Malke, ed., *Europäische Moderne. Buch und Graphik aus Berliner Kunstverlagen 1890 bis 1933. Ausstellung der Kunstbibliothek Berlin* (Berlin 1989); Marina Kühn-Ludewig, *Jiddische Bücher aus Berlin (1918–1936)* (Nümbrecht 2008).

²³ Klaus Kändler, ed., *Berliner Begegnungen: Ausländische Künstler in Berlin 1918 bis 1933* (Berlin 1987), p. 274.

an acknowledgement of his origins. However, in his large paintings for the planetarium at the aforementioned Exhibition for Hygiene, Social Welfare, and Physical Exercise in 1926 – a series of pictures that went on to take first prize at the exhibition – Adler did not use any Jewish motifs.

Henryk Berlewi (1894–1967), a champion of the “Jewish renaissance” in Warsaw, was another artist who, during his period in Berlin from 1921 to 1923, developed a radical form of abstract composition that he called *Mechanofaktur*, which was exhibited at the gallery Der Sturm in 1924. Berlewi later recalled that his break with the Jewish tradition, which was a very dramatic experience for him, was influenced by El Lissitzky.²⁴ El Lissitzky had spent some time in Warsaw on his way to Berlin in 1921 and had introduced Berlewi to Suprematism, a new direction in Russian art. Berlewi in turn reported from Berlin for the Yiddish-language press in Poland, informing his readers about events in the international art world in Germany.

This double-life of Jewish artists in Germany during the 1920s – that of belonging to both Jewish cultural circles and the radical transnational avant-garde – seems to have been a widespread phenomenon, and it was accompanied by reflections addressing the artists’ own roots.

Artists from Russia

Some Russian-Jewish artists who stayed in Germany until the mid-1920s came to Berlin on the occasion of the First Russian Art Exhibition, which took place at the Van Diemen gallery in the autumn of 1922. They took advantage of the opportunity offered by having so many Jewish printers in the city to publish their works, some of which had been created while they were still living in Russia. They were particularly active in the field of book illustration. Nathan Altman published a deluxe edition of his *Jüdische Graphik* [Jewish graphic art] with an introduction by well-known art critic Max Osborn.²⁵ In these works, which had been drawn earlier, Altman was striving for a stylised reinterpretation of Jewish folk ornamentation (Illustration 3). By contrast, the cover illustration, which was produced later, shows that Altman’s work was also close to the polygraphic means of composition used in international Constructivism (Illustration 1 in colour insert).

Issachar Ber Ryback (1897–1935) was another artist who began publishing lithographs of drawings he had produced earlier, namely in 1917–18, while still in Ukraine. In his portfolio *Shtetl. Mayn khorever heym, a gedekhenish* [Shtetl. My destroyed home, a remembrance], he dealt with a tradition that already belonged to the past. The lithograph “The Great Synagogue”, a part of this collection, shows the great wooden synagogue in Mogilev, which Ryback also depicted in Expressionist-Cubist paintings and large-format charcoal drawings. Using expressive force and dynamic distortions, he depicted everyday life in an East European shtetl, imbuing it with a mystical ecstasy, just the way Buber had imagined it (Illustration 4).

²⁴ Henryk Berlewi, “El Lissitzky in Warschau”, in *El Lissitzky (exhibition catalogue)* (Hannover 1965), p. 63.

²⁵ Nathan Altman, *Jüdische Graphik. Mit Einleitung von Max Osborn* (Berlin 1923).



Illustration 3: Nathan Altman, Fantastic Animals, from his book “Evreiskaia Grafika” [Jewish graphic art] (Berlin 1923)



Illustration 4: Issachar Ber Ryback, *Simchat Tora (Festival of the Tora)*, sanguine drawing, 1922

Ryback had received his training at the Kiev School of Art and was an active member of the art section of the *Kultur-Liga*. During his time in Berlin, from 1921 to 1924, he was, like many other avant-garde artists, a member of the left-wing November Group and exhibited his works with the *Berliner Secession* group and at the *Juryfreie Kunstausstellung*. After a short trip to Russia, he finally settled in Paris in 1926.

Josef Chaikov (1888–1979, Illustration 5), who was born in Kiev and attended the local School of Art, spent the years 1910–1913 in Paris. He, too, was active in the art section of the *Kultur-Liga* and lived in Berlin from 1922 to 1923 before moving to Moscow. In Berlin, he worked as a book illustrator for a number of Jewish publishing houses, but he also created three-dimensional figures and bas-reliefs made of plaster, in which he abstracted forms in Cubist-Constructivist compositions. His treatise *Skulptur*, which appeared in Kiev as a publication of the *Kultur-Liga*, was published in the Berlin edition of the Polish-Jewish journal *Albatros* in 1923. Lazar (El) Lissitzky (1890–1941), who did the layout for the Constructivist title page of the catalogue produced to accompany the First Russian Art Exhibition and edited a Berlin-based international journal entitled *Veshch - Gegenstand - Objet* (1922), was another artist who illustrated books for Jewish publishers in this period.²⁶

The Yiddish-language journal *Milgroym* (Illustration 2 in colour insert) became a place where German and Russian-Jewish publicists could exchange ideas. Appearing in Berlin from 1922 to 1924 alongside a nearly identical Hebrew edition called *Rimon*, this journal published articles on both Jewish and “universal” art and literature, while aiming to transcend borders in order to reach its intended Jewish audience.

The programme of *Milgroym-Rimon* had some similarities with the aims of the *Kultur-Liga*; after all, *Kultur-Liga* activists David Bergelson and Der Nister were also involved in the journal. Rahel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, the journal’s editor, was an expert on illustrated medieval manuscripts and was also familiar with the *Kultur-Liga* and its goal of using art for the purpose of enlightenment.²⁷ Wischnitzer-Bernstein saw *Milgroym-Rimon* as a “pathfinder in the world”, a journal that would encompass the different strata of Jewish culture and combine them, the past with the present, Jewish art with art in general. She considered Jewish art to be part of a creative process, “defined not by national characteristics but solely by time and the artist’s personality”.²⁸

Wischnitzer-Bernstein thought of Jewish culture as an integral part of universal culture. Accordingly, the journal published discussions on the general and Jewish artistic themes that were being debated at the time, for example, Expressionism and Chinese painting. Contributions by renowned art historians such as Franz Landsberger and Julius Meier-Graefe on Cézanne, Rembrandt, or El Greco were as innovative in their approach as those by artists like Berlewi and Lissitzky.

In one article for *Milgroym*, Lissitzky combined his thoughts on the different directions in Jewish art with his memories of a 1916 trip he and Ryback had made to the Mogilev synagogue at the instigation of ethnographer Solomon An-ski and banker

²⁶ Susanne Marten-Finnis and Igor Dukhan, “Transnationale Öffentlichkeit im Russischen Berlin. Die Avantgarde-Zeitschrift Vešč-Gegenstand-Objet”, *OSTEUROPA*, 3/2008, pp. 37–48.

²⁷ See her report on a visit she made to Kiev in 1918: Rachel Bernstein-Wischnitzer, “Jüdische Kunst in Kiew und Petrograd (1918–1920)”, *Der Jude*, 5–6 (1920), pp. 353–356.

²⁸ Rachel Wischnitzer, “From My Archives”, in idem, ed., *From Dura to Rembrandt: Studies in the History of Art* (Milwaukee 1990), p. 166.



Illustration 5: Iosif Chaikov, Self-portrait, 1920



Illustration 6: El Lissitzky, Boarding Card, collage und ink drawing, 1922

Horace Ginzburg (who funded An-ski's expeditions).²⁹ He saw the years between 1912 and 1915 as the zenith of the Jewish renaissance. In this period, Lissitzky wrote, a new generation of Jews had "suddenly" become "artistic" and gone to the "psychological borders" of the Pale of Settlement, the territory to which Russia's Jews were generally restricted. Lissitzky was referring to the breach of the prohibition on mimetic representation, which had made the break with tradition inevitable:

We took up our pencils and brushes and began to look not just at nature, but also at ourselves. Who are we? Where do we belong among the nations of the world? What is the nature of our culture, and what kind of art do we want to create?³⁰

According to Lissitzky, this new way of thinking about art had developed in a few towns in Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. From there, the movement headed to Paris and ended – "At the time, we thought it was the beginning" – with the First Exhibition of Jewish Art in Moscow in 1916. Lissitzky went on to add: "Today, true art is being created by those struggling against art." This provocative statement referred to the contradictory situation in which, so Lissitzky, modern Jewish art found itself.

The experience of artists from Eastern Europe during their stopover in Germany led not only to close contacts with the worlds of international and German art. It also forced them to consider theoretical questions concerning the relationship between Jewish and "universal" art, between "*yidishkayt* and civilization".³¹

The radical rejection of tradition, which from the point of view of traditional Jewry amounted to blasphemy, led to a kind of disorientation among some of these artists, even a "feeling that they did not belong in two senses, neither to Jewish tradition, nor to the history of European art".³² For Jankel Adler, this new art, which he called Expressionism, had come into being as a consequence of big city life: the streetcar clatter, the throngs of people, and the dissonant colours. This road also demanded sacrifices: "We are losing our connection with God and with our fathers."³³ And Chaikov was of the opinion that Jewish art should come into being out of the spirit of the present, the age of electrification, speed, steel construction, and concrete.³⁴

A kind of summary of Jewish art's development can be found in the book *Sovremennaia evreiskaia grafika* [Contemporary Jewish graphic art]. Written by Kiev artist Boris Aronson (1900–1980), this book was published in Russian by the Berlin-based Petropolis Verlag in 1924.³⁵ Aronson saw the path of development leading from "eth-

²⁹ El Lissitzky, "Erinnerungen an die Mogilever Synagoge", *Milgroym*, 3 (1923), pp. 9–13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hillel Kazovsky, "Between *yidishkayt* and Civilization", in Gennady Estraiikh and Mikhail Krutikov, eds., *The Shtetl: Image and Reality* [= Studies in Yiddish, 2] (Oxford 2000), pp. 80–90.

³² Armin A. Wallas, "Das Zelt. Jüdische Kunst zwischen den Weltkriegen", in *Jüdischer Almanach 1996* (Frankfurt am Main 1995), pp. 25–35, quote from p. 25.

³³ *Nasz Kurier* (5 December 1920), p. 4.

³⁴ Josef Chaikov, *Skulptur*, quoted in Ruth Apter-Gabriel, ed., *Tradition and Revolution: The Jewish Renaissance in Russian Avant-garde Art* (Jerusalem 1987), p. 231

³⁵ Boris Aronson, *Sovremennaia evreiskaia grafika* (Berlin 1924). The same publisher published Aronson's book on Marc Chagall in 1924, in Russian and Yiddish.

nography” to “aesthetics” and identified three phases of modern Jewish art: imitation, stylisation, and individualisation. He argued that ethnographic interests preceded aesthetic ones, and that the graphic element in folk ornamentation and book illustration provided a model of orientation for modern Jewish art. According to Aronson, the renunciation of naturalism resulting from anti-mimetic Jewish tradition provided the impetus for the modern artist’s search for form.

At the same time, Aronson was of the opinion that contemporary Jewish artists would be unable to find their own style. In the event that they turned to Jewish motifs, they risked trivialising those themes; but on the way to abstraction, the Jewish world’s inner warmth and sense of security would be lost. To illustrate how artists were departing from the Jewish tradition, Aronson singled out one of Lissitzky’s illustrations for a volume of stories by Ilya Ehrenburg; there Constructivist composition was combined with elements of Jewish script (Illustration 6).³⁶ Aronson noted:

In general, every national style stands in contradiction to the overall atmosphere of our time, in which dynamics, mechanics, and fragments are so important.³⁷

Overall, the position of Jewish artists from East-Central and Eastern Europe in the world of German art seems to have been an ambivalent one. On the one hand, their transnational contacts and the radicalism of some of their artistic statements were representative for the period of high modernism. The fact that many of them held left-wing political views also contributed to their integration into the largely left-wing oriented German art world. A few years later, the Nazi regime condemned modern art movements across the board as “Jewish and cultural Bolshevism”.

On the other hand, for many East European artists, the construction of a national, Jewish modern art was accompanied by a search for roots that seemed thoroughly archaic. It was precisely this combination of radicalism and archaism that seemed an innovation to Germany’s educated middle class. For most of the artists from Eastern Europe, Germany was no more than a stopping point on their way to France, Britain, or the United States. Nonetheless, because they were so closely involved in artistic life and established many contacts during their time in Germany, they were able to make an important contribution to reflection on the nature of Jewish art and modern form. They have left behind traces on the landscape of European art that cannot be erased.

Translated by Gerald Holden, Frankfurt/Main

³⁶ Il’ja Erenburg, *Shest’ povestei o legkikh kontsakh* (Berlin 1922).

³⁷ Aronson, *Sovremennaia evreiskaia grafika*, pp. 103, 107.

Omry Kaplan-Feuereisen

At the Service of the Jewish Nation

Jacob Robinson and International Law

Jacob Robinson (1889–1977) spent the greater part of his life in Eastern Europe. As a politician, minority rights activist, and specialist in international law, he had already gained an international reputation while living in Lithuania. Based in New York starting in 1941, he worked between the poles of specifically Jewish and generally human interests. Through his efforts to inculcate Jews with a national self-consciousness and his activity in the fields of international law and historiography, Robinson left his mark on European and world history.

Jacob Robinson: At first glance, one would never suspect that behind such an Anglo-Saxon sounding name stood a man who was once said to have embodied “in his biography and personality... the heritage of East European Jewry, which has been lost”.¹ Given the diversity of the Jewish experience and Jewish culture in a space as large and heterogeneous as Eastern Europe, such a statement ought to be taken only with a grain of salt. But there is no doubt that Jacob Robinson’s Jewish socialisation within the multinational structure of life in the western part of the Russian Empire was characterised by extraordinarily complex conditions. It is perhaps exactly this extraordinary experience that, although unique, was typical for other Jewish circles as well. Moreover, there is the fact that Robinson remained in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Russian Empire. When he was forced to leave during the Second World War, he had already spent the greater part of his life in Eastern Europe. Unlike many Jews who came from the region and achieved fame and standing only after their arrival in the west, Robinson had already made a name for himself beyond Eastern Europe before the war. His tireless commitment was driven by a form of Jewish-national self-perception that was particularly pronounced in Eastern Europe. For decades, his political and academic work produced results not only in the narrow confines of the Jewish world. It also left its mark on the course of world history.

Omry Kaplan-Feuereisen (1977), lic. rel. int., Ph.D. student at the Freie Universität, Berlin.

¹ “Jacob Robinson – 75 Jahre”, *Israelitisches Wochenblatt für die Schweiz*, (11 December 1964); Omry Kaplan-Feuereisen, “Jacob Robinson”, in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven 2008), pp. 1,567-1,568.

Childhood and Apprenticeship

Jacob Robinson was born in 1889 in Serei (today Seirijai, Lithuania), a small town in the Suvalki Guberniia (province) of the Russian Empire. Since the Vienna Congress (1814-1815), the Jews of this remote northeastern corner of Congress Poland, which was settled mostly by Lithuanians and Jews, had been caught between worlds. What separated them from the rest of the Jews in Congress Poland was what bound them to the Jews of the neighbouring gubernii of Kovno (Kaunas), Vil'na (Vilnius), and Grodno (Hrodno): a certain understanding of religion (the rational, misnagdic tradition), language (the Lithuanian dialect of Yiddish), and a stronger contact with Russian than Polish culture, the result of regional demographics.

As citizens of Congress Poland, the Jews of the Suvalki Guberniia were subjected to a different legal system than their brethren in neighbouring Russia. On a general level, Congress Poland, unlike the rest of Russia, was based on the Napoleonic Code, French civil law. Furthermore, due to Poland's special status under international law within the Russian Empire, there were two separate legislative processes in St. Petersburg: A general one for the empire and one for the Polish provinces, where general law was not automatically valid. The Russian government used this constellation as a political tool in order to create an additional level of legal dualism specifically directed at the empire's Jews.

In the first 50 years after the Congress of Vienna, the legal position of the Jews in Congress Poland was clearly worse than in the Russian areas of the Pale of Settlement, the group of gubernii to which the Jews were largely confined. However, political changes after the Polish Uprising of 1863 suddenly left the Jews in Congress Poland with more freedom and rights than in Russia. These new conditions provoked a mass migration of Jews from Russia to Poland, which – in accordance with Russian intentions – stirred anti-Jewish feelings in Poland, which in turn reduced the likelihood of a Polish-Jewish alliance aimed at Russia.²

The unusual place of this pocket of historical and cultural Lithuanian Jewry within Congress Poland and the special position of Congress Poland within the Russian Empire may well have played a role in shaping the young Robinson. But there were other features special to the situation of the Jews in the Suvalki Guberniia that also influenced him. The region's geographical proximity to Prussia probably facilitated the penetration of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) and other progressive ideas into the smallest towns of the province. The inevitable encounter between the deeply religious and compact Jewish population and modern and secular values led to conflicts of identity and inner-Jewish cultural strife.

These tensions were palpable in Robinson's immediate surroundings. His father, David, was a pious and educated man. He carried the family name Rabinsohn with pride because it reflected the family's prestigious origins, a two-century long unbroken chain of rabbis, which was supposed to have begun with the illustrious Talmud schol-

² Given the extensive literature on the history of Jews in Eastern Europe, it is remarkable that the background, purpose, extent, function, and results of this legal dualism has hardly been addressed. One exception is Michael J. Ochs, *St. Petersburg and the Jews of Russian Poland, 1862-1905*, unpublished dissertation, (Harvard University 1986). Ochs's research ought to be continued and expanded.

ar Yom Tov Lippman Heller (1578–1654).³ Independent of his traditional moral conduct, David was also a proponent of the Haskalah, a maskil, who held proto-Zionist views and sought to spread the use of modern Hebrew. At the same time, however, he worked as a teacher at state-run elementary schools for Jews, which were seen as an instrument of Russification, because pupils were taught in Russian, not in Yiddish, the children's native language.⁴

By contrast, Jacob's uncle on his mother's side, Efim Semionovich London, had gone a step farther. After studying medicine in Warsaw, he became a well-known scientist in St. Petersburg and a welcome guest at the court of Nicholas II. He provided financial support to his sister's large family back in Suvalki Guberniia.⁵

When Jacob was still quite young, his family moved to Vishtinets (today Vištytis, Lithuania) on the German-Russian border. The small-scale, cross-border commerce left its mark on the small town – economically and culturally. Overall, the town's 2,500 inhabitants – Jews, Germans, Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians – lived peacefully alongside one another. Many of the circa 800 Jews were day labourers who sympathised with the General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Community life, however, was characterised by an especially strong Hebrew-Zionist tendency.⁶ Robinson was also raised in this spirit, attending the local Jewish religious school (heder) and receiving instruction from his father at the state elementary school.⁷ Together with his formal education, Jacob's continuous interaction with this heterogeneous environment afforded him a hybrid education on several levels. In Vishtinets, a microcosm full of dissociations great and small, the highly talented Robinson developed into a comparatist in the broadest sense of the word at an early age.

Jacob first came into contact with high politics by a curious coincidence. In the summer of 1901, when a fire destroyed the Jewish part of Vishtinets, no lesser figure than Kaiser Wilhelm II hurried to aid the town. At his own cost, the Kaiser ordered the staff of his manor in the East Prussian settlement of Rominten (today Raduzhnoe, Russia) to tend the homeless and to initiate reconstruction efforts. Without prior notice, he appeared one day in Vishtinets and presented the astonished population a donation for the homeless from the Tsar. For the town's Jews, Wilhelm's visit was even more memorable because it took place – probably unintentionally – on Yom Kippur. The Jews had to interrupt their religious service and rush to the market place. It is said

³ The surname “Robinson” has its origins in the name “Rabinsohn” and is very rarely encountered among East European Jews. Like Rabinovic, Rabinovitch, Rabinov, Rabinski, etc., it marks the rabbinical lineage of the first person to adopt the surname. The vowel shift from “A” to “O” and the loss of the “h” in “sohn” makes identification difficult. The German spelling “Rabinsohn” goes back to 1795-1807, when the territory that later became the Suvalki Guberniia was under Prussian control.

⁴ Jacob Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews. Records and Transcripts* (1977), pp. 1-4 (private collection).

⁵ Robinson had six brothers. Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, pp. 6-8. On Efim S. London, see his entry in *Evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, 10 (St. Petersburg 1910).

⁶ Dov Levin, ed., *Pinkas Hakehillot-Lithuania* (Jerusalem 1996); Mendel Sudarski, ed., *Lite*, 1 (New York 1951); Chaim Leikowicz, ed., *Lite*, 2 (Tel Aviv 1965); *Yahadut Lita*, 1-4 (Tel Aviv 1959-1984).

⁷ Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, p. 6; Jacob Robinson, *Curriculum Vitae*, n.d. [probably 1964-1965] (private collection).

that Jacob's father was asked to greet the Kaiser in the name of the Jewish community and thank him for his generous help.⁸

Once Jacob had completed heder and elementary school, his family, following the example set by Uncle Efim, reluctantly decided to send him to the gymnasium in Suvalki, the provincial capital. Due to his uncle's influence in St. Petersburg, Jacob was accepted at the gymnasium, even though the places for Jewish pupils had already been distributed. Jacob, still a religious adolescent, left home at age 14.⁹

Suvalki was at this time a city of over 20,000 inhabitants, mostly Poles and Jews. The years that Jacob spent there at the Russian gymnasium – 1904 to 1910 – were decisive in determining the future course of his life. For one, the model student discovered a passion for the Russian language and its literature. Far more important, however, he came into contact with the major ideas and themes of the day: nationalism, socialism, and revolution. First and foremost, however, his self-perception changed fundamentally. He observed that his Polish and Lithuanian peers no longer defined themselves by their common Catholic faith, but by their ethnicity. The Poles were engaged in a fierce struggle against Russian oppression, while the Lithuanians were fighting for their freedom against the Russians and Poles. How should the Jews behave in this situation? With which party should they side?

Religion lost its traditional, identity-forming function for Robinson, as he absorbed works by Chaim Nachman Bialik, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and Simon Dubnov. These strengthened his growing belief that the Jews were in reality not merely a religious community, but, like the Poles and the Lithuanians, another nation, albeit a special one.¹⁰ As such, according to Robinson, the Jews should support neither the Poles nor Russians, but should recognise their own national interests and pursue their own goals.

After taking his school-leaving exam, the now secular Robinson studied law at the Warsaw University from 1910 until 1914. Since there was no mandatory attendance, he spent most of his time in Suvalki, where he worked as a tutor – just as he had done while a pupil at gymnasium.¹¹

Immediately upon graduating, he was drafted into the Russian Army in July 1914 and a little later sent to the front without any military training. By sheer luck, he survived a full year of combat and long marches, before finally being captured by the Germans in September 1915. The following three years were spent in various prisoner of war camps in East Prussia. Because he held an academic degree, he was treated as an officer, according to customs of the day. He was spared forced labour and could order books. He therefore used the time to educate himself further. In these years, he learned several languages, studied history, and honed his understanding of international relations.¹² When he was released from captivity in November 1918, he returned home with the skills and motivation to dedicate himself to the task that moved him most: raising the national self-awareness of the Jews. To a certain extent, almost everything that Robinson did afterwards stemmed from his efforts to realise this goal.

⁸ An article about this unusual event is in preparation.

⁹ Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-38.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-62; Jacob Robinson to Leo Zuckermann, 31 December 1914 and 20 April 1915 (private collection).



Jacob Robinson, around 1935

Educator of the Nation

Six months after the war, Robinson left Suvalki, by that point Suwałki, Poland, in order to establish an unusual middle school in the new Republic of Lithuania. Not far from Vishtinets, in the little town of Virbalis, Robinson oversaw the establishment of a pedagogically progressive school where only Hebrew was used.¹³

In his youthful zeal, Robinson was quite aware that he and his staff were, as he wrote, “extremists” and “revolutionaries”.¹⁴ In this school, which was co-financed by the Lithuanian state, they sought to educate the children in “love of the nation” and to induce the “hebraisation of the younger generation’s thoughts”. The displacement of Yiddish by Hebrew was to cure Jewish children of the “disease of polyglottism”, which, in Robinson’s view, stood in the way of establishing a strong Jewish national consciousness.

The teaching methods were drawn up according to the Polish example so that every subject was taught from a Jewish-national perspective. Robinson placed great value in the study of the Jewish present, unlike traditional Jewish schools, where the past always stood front and centre. By means of his “Jewish-universal humanism”, in which Jewish life and thought were understood in a general context of time and space, Robinson at the same time tried to make the interaction between the Jews and their environment a subject of discussion. He published the instruction plan he developed within the framework of this “revivalist work” as a textbook about the Jews in the present. In this work, which seems rather strange from a contemporary standpoint, Robinson ambitiously claimed that he had presented the “first complete introduction to living Jewry” and had given the “people of the book a book for the people”.¹⁵

In the three years he spent in Virbalis, Robinson laid the foundation for his career in Lithuania. For one, he distinguished himself in the various institutions that constituted Jewish autonomy within Lithuania.¹⁶ For another, he learned Lithuanian, so that he soon belonged to the small number of Jews in the country who could write and speak Lithuanian fluently.¹⁷ In the autumn of 1922, he moved to Kaunas, the interwar Lithuanian capital, in order to dedicate himself to new pursuits.

While Robinson was still trying to gain admission to the bar as a lawyer, the government was overthrown, the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) dissolved, and a new election called for May 1923. Although Robinson was still largely unknown among the country’s Jews, the General Zionists offered him a promising place on the list of Jewish Seimas candidates. The “united electoral list” of the Jewish, German, Russian, and Belarusian minorities did well enough to allow Robinson, the sixth of seven Jewish delegates, to enter the Second Seimas.¹⁸ A few months later, he was elected chairman

¹³ Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, pp. 66-70; Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybes Archyvas [LCVA], Vilnius F. 391, Ap. 2, B, 1930-1933.

¹⁴ Jacob Robinson, *Akhsania shel Tora* (Berlin 1921), p. 2. All of the following quotes originate from this book.

¹⁵ Jacob Robinson, *Yedi’at ‘amenu, demografyah ve-sotsyologyah, sefer limud ve-‘iyun* (Berlin 1923), pp. 8-9.

¹⁶ Sarunas Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania, 1918-1925* (Vilnius 2003).

¹⁷ Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, p. 70; LCVA, F. 391, Ap. 2, B, 1933.

¹⁸ See the very interesting, but little noticed document that originated under Robinson’s leadership and was published by the Jewish parliamentary group in the Seimas: *Barikht fun der yidisher seym-fraktsye fun tsveyten litvishen seym (1923-1926)* (Kaunas 1926).

of the Jewish parliamentary group. In this capacity, he later advanced to become the de facto speaker of the entire minority bloc.

Overnight, Robinson found himself in the spotlight, for the explosive nature of the minority question in postwar Europe also offered him an international stage. Moreover, parallel to his election to the Seimas, Robinson became the co-publisher of the Zionist daily *Di Yidishe Shtime*, the unofficial organ of the Jewish parliamentary group. Through his articles on both broad issues of principle and daily politics, he regularly reached a broad public. Robinson may well have tried to represent the interests of the entire Jewish population and to lead them to a minimum of unity. But he, too, was not above the fray in the fierce ideological and political struggles that divided Lithuania's Jews. Because this inner turmoil made a unified front in the Seimas impossible, the minorities' struggle against the government and parliament's unceasing efforts to reduce their national autonomy was all the more hopeless.¹⁹

Defender of Minorities, Specialist in International Law

Under pressure from the victorious members of the Entente, the defeated powers of the Great War (save for Germany) and the newly created or territorially enlarged states (save for Italy) had to commit themselves by treaty to guaranteeing their minorities a minimum of legal rights. By 1922, when Lithuania also had to accept such provisions, its minorities had already acquired a much broader set of rights, including collective rights. Consequently, the abrogation of the latter in 1924 and 1925 did not violate Lithuania's international obligations. However, a consequence of this about-face in Lithuanian minority policy was that, in Lithuania as well, much greater importance came to be attached to the League of Nations system for the protection of minority rights.

This new political reality marked the start of Robinson's scholarly preoccupation with questions of international minority rights. In the summer of 1925, he received an additional inducement to immerse himself in this issue: an invitation to participate in the European Congress of Nationalities (ECN) in Geneva. At this event, which was initiated by Europe's German minorities, Robinson was to represent the Jews of Lithuania.

Like all of the other Jewish participants at the ECN, Robinson sympathised with the Zionist-oriented *Committee of Jewish Delegations* (CDJ). Since the Versailles Conference, the CDJ had been involved on behalf of Jewish minority rights in Eastern Europe – both within the framework of the League of Nations and in the field of publishing. Leo Motzkin, the spiritus rector of the transnational CDJ, became one of the chairmen of the ECN, once it was institutionalised. At the Geneva gathering, Robinson made his first major appearance before an international audience.

Over the next five years, Robinson worked on behalf of the ECN, giving speeches, drafting papers, and writing articles.²⁰ The problems he encountered prompted him to publish an annotated bibliography on the minorities question. With this important work, which collected the relevant articles and books in 20 languages, Robinson gained recognition in academic circles around the world.²¹ Somewhat later, he assumed the role

¹⁹ Barikht; Liekis, *A State within a State?*

²⁰ *Sitzungsberichte des Kongresses der organisierten nationalen Gruppen in den Staaten Europas* (Vienna and Leipzig 1925-1933); *Nation und Staat. Deutsche Zeitschrift für das europäische Minoritätenproblem*, 1927-1933; Sabine Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress 1925 bis 1938* (Marburg 2000).

²¹ Jacob Robinson, *Das Minoritätenproblem und seine Literatur* (Berlin 1928).

of a mediator between Eastern and Western Europe, translating – from Russian into German – a study that reflected the Soviet Union’s understanding of international law.²² Given Robinson’s specialised knowledge and preference for comparative approaches, the publishers of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Nahum Goldmann and Jakob Klatzkin, asked Robinson – allegedly at the behest of Simon Dubnov – to supplement Dubnov’s own overview of Jewish autonomy in history with a contribution on Jewish autonomy in the present.²³ The elections to the Third Lithuanian Seimas in the summer of 1926 created new political conditions that seemed promising for the minorities. However, that December, the army staged a coup. Antanas Smetona replaced the parliamentary system with an authoritarian one. With that, the work of the Jewish faction in the Seimas – the last official representation of Jewish interests in Lithuania – came to an end. As a matter of necessity, Robinson concentrated on his career as a lawyer. Over the years, he earned a good name for himself and achieved relative prosperity.

Animated by his work in Lithuanian courts, Robinson wrote numerous articles on the Lithuanian legal system as well as a highly regarded systematic index of Lithuanian legislation.²⁴ Because the Jews and the other minorities were no longer able to participate in political life, Robinson sought different ways of making clear to those in power the wishes and needs of the Jewish population. In 1928, together with several influential Lithuanians, Robinson founded a club for Jewish-Lithuanian cultural understanding (*Lietuvių ir Žydų kultūrinio bendravimo Draugija*).²⁵ Still, it was not until the 1930s that – in the tradition of *shtadlanut* (intercession, pleading) – he was able to press the concerns of the entire Lithuanian Jewish community, as well as those of the Zionist cause, before senior government officials in Kaunas.

News of Robinson’s activism spread as far as distant Palestine, reaching David Ben Gurion, who in 1933 characterised Robinson as “the most important man in Lithuania”.²⁶ Although this assessment was quite exaggerated, Robinson had indeed gained access to the highest political circles in Kaunas. For reasons unknown, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry approached him in September 1931 with a request to state Lithuania’s case at a secret hearing before the Permanent German-Lithuanian Council of Conciliation. A few weeks later, the Foreign Ministry asked him to prepare a study on the status of the disputed Memel Territory under international law.

In early 1932, amid an international crisis over Lithuanian policy towards the Memel Territory’s German minority, Robinson accompanied Lithuanian Foreign Minister Dovas Zaunius to Geneva for a hearing of the League of Nations Council, where Zaunius had to deliver an official response to charges levelled against Lithuania.²⁷ Because the quarrel could not be settled in Geneva, the highly charged case was passed on to the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague. Here, too, Robinson was present as an advisor during the legal proceedings, while his still incomplete study of the Memel question served as the basis of the Lithuanian defence. On 11 August 1932, the court ruled in Lithuania’s favour on the most salient points.²⁸

²² Evgenij A. Korowin, *Das Völkerrecht der Übergangszeit. Grundlagen der völkerrechtlichen Beziehungen der Union der Sowjetrepubliken* (Berlin 1929).

²³ Jacob Robinson, „Autonomie in der jüdischen Gegenwart“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 3 (Berlin 1929), pp. 758-764.

²⁴ Jokubas Robinzonas, *Lietuvos istatymu raidynas* (Kaunas 1933).

²⁵ LCVA, F. 402, Ap.4, B. 578.

²⁶ David Ben-Gurion, *Diaries*, entry for 21 April 1933, Ben-Gurion Archives, Israel.

²⁷ LCVA, F. 383, A. 7, B. 1328.

²⁸ Permanent Court of International Justice, Series A/B, Nr. 49.

Lithuania's unexpected success before the Court of International Justice reflected well on Robinson and was greatly appreciated by the Lithuanian government. In 1934, Robinson published his study on Memel in the form of a legal commentary to the Memel Convention of 1924. The erudition and cogent reasoning contained in this study gained Robinson renown and respect among specialists around the world.²⁹

Although the legal conflict revolved around questions of constitutional law, Robinson's willingness to defend Lithuania had consequences for his role in the minority movement. After all, the disputed Lithuanian measures were seen by the German minorities as a brutal attack on the rights of the German inhabitants of the autonomous Memel Territory. Although the court had essentially ruled Lithuania's actions lawful, under these conditions it almost inevitably appeared that Robinson, the prominent defender of Europe's minorities, had changed sides. By declining to participate in the annual, high-profile meeting of the ECN in 1931 and 1932, Robinson effectively put an end to his public involvement in the congress – even before the representatives of the Jewish minorities walked out on the ECN due to the German minorities' refusal to take a clear stand against Hitler's antisemitic policies.³⁰

For Robinson however, the struggle for minority rights had lost none of its importance. Based in Kaunas, he continued to participate in the activities of the CDJ as a member of its executive committee. Shortly after the National Socialists came to power in Germany, Robinson had the idea of petitioning the League of Nations in order to draw attention to the fact that Hitler's antisemitic laws violated the German-Polish Convention on Upper Silesia. The general provisions of the Minorities Treaties negotiated at Versailles had been incorporated into this 1922 agreement between Warsaw and Berlin so as to secure the rights of the Polish minority in the German province of Upper Silesia and those of the German minority in Poland's Autonomous Silesian Voivodeship.

Robinson's creative idea to insist on the rights of Jews in German Upper Silesia on the basis of this bilateral agreement encountered resistance even within the CDJ. But in May 1933, when action was taken along the lines of this suggestion, the petition went down in history: Germany accepted the League of Nations Council's endorsement of the petition. This unique success brought relief to the Jews of Upper Silesia until 1937, when the Polish-German Convention expired.³¹

A lack of sources makes it difficult to reconstruct Robinson's political activities after 1933. The extent of his involvement in the CDJ after Motzkin died in November 1933 is just as unknown as his relationship with the World Jewish Congress (WJC), which was established in 1936 and succeeded the CDJ. Since Lithuania had given him a diplomatic passport, it is assumed that the government continued to draw on his services as an advisor until the late 1930s.³² It is only certain, however, that he continued to work as a lawyer in Kaunas and to publish, primarily on Lithuanian legal issues. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that he was rather successful as an advocate of Jewish interests, and that he set up an unofficial political committee of Lithuanian Jews.³³

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 caught Robinson by surprise while he was on vacation with his family in France. The flood of Jewish refugees from

²⁹ Jacob Robinson, *Kommentar der Konvention über das Memelgebiet vom 8. Mai 1924* (Kaunas 1934).

³⁰ Bamberger-Stemmann, *Nationalitätenkongress*.

³¹ Many of the relevant documents can be found in the Central Zionist Archives (CZA), especially under A 306 and A 126; Philipp Graf, *Die Bernheim-Petition 1933* (Göttingen forthcoming).

³² LCVA, F. 238, Ap. 2, B. 417.

³³ American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati. World Jewish Congress Collection. Series C, Box 14, File 26 [AJA, WJC, C14/26]; Yahadut *Lita*, v. 2; Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*.

Poland confronted the Lithuanian government and the Jewish community with enormous problems. Beseached to return to Lithuania, Robinson began the journey home in November 1939 – via Germany.³⁴ Given the chaotic conditions, Robinson's actions over the next six months were said to be of immeasurable value. Once in Vilnius, which the Soviet Union had handed over to Lithuania in October, Robinson familiarised the local Jews with Lithuanian institutions, mediating between both sides as well as between the government, the refugees, and the various relief organisations. Robinson helped to stabilise the refugees' situation and make it possible to care for them. He also tried to help as many refugees as possible leave Lithuania for Palestine or the United States.³⁵ It was only with considerable effort that Robinson managed to get himself to safety. Only at the end of May 1940 – just before the Soviet occupation – was he able to leave the country. Travelling first to the Soviet Union, he then journeyed from Moscow to his family in southern France via Romania, Yugoslavia, and Italy. The Robinsons then made their way to Lisbon. From there, they set sail for New York in November 1940.³⁶

The Institute of Jewish Affairs

Two months after his arrival in New York, Robinson founded the Institute of Jewish Affairs (IJA). Already in April 1939, he had submitted a proposal to the WJC to create, together with other important Jewish organisations, a central "Institute for Research on the Jewish Present", which would enable the political leadership of the Jewish world to base their decisions on scholarly work.³⁷ However, it soon became clear that the political and ideological rifts were insurmountable for such a joint undertaking. Thus, the IJA was supported only by the WJC.³⁸

With Max Laserson, Jacob Lestschinsky, and Arieh Tartakower, Robinson had first-class social scientists at his disposal.³⁹ The first thing on the agenda was a study of the international system in the interwar period. Based on the findings of this investigation, Robinson hoped to present the peace conference expected after the war with a concept for a more effective system of minority protection in Europe. But the institute's programme changed with the course of the war. Under Robinson's guidance, the IJA began to collect all of the available information on the situation of the Jews in those areas under National-Socialist occupation. The nascent archive developed into an extremely important resource for the IJA's research.⁴⁰

As a result of this work, Robinson knew by the end of 1942 that the National Socialists were striving for the physical annihilation of the Jews in Eastern Europe. He prepared the material that the political leadership of the WJC – in particular, Stephen S. Wise and Nahum Goldmann – passed on to the Allies in the hope of moving them to intervene.

³⁴ Robinson, *Curriculum Vitae*; Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, pp. 126-128.

³⁵ Jahahut *Lita*, v. 2, pp. 360-362; Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, pp. 129-141.

³⁶ Robinson, *Autobiographical Interviews*, pp. 140-141; AJA, WJC, C1/1, Robinson to Hans Kohn, March 6, 1941.

³⁷ AJA, WJC, A9/6 and C71/27, Jacob Robinson, *An Institute for Contemporary Jewish Research. Proposal Presented to the World Jewish Congress by Jacob Robinson* (Kaunas, 29 April 1939).

³⁸ AJA, WCJ, C67/16 und C68/1.

³⁹ See the corresponding entries in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

⁴⁰ The files regarding this matter are extensive and dispersed over several archives and countries, but they are mostly located in the AJA, WCJ.

Robinson increasingly concentrated on developing a legal basis for the punishment of the National Socialist crimes against the Jews and for claims for compensation.⁴¹ According to Goldmann, Robinson and his younger brother Nehemiah drew up ideas and concepts that were “absolutely revolutionary”. These would later be applied at the Nuremberg Trials of German war criminals and would form the legal basis of the compensation treaties between the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), Israel, and Germany.⁴²

In an exchange predominately with U.S. authorities over several years, Robinson argued that the prevailing definition of war crimes be extended to cover National-Socialist persecution of the Jews in its entirety. In addition, the Jews were to be seen as a collective victim independent of their citizenship. In June 1945, Robinson met with Robert M. Jackson, the designated chief prosecutor for the Trial of the Major War Criminals. Close cooperation between the IJA and Jackson’s team ensued with regard to the Jewish aspects of the trial.⁴³ Robinson submitted an abundance of documents to Jackson’s office as well as legal and statistical studies for the preparation of the trial – among them a detailed investigation estimating the number of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution to be about 6 million persons. Along with other data from memoranda produced by the IJA, this piece of information found its way into the indictment submitted by the Allies to the International Military Tribunal.⁴⁴

In November 1945, Robinson travelled to Nuremberg to help draft the Jewish brief presented to the Tribunal by U.S. prosecutors during the hearing of evidence.⁴⁵ Although Robinson was in New York during most of the proceedings, he remained in close contact with Jackson’s office. In August 1946, he again travelled to Nuremberg in order to advise Jackson’s designated successor, Telford Taylor, in the preparation of some of the 12 subsequent trials to be deliberated before U.S. military tribunals.⁴⁶

At this time, the peace treaties between the victors and vanquished were being negotiated in Paris. Because the restitution of Jewish property came up as an issue, Robinson, acting on behalf of the WJC and the Jewish Agency, also travelled to the French capital, where he went to great lengths to impress upon the Allied delegations the urgent need to find a solution to this problem.

In connection with his work in Paris, Robinson received a letter from Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, the man who in 1944 had coined the term “genocide”.⁴⁷ In this letter, Lemkin informed Robinson, in a rather unfortunate choice of words, that he had been “the great inspiration for genocide”. The sources do not make clear whether Lemkin had really been influenced by Robinson’s ideas. It is possible that Lemkin was only seeking to emphasise a request he had made of Robinson, namely, that he press for a prohibition of genocide to be embedded in the Paris Peace Treaties.⁴⁸ But even if Lemkin’s letter had

⁴¹ Nehemiah Robinson, *Indemnification and Reparations. Jewish Aspects* (New York 1944).

⁴² Nahum Goldmann, *Das jüdische Paradox* (Cologne and Frankfurt am Main 1978), pp. 166-167; Nahum Goldmann, “Introduction”, in Nehemiah Robinson, *Ten Years of German Indemnification* (New York 1964), pp. 7-11.

⁴³ A first approach to Robinson’s and the IJA roles in the Nuremberg Trials is Michael R. Marcus, “A Jewish Lobby at Nuremberg: Jacob Robinson and the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1945-1946”, *Cardozo Law Review*, 4 (2006), pp. 1,651-1,666.

⁴⁴ AJA, WJC, C14/23.

⁴⁵ AJA, WJC, C14/16 and C14/17.

⁴⁶ AJA, WJC, C14/19.

⁴⁷ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington 1944).

⁴⁸ AJA, WJC, C14/21, Memorandum and letter by Raphael Lemkin (London, 28 August 1946).

reached Robinson in time, it is still doubtful that Robinson would have granted him this favour. By then, the main emphasis of his interest had shifted decisively.

Israel – A State for a Nation

Robinson had been torn for decades between the ideal of Zionist colonisation in Palestine and the moral obligation to take part in the struggle for Jewish rights in Eastern Europe. At least in part, the latter worked against the former. However, now that this tension had been tragically resolved by Nazi Germany's murder of the East European Jews, Robinson was able to dedicate himself to the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state.

In May and June 1945, at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, Robinson, in cooperation with representatives of the Jewish Agency, had been able to convince a majority of governments to accept a provision drawn up in the sense of the Zionist movement. The formulation, which entered the UN Charter as Article 80, Paragraph 1, secured the continuity of the rights that the British had guaranteed the Jewish people under the League of Nations mandate for Palestine.⁴⁹ In 1947, during negotiations on Palestine before the United Nations, this passage of the UN Charter was to receive special importance in the arguments of the Jewish Agency.⁵⁰

However, Robinson was not able to realise his second goal in San Francisco. During the Second World War, the League of Nations system for the protection of minorities had fallen into disrepute due to Nazi Germany's instrumentalisation of the ethnic German minorities throughout Europe. From his own experience, Robinson knew all too well the many problems surrounding the protection of minorities in Europe. But because he had also personally experienced the effectiveness of the system – particularly in preventing major violations – he tried to avoid tossing out the baby with the bathwater.⁵¹ Therefore, he did his utmost to see that the idea of general human rights, which enjoyed great popularity, did not degenerate into a mere declaration of principles, but, following the example set by the Minorities Treaties, led instead to concrete obligations on the part of states, whose compliance could be legally enforced before a supervisory body.⁵² Disappointed by the clear setback that the UN Charter represented in comparison with the statutes and practices of the League of Nations, Robinson published an analysis of the place of human rights in the UN Charter.⁵³ At the invitation of the United Nations, he then served for three months at the end of 1946 as a special advisor for drafting the legal framework of the Human Rights Commission's work.⁵⁴ Sensing a decision in the Palestine question by the United Nations, Robinson left the IJA in February 1947 and, as a legal advisor to Jewish Agency, prepared the appearances of its political leadership before various UN bodies.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ AJA, WJC, C98/14, Goldmann's report to the administrative committee of the WJC, (7 February 1945).

⁵⁰ Jacob Robinson, *Palestine and the United Nations* (Washington 1947).

⁵¹ Jacob Robinson, et al., *Were the Minorities Treaties a Failure?* (New York 1943).

⁵² AFA, WJC, C98/14, Robinson's report to the Administrative Committee of the WJC (7 February 1945); Jacob Robinson, "From the Protection of Minorities to Promotion of Human Rights", in *The Jewish Yearbook of International Law, 1948* (Jerusalem 1949), pp. 115–151.

⁵³ Jacob Robinson, *Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Charter of the United Nations. A Commentary* (New York 1946).

⁵⁴ AJA, WJC, C14/26.

⁵⁵ Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. Dossiers of the Foreign Ministry.

After the founding of the State of Israel in May 1948, Robinson served as legal counsel to the Israeli delegation to the United Nations for ten years. The hundreds of memoranda he wrote on legal, political, and administrative issues bear witness to the crucial role he played in consolidating Israel's international position and diplomatic service. As a member of the UN's Sixth Committee (Legal Committee) – and for a period its vice president – he was at the forefront of the further development of international law.⁵⁶ In addition, the wartime efforts that he and brother Nehemiah had done to create the legal foundations of collective restitution came to fruition in 1952, when the reparations treaties between Israel, the Claims Conference, and the Federal Republic of Germany were signed. Both brothers also participated in the negotiations in Holland.⁵⁷



Jacob Robinson, acting on behalf of Israel, signs the UN convention declaring persons missing in the Second World War as dead, New York, 6 March 1950.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Goldmann, "Introduction"; Robinson, *Curriculum Vitae*.

Pioneer in Holocaust Research

In 1957, Robinson retired from the Israeli diplomatic service in order to focus on a new task. He still concerned himself with questions of international law – as can be seen by the course he gave at the prestigious Academy for International Law in The Hague (1958) and his comprehensive bibliography on international law (1967)⁵⁸ – but the last 20 years of his creative output were aimed primarily at the historical examination of the Holocaust. His task, to which he was especially well suited, was to initiate research projects on the Holocaust and to co-ordinate and oversee the work of Claims Conference-supported institutes in New York (YIVO), Jerusalem (Yad Vashem), London, and Paris. Under Robinson's supervision, numerous publications appeared, and Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial authority, was turned into an important research institute. Robinson also took on the editing of Holocaust-related subjects for the Jerusalem edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971) and published several finding aides for the study of the Holocaust.⁵⁹ Moreover, together with Nehemiah, who had assumed the directorship of the IJA in 1947, he centralised the efforts of Jewish organisations around the world to support the work of prosecutor's offices investigating National Socialist criminals by providing documents and locating witnesses.⁶⁰

After the capture of Adolf Eichmann, the Israeli government invited Robinson to serve the Israeli attorney general as a special advisor for legal and historical questions and to prepare and accompany him throughout the trial. Incensed by some of the judgments and the numerous errors in Hannah Arendt's reporting on the trial, Robinson responded with his own book. He tried to refute Arendt's statements and interpretations point by point. This work made him known to a wider public and propelled the controversy over Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) to its climax.⁶¹

Jacob Robinson died in New York on 25 October 1977. He was 88. Given his many achievements on behalf of the Jewish cause, he was described by Nahum Goldmann as "one of the greatest figures in the [sic] Jewish history of this last half century".⁶² In truth, through the pursuit of specific Jewish goals as an academic, politician, and specialist for international law, Robinson, a modest man who acted mostly behind the scenes throughout his long and productive life, wrote not only Jewish, but European and world history.

Translated by Richard Mann, Berlin

⁵⁸ Jacob Robinson, *Metamorphosis of the United Nations, Recueil des Cours de l'Académie de Droit International*, (1958); Jacob Robinson, *International Law and Organization. General Sources of Information* (Leyden 1967).

⁵⁹ Jacob Robinson and Philip Friedman, *A Guide to Jewish History under Nazi Impact* (Jerusalem and New York 1960); Jacob Robinson, *The Holocaust and After. Sources & Literature in English* (Jerusalem 1973); Jacob Robinson and Henry Sachs, *The Holocaust. The Nuremberg Evidence. Digest, Index and Chronological Tables* (Jerusalem 1976); Jacob Robinson, Yehuda Bauer, *Guide to Unpublished Materials of the Holocaust Period*, 1-6 (Jerusalem 1970-1981).

⁶⁰ Documents on this are to be found at archives in Jerusalem (Yad Vashem, Claims Conference) and New York (YIVO).

⁶¹ Jacob Robinson, *And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight. The Eichmann Trial, the Jewish Catastrophe, and Hanna Arendt's Narrative* (New York 1965).

⁶² CZA, Z6-2748, Nahum Goldmann, Paris, (11 December 1977). [Obituary for Jacob Robinson].

Eglė Bendikaitė

Intermediary between Worlds

Shimshon Rosenbaum: Lawyer, Zionist, and Politician

Shimshon Rosenbaum (1859–1934) grew up in a Lithuanian-Jewish community in what is now Belarus. As a lawyer and politician, he campaigned throughout his life for Jewish rights. He worked in Minsk, Vilna, and Kaunas. In independent Lithuania, he served first as deputy foreign minister and then as minister for Jewish affairs. A moderate Zionist, he maintained contacts with Jews around the world and tried to modernise East European Jewry. Disappointed by growing antisemitism in Europe, he immigrated to Palestine in 1924. There, he remained active on behalf of Lithuania as general consul in Tel Aviv.

Rosenbaum was a law unto himself.... with difficult character traits and ways of behaving.... an experienced man with a youthful outlook, quick powers of comprehension, an impish smile, persistent, up-standing, and prudent.

Di yidishe shtime, 20 November 1924

Shimshon Rosenbaum was born on 3 September 1859 in Pinsk (Minsk Guberniia), a centre of Jewish culture within the Russian Empire. He grew up in a traditional Orthodox, Lithuanian-Jewish environment and made his way through the customary schools and rights of passage. As a pupil at the yeshiva in Volozhin (today, Valozhyn, Belarus), he studied Torah, Talmud, and other Jewish religious texts closely. Having prepared on his own, he took his school leaving examinations in Czernowitz Austria (today Chernivtsi, Ukraine) in 1883 and then went on to study law in Vienna and Odessa. He received his doctorate in Novorossiisk in 1887.¹

Rosenbaum was sworn in as a clerk at Minsk District Court and later went on to work as a private lawyer.² He was small in size and wore a beard and pince-nez; his sharp

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¹ *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia*, 13 (St. Petersburg 1912), p. 579; *Trumpos Steigiamojo Seimo narių biografijos su atvaizdais* (Klaipėda 1924), p. 48; A. Banevičius, *111 Lietuvos valstybės 1918–1940 politikų veikėjų* (Vilnius 1991), p. 111; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 17 (Detroit and London 2007), p. 433; *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2 (New Haven and London 2008), p. 1,592.

² On Rosenbaum's taking his oath as a lawyer, see Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (LCVA), f. 1,743, ap. 1, b. 879, p. 3.

mind and logical reasoning as well as his political engagement quickly brought him professional success.³ As a student, he had already become enthralled by the idea of a renaissance of the Jewish people and involved himself in the Jewish national movement. While in Odessa, he had met notable leaders of the movement *Hibat Tsiyon* (*Love of Zion*), such as Moses Leib Lilienblum and Leon Pinsker, who were to play a key role in determining his future activities.⁴

Full of energy and optimism, Rosenbaum helped spread Jewish national consciousness. No sooner had he arrived in Minsk than he was a key figure in the local *Hibat Tsiyon* movement. He brought together members of the older generation of the Hebraic movement and the national-minded Jewish youth, which was to produce several famous figures within the Jewish community and the Zionist movement, such as Yehuda Leib Berger of the bank Jewish Colonial Trust and the Jewish National Fund (the agency for purchasing land in Palestine) and Eliezer Kaplan of the Zionist World Congress and the Israeli Knesset (1949–1955).⁵

Rosenbaum tried to convince Jews to emancipate themselves from their own rigid traditions without giving up their Jewish identity. As a moderate Zionist, he adapted his goals to geopolitical changes. When the Russian Empire collapsed, he saw it as his urgent task to support the Jews in independent Lithuania. Later, he saw the possibility of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine and concentrated his energies on creating a new homeland for the Jews there without relinquishing his engagement for the Jewish diaspora. When he joined *Hibat Tsiyon*, it was clear to him that Jews were going to need a lot more convincing before they came to see themselves not just as a religious community but as a nation as well.

Rosenbaum was also active outside of Minsk. He travelled through many towns and *shtetlekh* and called on the Jews to take part in making the national ideal a reality. More than once, he had his lawyer's robes brought to the train station so that he could go straight from the train to his job at court. As a result, many of his clients gained the impression that he was not paying enough attention to their interests and thus turned to other lawyers. In turn, a growing number of Zionists began calling on him for his services as a lawyer.⁶

Rosenbaum was soon known throughout the northwest of the Russian Empire. In 1897, he was sent to the First World Zionist Congress in Basel as a delegate for Minsk and remained a permanent member of the Congress until 1923. He was elected to the General Council of the Zionist Organisation in 1900. Rosenbaum considered the work of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, to be very important and regarded him as a charismatic leader, but he repeatedly criticised many of Herzl's proposals at congresses.⁷

Rosenbaum stood at the forefront of the Democratic Faction, which took shape at the turn of the century to counter what was seen by some as Herzl's dominance in the Zionist movement. At the Sixth Zionist Congress (1903), Rosenbaum fiercely op-

³ Daniel Persky, "Shimshon Rosenbaum", in Shelomo Even-Shoshan, David Kohen, eds., *Minsk, ir va-em, korot, ma'asim, ishim, havai*, 1 (Jerusalem 1975–1985), pp. 345–349, here p. 345.

⁴ Moses Kahan, "Roznboym als tsionist", *Yidishe Shtime*, 20 November 1924.

⁵ Persky, "Shimshon Rosenbaum", p.348.

⁶ Kahan, "Roznboym".

⁷ *Ibid.*

posed Herzl's plan to create an autonomous Jewish district in Uganda.⁸ Although Rosenbaum was not a great orator, he is said to have possessed enormous powers of persuasion and used his calm tone to gain the trust of his audience.⁹ Herzl's Uganda plan was consequently rejected.

In 1902, Rosenbaum convened the Second All-Russian Zionist Conference in Minsk. He was a co-founder of some of the first groups of the socialist movement *Po'alei Tsiyon* (Workers of Zion) and worked on the statutes of both the Jewish Colonial Trust and the Jewish National Fund. At the Third Congress of Russian Zionists in Helsinki in 1906, he joined in adopting a programme that called for the promotion of Jewish immigration to Israel and the intensification of "work in the present". The latter meant the struggle for Jewish civil and minority rights in the various countries where Jews were living.

Rosenbaum's interests included not only the Zionist Organisation, but also the living standards of his co-religionists in the Russian Empire. He campaigned not only for Jews' right to their own country, but for their political and civil rights as well. Rosenbaum did not shy away from politically motivated court cases. He represented the victims of pogroms as well as Zionists who were accused of "actions that threaten state order and social stability".

Following his election to the State Duma in March 1906 as a representative for the Minsk Guberniia, Rosenbaum joined the parliamentary group of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets) and initiated legislative proposals that would give Jews political equality.¹⁰ Following the dissolution of the Duma four months later, he and other members of the Kadets parliamentary group signed the Vyborg Manifesto, which called for civil disobedience to tsarist rule and the withholding of taxes. As a result of this action, Rosenbaum was given a prison sentence in St. Petersburg.¹¹

Politician for Lithuania in Vilnius and Kaunas

In 1915, during the First World War, Rosenbaum moved to German-occupied Vilna. He was already familiar with the city, because he had been accredited by the Vilna District Court as a defence lawyer in 1903 and named a court examiner the following year.¹² With the increasing persecution of the Jews at the hands of the tsarist authorities, Vilna had become headquarters for Russia's Zionists. In his capacity as a member of the All-Russian Zionist Organisation's Central Committee, Rosenbaum had also stayed in Vilna many times starting in 1905.¹³

⁸ Persky, "Shimshon Rosenbaum", p. 345.

⁹ "Rozenboym", *Yidische Shime*, 20 November 1924.

¹⁰ Boris Goldberg, "Di yiden bay di ershte politishe valen in Rusland", *Dos yidische folk*, 15 May 1906.

¹¹ Trumpos Steigiamojo Seimo, p. 48.

¹² On Rosenbaum's appointment as court examiner, see LCVA, f. 1743, ap. 1, b. 879, p. 3.

¹³ Lietuvos Valstybes Istorijos Archyvas (LVIA), f. 378, ap. p/s 1907, b. 50, p. 3, Otnoshenie Vilenskomu, Kovenskomu, Grodnenskomu general-gubernatoru nachal'nika Vilenskogo okhrannogo otdeleniia, 22 October 1907; Yitzhak Broides, *Vilna ha-zionit ve'askaneah, sefer zikhronot u-te'udot al peulot hovvey zion veva-zionim be-Vilna (mishenat 1881-1924)* (Tel Aviv 1939), pp. 301-302.

After his formative years in Minsk, Rosenbaum's decade of visits to Vilna represented a qualitatively new stage in his life. Events were slipping beyond control. Shortly after his arrival in Vilna, Rosenbaum became spokesman for the local Zionist movement and was soon a recognised public figure. Here, too, he directed his attention to social problems confronting the Jewish population and defended its interests against local anti-Jewish policies and propaganda.

After the First World War, when the Russian Empire collapsed and new countries were founded, causing Lithuanian, Polish, and Belarusian political forces and aspirations to clash with other, Lithuanian Jews were also forced to think about how they envisioned the future of Jewish life in the region. The Executive of the Zionist Organisation, which at the time was headquartered in Germany, repeatedly sought out Rosenbaum as one of the most important contact persons in the Lithuanian territories for encouraging cooperation between Jews and Lithuanians. Towards the end of 1917, Rosenbaum, together with like-minded individuals in the German-occupied Lithuanian territories, convened a Jewish National Congress, which – unlike the Lithuanian Conference (*Vilniaus konferencija*) – was not sanctioned by the German authorities.¹⁴

A Zionist meeting on 14 October 1917 showed clearly that the war had changed nothing in the Jews' desire to have a political homeland of their own. Rosenbaum emphasised this in his speech:

The question of equality belongs, like the tsarist Empire, to the past... alongside other questions, the war has once again raised the Jewish question, not, however, as a question of an individual community, but as a united nation with all its attributes.¹⁵

Thanks to Rosenbaum and other leading Zionist figures in Lithuania, such as Jakub Wygodzki, the political party General Zionists decided a year later to support the founding of a Lithuanian state and to participate in the Lithuanian Council (*Lietuvos Taryba*), which had emerged from the Lithuanian Conference. In his speech, Rosenbaum said:

the Jews have to stand by the Lithuanians and support the interests of an independent Lithuania, because only then will they have the opportunity to develop freely themselves.... Belarusian interests must also be protected, for the Lithuanian Jews must not be divided and alone the term Lithuania encompasses more space than the Lithuanians themselves could imagine.¹⁶

Rosenbaum feared that the historical community of Lithuanian Jews would otherwise be torn apart by new national borders. After Lithuania's northeastern border was established, Rosenbaum made an attempt to justify Lithuanian territorial claims to the southeast on historical and legal grounds. Together with Juozas Purickis, at the time

¹⁴ Šarūnas Liekis, "On the Jewish Participation in the Taryba in 1918", *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 4 (1999), pp. 62–82, here, pp. 71 and 75.

¹⁵ "Tzionistishe miting in Vilne", *Letste naves*, 16 October 1917.

¹⁶ Mokslų Akademijos Biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, f. 255–929, p. 31, Lawyer S. Rosenbaum's speech at the Zionist conference in Vilnius.

Lithuania's minister in Berlin, he wrote a memorandum in French on the territory of Lithuania. A summary of this memorandum, which included ethnographic, historical, and statistical information, appeared in Paris in 1919 under the title *Les territoires lituaniens. Le Gouvernement de Grodno*.

On 11 November 1918, Rosenbaum was elected to the Lithuanian State Council (*Lietuvos Valstybės Taryba*) as an independent and immediately appointed deputy foreign minister for a one-year term.¹⁷ He represented the Jewish minority as a member of the Lithuanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.



Shimshon Rosenbaum

¹⁷ Mokslų Akademijos Biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, f. 255-1,089, pp. 1–13, Žydų kooptavimo klausimu Lietuvos Taryboje, 11 December 1918.

Although Rosenbaum represented moderate, realistic policies, political forces in the new capital of Kaunas sought to marginalise him, because he allegedly acted on his own accord. But because Rosenbaum had good contacts in international Jewish organisations and persuasively countered misleading reports disseminated by the Polish side about the situation of the Jews' in Lithuania and other political issues, he was able to keep his post.¹⁸ Despite this resistance, Rosenbaum also earned considerable respect outside Lithuania in his negotiations abroad. He became the leader of the Lithuanian delegation for peace negotiations with Soviet Russia and was responsible for drafting the resulting peace treaty. On 10 July 1920, Rosenbaum, along with delegation members Petras Klimas, Juozas Vailokaitis, and others, signed the treaty with Russia as well as an agreement on the return of refugees.¹⁹

When the Polish Army marched into Vilnius on 9 October 1920, the Lithuanian government was forced to flee to Kaunas. A year later, when Poland announced its intention to hold parliamentary elections in the contested Vilnius region territory, which Warsaw called “Central Lithuania”, Rosenbaum went to the Polish-held administrative centre with Max Soloveitchik, minister for Jewish affairs, to persuade the Jewish community there to boycott the elections. Rosenbaum also made a private trip to Warsaw and met with Polish Foreign Minister Konstanty Skirmunt – a move criticised by Lithuanian politicians and the Jewish community in Kaunas.²⁰

Rosenbaum did not forget Jewish national interests or Zionist activities as a result of this excursion into international politics. At the 1918 conference of the General Zionists of Lithuania, Rosenberg said:

the Zionists pursue a Jewish policy, but not a policy for the Jews... because the constitution still does not guarantee any rights, it is necessary that the Jews themselves be [among the] framers of the constitution; therefore there absolutely has to be a struggle [to ensure] that Jews are represented at all levels of power.²¹

On 5 January 1920, representatives of Lithuania's Jewish community elected a National Council of the Jews in Lithuania at their first congress. Rosenbaum chaired this body until it was dissolved in 1924.²² He campaigned for the strengthening of the secular, democratic communities, the *kehilot*, and opposed Orthodox critics of the “forced” subdivision of the Jews into religious communities, explaining that the nation was something more than a religious community, and that it had to be decided whether it was more important: “to assimilate oneself and be Jewish only within the

¹⁸ LCVA, f. 383, ap. 7. b. 7, p. 37, Lietuvos delegacijos posėdžio protokolas apie Baltijos komisijos posėdį, 8 July 1919; LVCA, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 2, pp. 72–73, Seinų krašto ir apskrities gventoj pareiškimas Lietuvos delegacijai prie Paryžiaus taikos konferencijos, 8 September 1919.

¹⁹ Jonas Aničas, “Žydai diplomatinėje kovoje už Lietuvos pripažinimą”, *Lietuvos Jeruzalė*, 3 (1993).

²⁰ “P. Rozenbaum taikos balandžio rolėj”, *Socialdemokratas*, 8 December 1921; Nuliūdęs Rozenbaum ir milaširdingi krikščionys, *Socialdemokratas*, 15 December 1921; “Der onheib funem sof”, *Vilner vokh*, 3 December 1921.

²¹ Mokslų Akademijos Biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, f. 255–929, p. 31, Lawyer S. Rosenbaum's speech at the Zionist conference in Vilnius.

²² Leib Shimoni, “Jidishe natsionale farzamlung in Lite”, *Lite*, 1 (New York 1951), pp. 252–272.

religious community, or to grow in strength to become an independent people with a national autonomy anchored in institutions.”²³

As chairman of the National Council, Rosenbaum encouraged Jews to use their voting rights in parliamentary and local elections, to close ranks with one another, and to run as candidates for political posts.

Rosenbaum was elected to Lithuania’s Constituent Assembly, which was convened on 15 May 1920 as a representative of the United Jewish People’s List, and on 5 July 1923, he was elected to the second Seimas, the Lithuanian parliament, as a representative of the United Zionists’ List.²⁴ In his parliamentary work, he dedicated particular attention to laws concerning the form of government, the political system, and the executive as well as the consolidation of freedom and civil rights in the constitution. Most of his speeches in the Seimas were not recorded by the stenographer or were rudely interrupted as soon as he began because he did not speak Lithuanian.²⁵

When the ninth government of the Republic of Lithuania was formed under Ernestas Galvanauskas on 29 July 1923, Rosenbaum became minister of Jewish Affairs, for he was equally well known among Lithuanian Jews and Lithuanian politicians. As minister, Rosenbaum made it his goal to promote “the co-existence and co-operation of the organisations representing Jewish interests”²⁶

Rosenbaum, however, had little influence in general Lithuanian politics, which had not developed in a way beneficial to the Jewish population. When the budget for his portfolio was eliminated in 1924, he resigned as minister in protest. After the government restricted the activity of the National Council of the Jews in Lithuania that same autumn, and the Seimas took up debate on a new “Law on the Jewish Communities”, which in practical terms meant the abolition of the *kehilot*, Rosenbaum resigned from the Seimas and decided to leave Lithuania.²⁷

Intermediary between Worlds in Tel Aviv

In the eyes of Rosenbaum’s colleagues, it was logical that he would immigrate to *Eretz Israel*. On 19 November 1924, the Jewish community and Lithuanian émigrés gave Rosenbaum a warm reception in Tel Aviv. Although the Lithuanian government had deeply disappointed him, and although he doubted that Jews in Lithuania would ever enjoy cultural autonomy, he continued to impress those around him with his unshakeable optimism: “One should not think that the Jews in Lithuania are without hope. They are organised, hardened in battle, and will survive difficult, perilous times. Nobody doubts anymore that united in strength, even when the future is not easy, they will help build a free Jewish homeland.”²⁸

²³ “Di fir kashes”, *Yidishe Shtime*, 3 December 1919.

²⁴ “Steigiamojo Seimo narių sąrašas”, *Lietuva*, 15 May 1920; “Steigiamojo Seimo narių sąrašas”, *Vyriausybės žinios*, 30 May 1923.

²⁵ See, for example, the 29th Session, 21 July 1920; the 41st Session, 15 September 1920; the 60th Session 4 February 1921; the 180th Session 8 March 1922, etc., in *Steigiamojo Seimo Darbai* (Kaunas 1920–1922), as well as the 2nd Session, 8 June 1923 and the 9th Session, 30 June 1923, in *II Seimo Stenogramos* (Kaunas 1924).

²⁶ “Baym nayem yidishn minister”, *Yidishe Shtime*, 2 July 1923.

²⁷ Arkadijas Bliuminas, *Žydų frakcija Lietuvos Seimuose 1920–1927 m.* (Vilnius 2003), p. 35.

²⁸ “Dr. Sh. Roznboym in Eretz Israel”, *Yidishe Shtime*, 7 December 1924.

Immediately upon arriving in Israel, Rosenbaum began working for the supreme Jewish peace tribunal, but only for a short period. He remained active both within society and the Zionist movement and co-founded the Tel Aviv School of Law and Economics.

After emigration, Rosenbaum maintained his links to Lithuania. On 17 February 1927, Lithuanian President Antanas Smetona appointed him Lithuanian Honorary Consul in Palestine, and on 1 July 1931, he became acting Lithuanian General Consul. Rosenbaum was the first consul of independent Lithuania in Tel Aviv and the first Jew to hold such a high rank in the Lithuanian diplomatic service.²⁹ As Lithuania's representative, he followed political instructions from the Foreign Ministry in Kaunas, including an order not to establish diplomatic contacts with Poland. New arrivals from Lithuania, said Rosenbaum, "should not allow their bond to Palestine affect their loyalty to Lithuania".³⁰

Though Rosenbaum spent the greater part of his life in Jewish Lithuania, his international work in bringing together the Jewish communities of Eastern and Western Europe went far beyond the Baltic states and Russia. Rosenbaum dedicated his whole life to spreading and realising Zionist ideas and campaigned tirelessly for Jewish civil rights and Jewish participation in the political process wherever they lived. His example shows that Jewish and European cultures are compatible, and that Jews in the diaspora must not necessarily decide in favour of one or the other. Rosenbaum shared traditional Jewish ideals and values as well as modern European ones. He encountered foreign cultures and convictions with esprit and developed his own worldview.³¹

Shimshon Rosenbaum died in Tel Aviv in 1934 at the age of 75. The year 2009 will mark the 150th anniversary of his birth and the 75th anniversary of his death. He deserves respect and recognition not only for his historical merits as a leading Zionist and Lithuanian Jew, but also for his efforts as a Lithuanian politician during the interwar period and as a intermediary between different cultures, peoples, and countries.

Translated by Mark Belcher, Berlin

²⁹ LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 344, pp. 4, 6, and 55, Susirašinėjimas dėl S. Rozenbaumo paskyrimo garbės generaliniu konsulu Palestinoje, raportai apie įvykius Tel Avive ir Jeruzalėje, 13.1.1927–10.7.1931.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–39 V.

³¹ "Rozenboym" *Yidishe Shtime*, 20 November 1924.

Manfred Sapper

Overcoming War

Ivan Bloch: Entrepreneur, Publicist, Pacifist

Jan Bloch is a classic example of an upwardly-mobile, 19th century Jew. Bloch worked his way up from humble East European Jewish origins in central Poland to become one of the Russian Empire's leading entrepreneurs. He financed railroad lines for the state during Russia's era of "borrowed imperialism". However, Bloch's initiatives to overcome war represent his greatest service. He lent impetus to the Hague Peace Conference. In his standard work "The Future of War", he predicted total annihilation through industrialisation of war and revolution in Russia. He called for a departure from Clausewitz and advocated arms control as well as an international court of justice. This book deserves its place as a classic work of historical peace research.

Ivan Bliokh? Never heard of him? Never mind. You probably don't have a copy of the Brezhnev-era *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* at home. It is ideologically short and sweet about this Bliokh: "bourgeois economist, statistician, financier and son of a Polish factory owner".¹ Perhaps the German version of his name, Johann von Bloch, means something to you? Still doesn't ring a bell? This is no shock, for you are in the best of company: The paperback version of the *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia* has to take a pass. The Swiss composer Ernest Bloch, who found fame in the United States, is there, as is of course Ernst, the philosopher of hope, but Johann? No. This is not a one-off. The *Staatslexikon*, a bastion of Catholic erudition, has much to say about Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian chancellor who unified Germany, and something on Theodor Blank, the Catholic social policy expert and first defence minister of the Federal Republic of Germany. But it draws a blank on Bloch.

And so it goes, wherever one looks: If one turns to encyclopaedias from France and Italy, two of the founding states of European integration after the Second World War, perhaps the *Encyclopédie Française* or the *Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico Utet*, the results are no different. Even that most noble of European encyclopaedias of the pre-Wikipedia age, good old *Britannica*, is no exception. No John Bloch at all.² If one

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¹ *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 3, (Moscow 1970), Column 1,254–1,255.

² The following reference works were consulted for this overview: *dtv-Lexikon* (Munich 1997); *Staatslexikon* (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna 1995); *Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico Utet* (Turin 1985); *Encyclopédie Française* (Paris 1972); *New Encyclopedia Britannica* (London ¹⁵1997).

takes these English, German, Italian, and French repositories of knowledge as representative of Western Europe, the chances of Bliokh, or Bloch, being embedded in Europe's memory do not look good. Is this an expression of the difference between "old" and "new" Europe? Is this a reflection of the Cold War division of the continent? Or does this phenomenon have deeper causes?

Bloch's scant presence in present-day European historical memory would not have been expected in his lifetime. On the contrary, everything pointed to him being mentioned in the same breath as Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919) and Alfred Nobel (1833–1896). All three were children of the Industrial Revolution. During the 19th century boom, they made their fortunes in steel, coal, and chemistry and became world famous businessmen and benefactors. They all seem to have been especially committed to peace. The Nobel Peace Prize is the most prestigious among the awards presented every year in Stockholm. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, drawing on its limitless resources, runs projects for the good of peace and education around the world.

All of this makes the non-peaceful background of these benefactors one of the great ironies of history. The chemist Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, which provided the basis of his wealth, as well as nitro-glycerine and the explosive Ballistit, helped make possible the mass destruction of 20th-century warfare. The steel tycoon Carnegie showed a toughness unmitigated by any kind of morals or sense of fairness when his own interests were at stake.³ Whereas the Swede and the born Scot are now well established in collective memory and are almost household names throughout Europe and the rest of the world, Ivan Bliokh, also known as Ivan Bloch, is barely to be found. Bloch is at risk of dying for good, in the Jewish understanding of the word. As the Talmud says, a person is only truly dead when the memory of him has also passed away.

Not to Be Pigeonholed

It is of course no coincidence that the lexica are silent, and that Bloch is in danger of vanishing from Europe's collective memory. If encyclopaedias and lexica impart the consolidated knowledge of an epoch at their time of publication, then this is a lesson on the gaps in European memory. The collective memory of Europeans does not take notice of backward or cumbersome phenomena from Eastern Europe or does so only in exceptional cases.

Bloch was definitely a man who could not be pigeonholed. Europe knew him by many names: in Polish as Jan Bloch, in Russian as Ivan Stanislavovich Bliokh, in French as Jean de Bloch. In the Netherlands and Germany, he was known as John Bloch or Johann von Bloch.⁴ He was a successful entrepreneur and an exceptionally

³ On Carnegie und Nobel, see Peter Krass, *Carnegie* (Hoboken, NJ, 2002); Joseph Frazier, ed., *The Andrew Carnegie Reader* (Pittsburg 1992); Andrew Carnegie, *Geschichte meines Lebens. Vom schottischen Webersohn zum amerikanischen Industriellen, 1835–1919* (Zürich 1993); Kenne Fant, *Alfred Nobel: Idealist zwischen Wissenschaft und Wirtschaft. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main 1997); Fritz Vögtle, *Alfred Nobel. Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek 1983). On the history of the Nobel Peace Prize see Giuliano Procacci, *Premi Nobel per la pace e guerre mondiali* (Milan 1989).

⁴ Although most publications on Bloch use his Russian name Ivan Bliokh, and although he was a subject of the Russian Empire, the Polish and German versions of his name will be used here.

gifted autodidact who never completed an ordinary degree, but mastered French, English, and German alongside Polish and Russian. He concerned himself with national economic problems as well as the living conditions of the Jewish population within the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement. A tireless peace activist, he was the intellectual father of the 1899 International Peace Conference at The Hague. Already during his lifetime, he could not be understood or classified by any standard of measure involving dogma. He transcended every category: He was too much of a pacifist for the militaries, too well versed in military technology for the pacifists, too conservative for the left, and too liberal for the reactionaries.



Ivan Bloch (1836–1902)

He was too Russian for the Polish nationalists, who would have gladly incorporated him into their campaign for Polish independence. To the Russian Communists, even after the successful October Revolution, Bloch was no more than an “element” of the bourgeoisie, the class now historically condemned to die out. And for antisemites in every country, he was and remained above all a Jew. Neither his conversion to Christianity, his willingness to assimilate, his enormous productivity, nor least of all the cosmopolitan horizons of his thought and actions could do anything to change this. The Europe that came after him found it difficult to accept him into its collective memory. To this day, there is no critical biography of Ivan Bliokh that does justice to the depth of his personality and the scope of his activity and at the same time meets academic standards.⁵

The Doer

Bloch was born on 24 August 1836, the seventh of nine children, to a Jewish family in the Polish town of Radom, which had been under Russian rule since the end of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. His parents were poor. His father worked as a wool dyer. Since the 1830 Polish November Uprising and the ensuing customs restrictions, business had been miserable. As a 14-year-old boy, Jan was sent to Warsaw, where he became an apprentice in Szymon Toeplitz’s bank. Under his influence, Jan converted to Calvinism in 1851 at age 15. Five years later, on the occasion of his marriage, Bloch converted again, this time to Catholicism. The conversion was an example of the readiness of ambitious Jews in those days to break with their own religion and tradition, if it seemed likely to improve their social situation. In the years that followed, Bloch advanced from errand boy to banker. He moved to the Russian capital, St. Petersburg, in 1856 and stayed there till 1864.

⁵ This also goes for two authors who have done pioneering work. Peter van Dungen takes the credit for rescuing Johann von Bloch from oblivion. However, his bibliography of Bloch’s works, which includes an introductory essay, omits the Russian and Polish publications – possibly due to the language barrier and difficulties in accessing the material at that time, see Peter van Dungen, *A Bibliography of the Pacifist Writings of Jean de Bloch* (London 1977); idem, “Een interessant probleem – Jean de Bloch en de eerste Haagse Vredesconferentie”, *Transaktie*, 3 (1981), pp. 291–335. The Polish economic historian Ryszard Kolodziejczyk characterised his approach to Bloch’s life and work as a “sketch”. Here, Bloch’s rise from apprentice to “railway baron” is in the foreground, see Ryszard Kolodziejczyk, *Jan Bloch (1836–1902) Szkic do portretu “Krola polskich kolei”* (Warsaw 1983) as well as idem, “Jan Bloch (1836–1902), Pazifist und Verfasser des ‘Zukunftskrieges’”, in Jacques Bariéty, Antoine Fleury, eds., *Mouvements et initiatives de paix dans la politique internationale: 1867–1928* (Bern 1987), pp. 135–152. Russian historiography has also recently rediscovered Bloch, see Tatiana Pavlova, “Sto let rossiiskogo patsifizma”, unpublished manuscript, (Moscow 1999); R.M. Iliukhina, D. Svizhkov, “Rossiiskii patsifizm i zapadnoe mirotvorchestvo v nachale XX. v. (stanovlenie i deiatel’nost’ rossiiskikh obshchestv mira)”, in Tatiana Pavlova, ed., *Dolgi put’ rossiiskogo pacifizma. Ideal mezhdunarodnogo i vnutrennogo mira v religiozno-filosofskoi i obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli Rossii* (Moscow 1997), pp. 179–201; P. van den Dungen [= Dungen], “I. Bliokh i Ia. Novikov – rossiiskie mirotvortsy na rubezhe stoletii”, in *ibid.*, pp. 202–214. Additional biographical sketches have been published in Poland: Andrzej Werner, “Jan Bloch. Niedoceniany działacz i myśliciel”, *Przegląd Wschodni*, 4 (1999), pp. 793–800; Elżbieta Małecka, *Jan Bloch: niezwykły Warszawiak. Bankier, magnat kolejowy, działacz i myśliciel* (Warsaw 2002).

These were the years of “borrowed imperialism”, to use Dietrich Geyer’s phrase. After the military debacle of the Crimean War (1853–1856), Russia took out huge loans in Western Europe as part of a drive to catch up in industrialisation and modernisation. Railway construction was an area of industrialisation that was also useful for the military. The government planned the lines, built selected projects with its own resources, issued special loans for railway construction, and sought to acquire private investors. Jan Bloch participated in the construction of the St. Petersburg–Warsaw line. Due to the political unrest in the former Kingdom of Poland, this line was also of strategic military importance for the government in St. Petersburg.

At first, Bloch was a supplier of construction materials. In the last stage of construction, Bloch paid for the building of all of the train stations between St. Petersburg and Warsaw. The line went into service at the end of 1862. He built further connections, for example, to Łódź, and made a fortune from them. In Warsaw, he founded his own banking house and was the main shareholder in the Southwest Railway Company, which operated the Brest–Kiev and Brest–Odessa lines in addition to building additional railroads.

Bloch was now considered one of the most successful “railway barons” of his day. At the same time, he was looking for ways to “diversify his business portfolio”, as we would say today. He invested capital in the sugar, timber, and paper industries and bought up estates and shares in public companies. In the second half of the 1870s, he reached the zenith of his career. He was co-founder of a merchant bank, sat on the board of directors of the Bank of Poland, and was chairman of the Trade Association and president of the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

At this point, he began a second career as a scientific publicist. In the context of numerous, extended journeys abroad, including to the Humboldt University in Berlin, he at first dealt extensively with problems of national economy. His productivity in this area was enormous and compared favourably with his indefatigability as an entrepreneur: His first work, *Russkie zheleznie dorogi* [Russian railways], appeared in 1875. This was followed by a five-volume statistical investigation of how the railway influenced Russia’s national economic development. These works were in turn joined by studies on Russia’s finances in the 19th century, the factory industry in Poland, and agricultural credit policy.⁶ All of these works used the findings of a bureau of statistics that he himself had founded.

Two of his later works brought him into a crossfire of criticism: The first dealt with the situation of the Jews, the second with the future of warfare. Responding to an outbreak of pogroms in the southwest part of the Pale of Settlement and the antisemitic stereotypes of “Jewish exploitation” used to justify them, Bloch turned his attention to the economic activities of the Jews. He presented a memorandum to the Russian government in the 1880s, in which he examined the national economic effects of land leasing on the Jews.⁷ He managed to show that Jewish economic activity made an important

⁶ Ivan S. Bliokh, *Russkie zheleznie dorogi otositel’no dokhodov i raskhodov ekspluatatsii, stoimosti provoza i dvizheniia gruzov* (St. Petersburg 1875); idem, *Vliianie zheleznykh dorog na ekonomicheskoe sostoianie Rossii*, 1–5 (St. Petersburg 1878); idem, *Finansy Rossii XIX veka*, 1–4 (St. Petersburg 1882); idem, *Melioratsionnyi kredit i sostoianie sel’skogo choziaistva v Rossii i inostrannykh gosudarstvakh* (St. Petersburg 1890).

⁷ “Ob arendovanii evreiami zemli”, unpublished memorandum, (1885).

contribution to the national economy. Later, Bloch used his direct access to Alexander III to stop the Russian government from extending to the Kingdom of Poland legislation that was to restrict the economic activity of the Jews living there.

As a thinker committed to the Enlightenment, Bloch was convinced that prejudices could be undermined by empirical facts, and that state antisemitism could be overcome in this way. In 1891, he completed a multi-volume systematic, comparative investigation into economic performance and wealth.⁸ This also showed that economic productivity was higher in the Pale of Settlement than in the Russian interior. Because of his work on behalf of Jewish interests, Bloch became a target for antisemitic reactionary groups. A fire at the printing press destroyed almost the entire print run of this latter work. The cause of the fire was never explained. The findings, however, were published and disseminated after Bloch's death in a summary by A.P. Subbotin entitled *Evreiskii vopros v ego pravil'nom osveshchenii* [The Jewish question in the right light].⁹

The Future of War

Bloch attracted international attention only with his magnum opus, which for a time established his reputation as one of the most influential pacifists of Europe. It was the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) that stirred Bloch's interest in military affairs. During the conflict, he had been in charge of railway transport and had organised provisions for the troops. This experience left him with the impression that the military did not understand even the most basic consequences of industrialisation on warfare. This led to a long-term preoccupation with military and technical issues. At first, he merely wanted to solve the problems of logistics and infrastructure encountered in transporting troops. In the course of this work, Jan Bloch – who the State Council ennobled as Johann von Bloch in 1883 for his services to railway construction – became a committed pacifist. Bloch wrote many smaller studies during this period, but the end result of this preoccupation with the technological changes in warfare, or in modern parlance the arms dynamic, was a exhaustive study of war: *Budushchaia voina v tekhnicheskoi, ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi otnosheniakh* (The future of war from technical, economical, and political points of view). The Russian original was published in St. Petersburg in 1898, with the German version appearing a year later at the renowned Berlin publishing house Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, which specialised in political science and legal affairs. It was simultaneously published in French.¹⁰

Bloch's book is not a moral plea in the spirit of Bertha von Suttner's 1888 novel *Lay Down Your Arms*.¹¹ It also has none of the form, argument, language, or style of Leo

⁸ Ivan S. Bliokh, *Sravnienie material'nogo i npravstvennogo blagosostoianiia gubernii zapadnykh, velikorossiiskikh i vostochnykh* (St. Petersburg 1891).

⁹ A.P. Subbotin, *Evreiskii vopros v ego pravil'nom osveshchenii* [V sviazi s trudami I.S. Bliokha] (St. Petersburg 1903).

¹⁰ Ivan S. Bliokh, *Budushchaia voina v tekhnicheskoi, ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi otnosheniakh*, 1–5 (St. Petersburg 1898). Shortly thereafter, Bloch published the conclusion: idem, *Obshchie vyvody* (St. Petersburg 1898); Johann von Bloch, *Der Krieg. Der zukünftige Krieg in seiner technischen, volkswirtschaftlichen und politischen, Bedeutung*, 1–6. (Berlin 1899); Jean de Bloch, *Évolution de la guerre et de la paix* (Paris 1899).

¹¹ Bertha von Suttner, *Die Waffen nieder!* (Vienna 1966).

Tolstoy's grandiose, religiously motivated, radical pacifist pamphlets against the state and war, which appeared in print at almost exactly the same time.¹² Bloch's study is a dry but methodologically exemplary masterpiece of empirical social research. The six-volume work includes a wealth of illustrations, tables, foldout maps, and sketches of all kinds. It is no exaggeration to count the book among the classics of peace and conflict research – except that it remains an undiscovered “classic”. This work stands alongside Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*, and Quincy Wright's unsurpassed work of empiricism *A Study of War*.¹³

Over 3,474 pages, Bloch describes how – in light of higher arms levels and aggregate destructive power – the character of war had totally changed and could no longer be waged between modern industrialised countries. Ultimately, this meant dismissing Clausewitz: “War as the continuation of politics by other means” had become obsolete, according to Bloch, because it could no longer be decided on the battlefield. Otherwise, the European powers would face a battle of materiel, which would make such demands on financial and human resources that no country could sustain it. Finally, he presaged the collapse of national economies – first and foremost Russia's. What's more: Wherever the civilian population was drawn into the war and soldiers returned home demoralised by the enormous losses and senseless battles of materiel, internal political consequences would become unavoidable. War would foster subversive, revolutionary movements. To prevent all of this, Bloch advocated preventative measures so that conflicts between countries could be resolved peacefully. In particular, he championed an international forum for arms control and an international court of justice.

Bloch was the first to develop a systematic concept of peace as a mechanism for preventing revolution. This made him suspect among members of the Socialist International, who otherwise welcomed the work's critical stance towards the military. Bloch's fundamental criticism of the arms race and warfare was firmly rejected in military circles. The Russian military press ignored the book and denounced its author as a parvenu and converted Jew. It was no different for him than it had been for his fellow campaigner Bertha von Sutter in the Habsburg Empire or Alfred Fried in the German Empire. However, he was successful in one respect: After the book was published, Bloch put all his boundless energy into promoting his ideas. His book, pamphlets, and lectures caused a sensation all over Europe.

In Russia, he succeeded in attracting the tsar's attention. Bloch's influence on the Russian government's decision to request a conference on disarmament, or at least on arms limits, is unquestioned.¹⁴ On the initiative of Tsar Nicholas II, the European powers met for the first International Peace Conference at The Hague from May to July 1899.¹⁵

¹² Lev N. Tolstoj, *Rede gegen den Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, Peter Urban, ed. and trans. (Frankfurt am Main 1963).

¹³ Immanuel Kant, „Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf“, in Wilhelm Weischedel, ed. Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Werke*, 11, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik* 1 (Frankfurt am Main 1993), pp. 191–251; Werner Hahlweg, ed. Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, (Bonn 1980); Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago 1942).

¹⁴ Peter van Dungen, *The Making of Peace: Jean de Bloch and the First Hague Peace Conference* [= Occasional Paper 12, Center for the Study of Armament and Disarmament, California State University] (Los Angeles 1983).

¹⁵ Jost Dülffer, *Regeln gegen den Krieg? Die Haager Friedenskonferenzen von 1899 und 1907 in der internationalen Politik* (Berlin 1981); Jost Dülffer, “Internationales System, Friedensgefährdung und Kriegsvermeidung: Das Beispiel der Haager Friedenskonferenzen 1899 und

Even though the historian Theodor Mommsen turned up his nose at the opening of the conference and derided it as a “misprint in world history”, it was not without consequences. However, the efforts at disarmament failed due to the European powers’ ambitions, but the conference still had some success in the field of peaceful conflict resolution. The first international institution for conflict resolution was created in the form of Permanent Court of Arbitration, which remains based in The Hague. Long before the invention of non-governmental organisations, which are now a part of the baggage-train at Group of Eight summits and United Nations conferences, Bloch and those who shared his views acted as a pressure group on the periphery of the Hague conference. With Bertha von Suttner and others, he contributed to making sure that the closing convention included the section “Pacific Settlement of International Disputes”. The ideas for the appointment and intervention of investigative committees had an effect that stretches from The Hague Convention to the present.¹⁶

The fact that Bloch’s main thesis – the unfeasibility of war – was proved wrong in August 1914 did not change any of this either. His basic theories on the character of industrialised mass warfare in the 20th century were remarkably precise. His book on the future of war was a nightmarishly accurate prediction of the mass deaths in the trenches and on the battlefields of the First World War.¹⁷ And this enlightened conservative was also spot on in establishing a link between war and social revolution. With hindsight, it reads like a script for the Russian Revolution, which would have been unimaginable without the First World War as midwife.

It was the substance of his book on the future of war, as well as his life’s work, which prompted the Cracow Academy of Sciences to nominate Johann von Bloch for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901. In the meantime, he had been preparing a foundation to set up a peace museum in Lucerne. He did not live to see its opening, and due to a lack of financial and organisational resources, it was not a long-term success.¹⁸

Nor did the Nobel Prize Commission concern itself with the suggestion from Cracow. The successful entrepreneur, publicist, and pacifist, who had worked his way up from modest Jewish-Polish beginnings in Radom, died on 7 January 1902. People like him are slipping into oblivion in Europe. It would do European memory some good to remember the more exceptional achievements and people from the eastern half of the continent. Johann von Bloch deserves a place in Europe’s collective memory.

Translated by Mark Belcher, Berlin

1907”, in Reiner Steinweg ed., *Lehren aus der Geschichte? Historische Friedensforschung* [= Friedensanalysen 23] (Frankfurt am Main 1990), pp. 95–116; Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York 1991).

¹⁶ Bertha von Suttner, *Die Haager Friedenskonferenz. Tagebuchblätter* (Dresden and Leipzig 1901).

¹⁷ Thérèse Delpech, “La ‘guerre impossible’ selon Ivan Bloch”, *Politique étrangère*, 3 (2001), pp. 705–712; Gwyn Prins, Hylke Tromp eds., *The Future of War* (The Hague 2000).

¹⁸ Peter van Dungen, “The International Museum of War and Peace at Lucerne”, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 31 (1981), pp. 185–202.

Anna Lipphardt

Forgotten Memory

The Jews of Vilne in the Diaspora

The way East European Jews are remembered is subject to increasing examination, but very little is known about how East European Jews remember. Most Holocaust survivors did not return to their hometowns and villages, but settled around the world. Jewish hometown associations, or *landsmanshafn*, kept alive the memory of the places they had left behind, and the Holocaust. This is seen in the case of the Jews of Vilnius, or Vilne as it is called in Yiddish. The way they view the past differs fundamentally from the way Jews still living in Vilnius see it. This contains the potential for conflict over cultural heritage and the interpretation of history, as evidenced in the dispute over materials from the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

The collapse of Communism in 1989 was accompanied by a rediscovery of the Jewish past and an increase in commemorative events dedicated to the Holocaust. Both phenomena are undoubtedly of crucial importance to the pluralistic, historically conceived, contemporary self-perception of the East European societies in whose midst Nazis carried out the genocide of the Jews. Some members of these societies even participated in this genocide. Today, Eastern European has to come to terms with the void left behind by the Holocaust.

The politics of remembrance and the scholarship on memory usually take a national point of view. Far less attention is paid to those directly affected: the Holocaust survivors, their families, and the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. The way others remember the East European Jews is subject to increasing examination, but very little is known about how East European Jews remember. Although Jewish remembrance in Eastern Europe is centred around generally recognised dates and sites of commemoration, the fixation on common, external points of reference fails to notice significant differences in the treatment of the past. For example, Jewish memorial activities between 1944 and 1989 took place for the most part outside Eastern Europe – not just because of the repressive attitude of Communist regimes towards the Holocaust, but because most of the East European Jews who survived the Holocaust left their hometowns and villages soon after the Second World War. The surviving community of Jews from Vilnius, or Vilne – as the city is called in Yiddish and will be called here in reference to the prewar Jewish community and its members – offers an example of the consequences that mass emigration was to have on Jewish memory of Eastern Europe. But first, the differences between commemoration, remembrance, and mourning must be illuminated, as they are of fundamental importance to how the Holocaust is treated.

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Commemoration, Remembrance, Mourning

The *memorial turn* that has embraced the East Central- and East European public over the past two decades has generated a variety of concepts and terms and, as a result, a certain amount of confusion over terminology as well. At the moment, there are almost as many different uses of the terms “commemoration”, “collective memory”, “remembrance”, or “places of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*) as there are authors writing about these topics. Frequently, these terms are used as synonyms for one another. In order to provide some orientation within this semantic jungle, I suggest a differentiation based on particular meanings of the German words *gedenken* (to commemorate) and *erinnern* (to remember). *Gedenken* contains the root *denken* (to think) and therefore entails a deliberate act of calling to memory or marking by ceremony. It requires no direct connection between the commemorator and the events or those affected by them and can function at a great social and temporal distance from what is being commemorated. *Gedenken* does not demand direct involvement in the past, but merely a certain idea and fundamental knowledge of this past. *Erinnern*, by contrast, should be thought of in this context as the act of recalling a personal experience. Strictly speaking, one remembers something in which one was involved, with which one has come into contact.

Unlike *gedenken*, *erinnern* frequently cannot be controlled, especially when it is associated with trauma – as is remembrance of the Holocaust. Many survivors still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, an affliction characterised by the inability to curb constantly recurring, distressing memories:

What was previously experienced runs almost incessantly through the heads of many who are traumatised.... They cannot “switch off” the thoughts, rebukes, and self-accusations. Memories force themselves upon them again and again. Shripping memories tend to come back in agonising detail and vividness, especially just before sleep.... But some traumatised people go through their extreme experiences not just in memories or dreams. It can happen that they suddenly behave or feel as if they are going through the traumatic experience again (flashback). The memory symptoms are connected with strong emotions and feelings, which repeatedly send the person affected into a psychological shock.... To defend themselves from the anxieties caused by memory symptoms, those affected often try, consciously and unconsciously, to push away and avoid thoughts and situations that trigger memories of what was experienced.¹

In Eastern Europe, where the Holocaust was taboo for more than half a century, and where specialised psychological care remains scarce, survivors find it especially difficult to deal with their memories. In addition, the survivors’ memories of the Holocaust are always associated with the grief felt for their murdered relatives, friends, and

¹ Matthias Schützwohl, “Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung. Die Folgen extrem belastender Ereignisse”, Berufsverband Deutscher Psychologinnen und Psychologen e.V., ed., *Informationsreihe Psychische Erkrankungen und ihre Behandlung* (Bonn ³1997), pp. 2–3.

almost all of their social and cultural peers. Mourning, as Micha Brumlik has aptly put it, is to be understood as “an emotion of closeness” (*Nahemotion*) related to “familiar people or those perceived as familiar”.² Often, survivors do not know where and when the people who were close to them died and therefore lack a location or date to which they can symbolically attach their mourning.

The commemoration days and places that have been nationally recognised since 1989 serve as a substitute. Even if they always mean for survivors a painful confrontation with their grief and memories they would rather forget, such days and places can still fulfil an important function in working through and coping with traumas and can contribute to stabilising emotions. For one, they offer a concrete focal point where survivors can care for their dead loved ones; for another, this kind of clearly defined framework, together with communal rituals of mourning, can bring the individual pain survivors feel under some control. The attention of the immediate environment is also enormously important for the processes of grieving and healing, as is public acknowledgement. Together they break the monstrous silence that follows in the wake of genocide.³

With this in mind, the public acknowledgement that accompanies official, usually national commemoration days should be viewed as very positive. At the same time, however, the enormous political significance attached to such events in Eastern Europe encroaches on the space left for survivors to grieve and to remember. With their accession to the European Union, most East Central European countries have adopted Western conventions of commemoration. In many countries, the day commemorating the Holocaust is observed by an act of state, the protocol of which is determined by state authorities such as the office of the head of state, the president of the parliament, or in some cases the protocol department of the foreign ministry.

Attention at these occasions falls on the individual speakers’ assertions that it is very important for the country and for Europe as a whole never to allow the Holocaust to be forgotten, so that nothing similar can happen again. The formulaic way in which these pleas are uttered may well meet international standards and the general requirements of reverence. However, they all too often neglect the feelings and needs of the survivors, their families, and the Jewish communities, all the more so as such statements are rarely ever followed by corresponding action in everyday politics.

² Micha Brumlik, “Trauerrituale und politische Kultur nach der Shoah in der Bundesrepublik”, in Hanno Loewy, ed., *Holocaust. Grenzen des Verstehens. Eine Debatte über die Besetzung der Geschichte* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1992), pp. 191–212, here p. 197.

³ Hans Keilson, “Sequentielle Traumatisierung bei Kindern durch ‘man-made-disaster’”, in Alexander Friedmann, et al., eds., *Überleben der Shoah – und danach. Spätfolgen der Verfolgung aus wissenschaftlicher Sicht* (Vienna 1999), pp. 109–126; Dori Laub, “Zeugnis ablegen oder Die Schwierigkeiten des Zuhörens”, in Ulrich Baer, ed., *Niemand zeugt für den Zeugen. Erinnerungskultur nach der Shoah* (Frankfurt am Main 2000), pp. 68–83; idem, “Die prokreative Vergangenheit: Das Fortleben historischer Traumatisierung”, in Harald Welzer, ed., *Das soziale Gedächtnis. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung* (Hamburg 2001), pp. 321–338.

Milieus and Places of Remembrance: Survivors from Vilnius

Those who seek to examine the Jewish past in Eastern Europe are today confronted by the tremendous void left by the Holocaust and preserved by the Communist regimes' repressive attitude towards the reconstruction of Jewish life after the war.⁴ Little attention has been given to the consequences of Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe in the immediate postwar period. Emigration meant that what was left of the Jewish community declined even more dramatically. The centre of East European Jewish life shifted overseas.

With the departure of these emigrants – who included the overwhelming majority of surviving Jewish leaders, cultural figures, educators, and intellectuals – Eastern Europe lost not only an enormous treasure trove of knowledge and valuable perspectives on its Jewish past. A large part of those Jewish cultural assets that had been saved from the Nazis was also transferred to the West, where it became the foundation for important research and documentation centres, such as the Hebrew University and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem or the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut) in New York.

The postwar history of Vilne's survivors is as a good example of this development. When the Red Army liberated Vilnius on 12 July 1944, it found 500 survivors remaining from the city's prewar community of 60,000 Jews.⁵ In the months that followed, several hundred Vilne Jews returned from labour camps or hideouts, from partisan units or the Soviet interior, to which they had been deported by the Soviets before the German invasion, or to which they had fled after the invasion. However, the overwhelming majority of the Jews who gathered in postwar Vilnius were originally from other parts of Lithuania or the Soviet Union. By the end of 1945, there were 10,000-12,000 Jews living in Vilnius.⁶

Immediately upon liberation, a group of Jewish intellectuals who had been in the Vilna ghetto and then with the Soviet partisans set about securing remnants of the Jewish past. For example, they started recording accounts of what the Jews had experienced during the German occupation.⁷ Their main activity, however, was to bring together the numerous Jewish archival materials, books, and works of art that had been hidden from the Germans.⁸ Although the Soviet authorities had approved the

⁴ The following arguments are based on my *dissertation Vilne, yidishlekh fartrakht... Kulturelle Erinnerung, Trauma, Migration. Die Vilne-Diaspora in New York, Israel und Vilnius nach dem Holocaust*, (University of Potsdam 2006).

⁵ Dov Levin, "July 1944 – The Crucial Month for the Remnants of Lithuanian Jewry", *Yad Vashem Studies*, 16 (1984), pp. 333–361, here p. 361; Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem 1980), pp. 27–28; A. Suzkewer, "Das Ghetto von Wilna", in Wassili Grossman, et al., eds., *Das Schwarzbuch. Der Genozid an den sowjetischen Juden* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1995), pp. 457–547, here p. 457.

⁶ Szmerke Kaczerginski, *Tsvishn hamer un serp. Tsu der geshikhte fun der likvidatsye fun der yidisher kultur in Sovetn-rusland* (Paris 1949), p. 84.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

⁸ The Vilna ghetto had to provide a unit of forced labourers – the *papir-brigade* – for Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, one of the Nazis' principle agencies of plunder, in order to "select" Jewish collections, i.e. to forward the valuable materials to Frankfurt am Main and Prague for Nazi institutions of Jewish research and to take the rest (a quota of 70 per

creation of a museum of Jewish art and culture, it soon became clear that the conditions for Jewish cultural activity would worsen under Stalin. With this in mind, museum employees began to organise the secret transfer of the valuable items to free countries.⁹

It is due to their great sense of historical awareness, the tradition of Jewish self-help and historiography from below, as well as the experience gained in the cultural resistance to Nazi occupation that these valuable repositories of culture and knowledge “emigrated” and could be made available to the public in the countries that received them.¹⁰ The Jewish museum in Vilnius, however, was closed in 1948, and what was left of its holdings was integrated into Lithuanian collections or confiscated by the Soviet censors.¹¹

In addition to the ever-present consequences of genocide and the restrictions placed on Jewish cultural life, everyday life was also increasingly subjected to political and social constraints. Many of the Jews in Vilnius soon recognised that the city had nothing more to offer them. With few exceptions, the surviving Jews of Vilne left the city between 1944 and 1947. This was made possible by the fact that, as former Polish citizens, they were permitted to leave for Poland under a repatriation treaty negotiated between Poland and the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic in September 1944. Departure was accompanied by a radical change of perspective, as evidenced by this quote from a 1948 article:

Our Yerushalayim deLita [Jerusalem of Lithuania] is no longer there... – Yes, Vilnius still exists, the geographical name is still there and will probably exist forever, but o u r Vilne is no longer there. Our Vilne is now homeless [*na-venad*].... Today, we can encounter a true Vilne face only abroad.¹²

Łódź, for a time after the Second World War the largest transit centre in Europe, was the first destination of the Vilne Jews. In April 1946, they founded the Association of Vilne Jews in Poland (*Farband fun Vilner Yidn in Poyln*), which set for itself four tasks: 1. the registration of survivors, maintenance of contacts with Vilne hometown associations, or *landsmanshaftn*, around the world, and the social support of Vilne Jews in Poland; 2. the commemoration of Jewish Vilne before and during the war; 3.

cent was set) to a paper mill. The story of the papir-brigade is depicted in David E. Fishman, *Embers Plucked from the Fire: The Rescue of Jewish Cultural Treasures* (New York 1996).

⁹ The immediate circumstances of this cultural transfer, which was illegal from the Soviet point of view, are not well documented, see Fishman, *Embers Plucked*; Kaczerginski, *Tsvishn hamer*, p. 88.

¹⁰ On the tradition of East European Jewish historiography from below, which was spurred originally by the 1881 pogroms, see Anke Hillbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus. Zur Geschichtskonstruktion Simon Dubnows* (Göttingen 2007), pp. 148–167; Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington 2007); Laura Jockusch, “‘Khurbn Forshung’: Jewish Historical Commissions in Europe, 1943-1949”, *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Institut*, 6 (2007), pp. 441–473.

¹¹ Fishman, *Embers Plucked*; Marek Web, “Tsu der geshikhte funem YIVO-arkhiv”, in Joshua Fishman, ed., *Lekoved fuftsik yor YIVO, 1925–1975*, Yovel-band XLVI (New York 1980), pp. 168–191.

¹² *Vilner opklang. Byuletin fun Farband fun Vilner yidn in Poyln (Umperyodishe oysgabe)*, 1 (January 1948), pp. 1–2. Emphasis as in the original.

Yiddish-speaking cultural activities; and 4. the search for German war criminals and the collection of evidence.¹³ The statutes of the association included a comprehensive programme of commemoration, which described in detail whom and what should be commemorated, and how this was to be institutionalised:

The memory of the 150,000 Jewish victims from the city and region of Vilne [is to be] perpetuated through the creation of heritage [*yerushe*] commissions with all of the Vilne *landsmanshaftn*, which will dedicate themselves to:

- the collection of all materials, documents, photographs, memoirs, articles, and books that tell about the centuries of Jewish life and creativity in Yerushalayim deLita;
- the collection, recording and copying of all documents, eyewitness accounts, diaries, letters, memoirs, drawings and photographs that are available among the Vilne survivors and address: life in the Vilna ghetto, Vilner in the concentration camps, in resistance groups, partisan formations, in the Red Army, the Polish Army and in allied armies; Vilne Jews on the Aryan side, in emigration (Soviet Union and other countries); non-Vilne Jews in the Vilna ghetto; Vilne non-Jews who rescued and hid Jews and Jewish children; non-Jewish citizens of Vilne who betrayed Jews or participated in their murder; Jewish traitors.

All of these collected materials are to be handed over to YIVO, the historical archive Yad Vashem in Erez-Israel or other Jewish academic institutions, with the aim that Vilne rooms will be established [there] – museum archives of Yerushalayim deLita.

The association will see to the establishment of a corresponding commemoration fund:

- to furnish and maintain the Vilne rooms;
- to provide scholarships and prizes for the most prolific collectors and the most important collections, the best research and studies on the 4-year martyrdom of Jewish Vilne and the centuries of history of constructive Jewish national life in Vilne in all its forms;
- for the publication of a memorial [*yizker*] album for the murdered Jews and their destroyed social institutions; for the publication of the [series] “Bleter vegn Vilne” [Pages about Vilne] and of periodicals, in which the most important materials, documents, memoirs and historical papers as well as “Vilne news” on the life and activities of the Vilner in their *landsmanshaftn* will be published around the world.¹⁴

¹³ “Farband fun yidn fun Vilne un umgegn. Oystsugn fun shtatut”, in Leyzer Ran and Leibl Korisky, eds., *Bleter vegn Vilne*, pp. 69–70; Archiv Bet Lohamei Hagetaot, file 2,980, *Shtatut, Ziomkostwo Żydów Wilnian w Polsce / Farband fun Vilner Yidn in Poyln, Lodz*, (June 1946).

¹⁴ “Farband fun yidn fun Vilne un umgegn”.

Map 1: The Murder of the Jews: Area of German Occupation and Selected Camps

Map 2: The Murder of Europe's Jews: Number of Victims

Map 3: Camps for Jewish Displaced Persons 1945-1957

Map 4: Jewish Periodicals in Europe

Map 5: Jewish Museums in Europe

Map 6: Jewish Studies in Europe



The Murder of the Jews

Area of German Occupation and Selected Camps

- "Greater German Reich" and annexed territories
- General Government
- occupied territory
- unallocated German-occupied territory
- Axis allies and co-belligerents
- greatest extent of Axis rule
- anti-Hitler coalition

- ### The Destruction of the Jews
- Main concentration camps
 - Selected ghettos
 - Killing centres

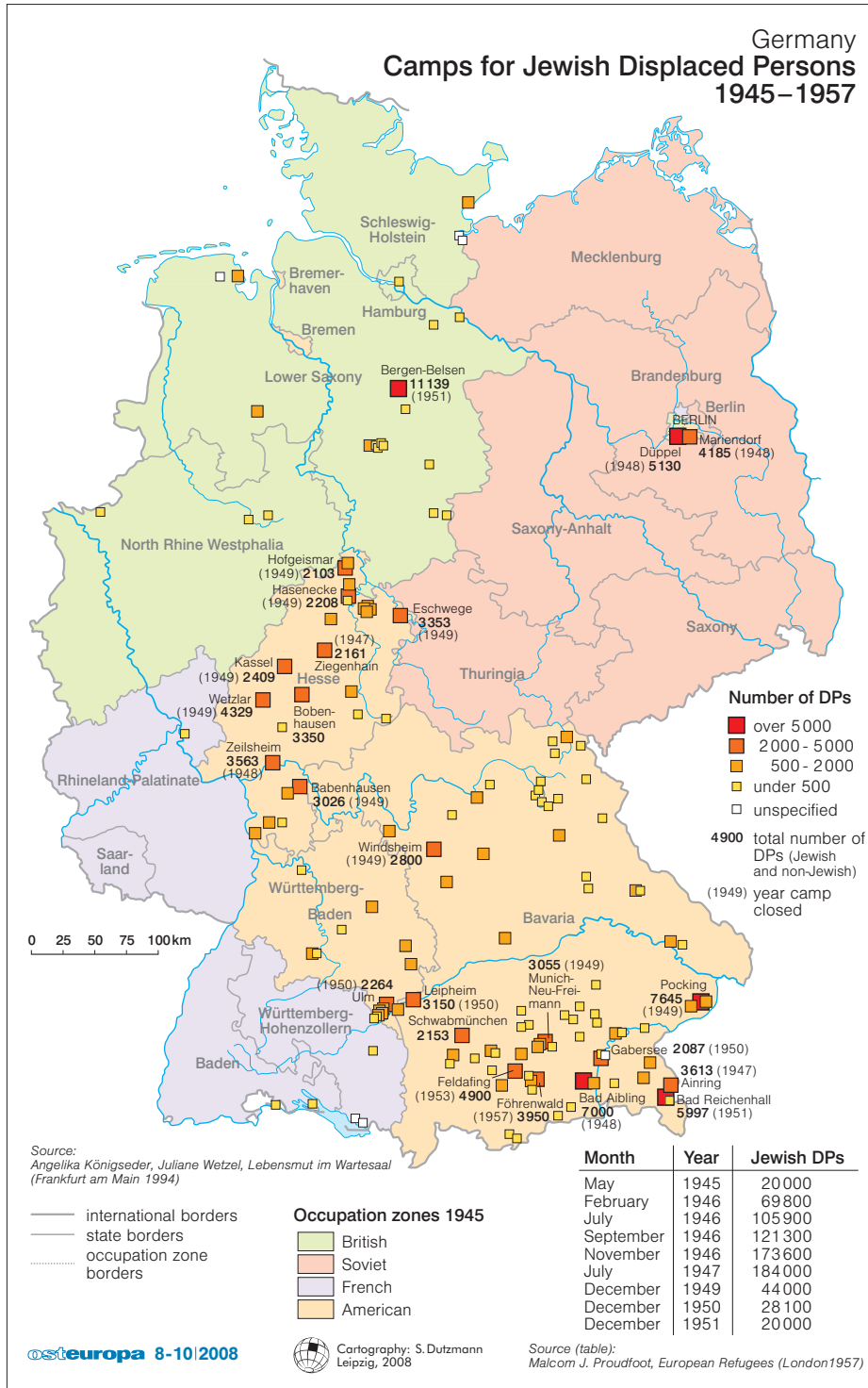
0 200 400 600 km

Source: Putzger. Historischer Weltatlas 2007

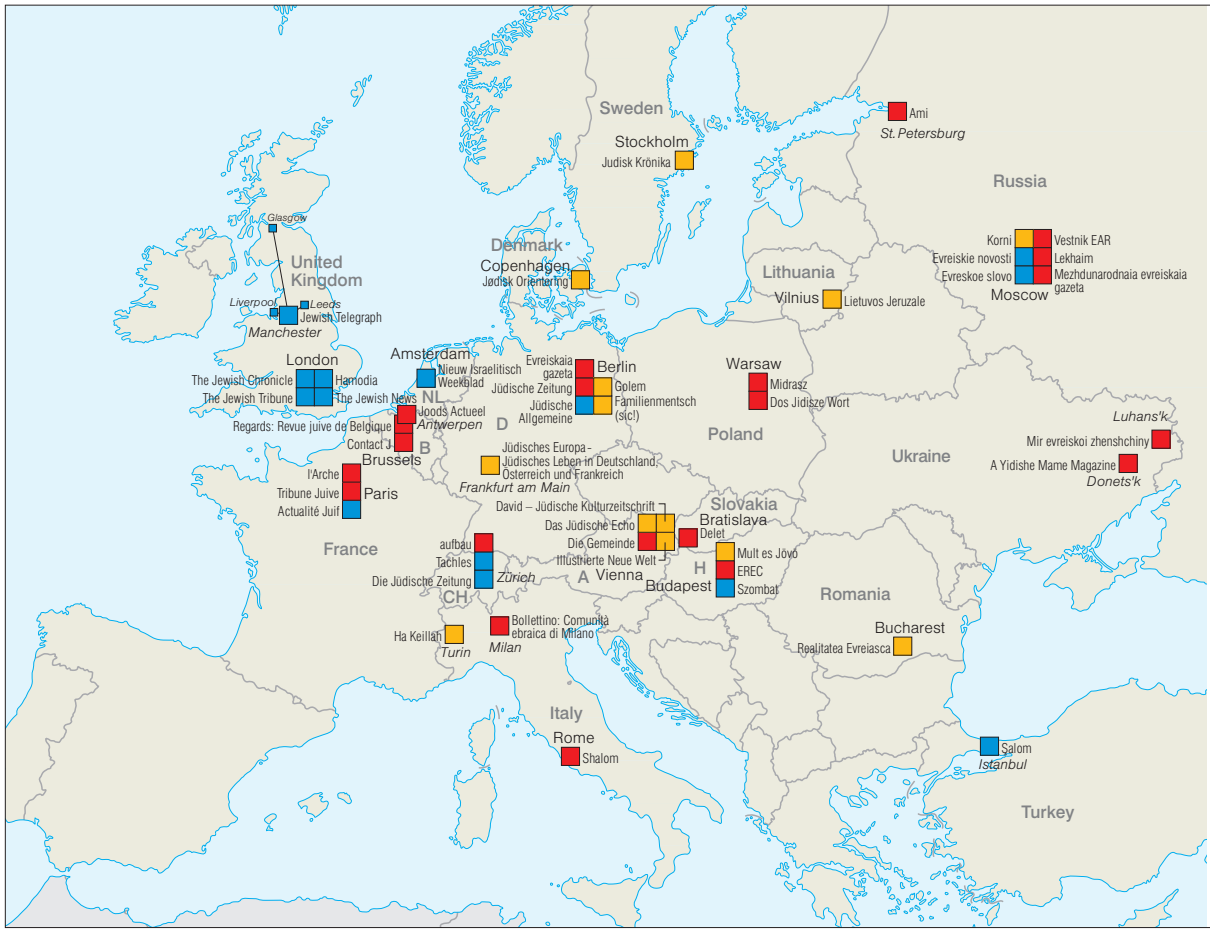
Cartography: S. Dutzmann
Leipzig, 2008

europa 8-10/2008

Germany Camps for Jewish Displaced Persons 1945–1957



Jewish Periodicals in Europe



- weekly
- biweekly or monthly
- 1-11 times per year

- main and regional edition

Abbreviations:

- A Austria
- B Belgium
- CH Switzerland
- D Germany
- NL Netherlands



Sources: European Jewish Congress
 haGalil.com
 in-house research

Cartography: S. Dutzmann
 Leipzig, 2008

Jewish Museums in Europe

■ Jewish Museum

Abbreviations:

Germany	Czech Republic
Au. Augsburg	Bo. Boskovice
Bo. Bopfinger-Oberdorf	Bf. Břeclav
Br. Braunschweig	Ho. Holešov
Bu. Buttenheim	Tr. Třebíč
Cr. Creglingen	
Do. Dorsten	
F. Frankfurt am Main	
Fr. Freudental	
Gö. Göppingen	
Lau. Laupheim	
M. Munich	
Sch. Schmittach	
Sp. Speyer	
St. Steinbach am Glan	
W. Wiesbaden	
Vei. Veitshöchheim	

Europe

A	Austria
B	Belgium
CH	Switzerland
CZ	Czech Republic
D	Germany
HR	Croatia
NL	Netherlands
SK	Slovakia




Sources: Association of European Jewish Museums,
11 September 2008
in-house research

Cartography: S. Dutzmann
Leipzig, 2008

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Jewish Studies in Europe

 institute or chair of Jewish Studies

Abbreviations:

Germany
 D Düsseldorf
 Du. Duisburg
 E Essen

Europe
 A Austria
 B Belgium
 CH Switzerland
 CZ Czech Republic
 D Germany
 NL Netherlands



Sources: www.jewish-studies.com
www.eajs.net

 Cartography: S. Dutzmann
 Leipzig, 2008





The Murder of Europe's Jews Number of Victims



Europe in 1937

— Europe's borders in May 1941

930-1000 number of Jews murdered based on 1937 borders

The figures here represent approximations based on documented numbers of victims. The real figures are in some cases higher. Any quantitative depiction of the Holocaust is extremely problematic due to incomplete documentation, shifting borders, refugee movements, and uncertain citizenship. For more on these issues, see Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich 1991).

¹ In the borders of June 1941, the number of murdered Jews is well over 2 million.

² In the borders of "Greater Hungary", i.e. incl. territories annexed from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, ca. 520,000 Jews were murdered.

³ This is a low-end estimate.

Sources:

Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimension des Völkermords* (Munich 1991)

Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas Gideon Botsch, Norbert Kampe, eds. *Die Wannsee-Konferenz und der Völkermord an den Europäischen Juden* (Berlin 2007)

Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944 (Hamburg 2002)

0 200 400 600 km



Cartography: S. Dutzmann
Leipzig, 2008

osteuropa 8-10/2008

None of this could be realised in Łódź. Much of what had already been started semi-legally in Vilnius and had then been formulated and systematised in the Łódź statutes was, however, set in motion here and realised – in part decades later – in Israel or New York.

On the basis of the central registry that the Łódź association compiled with the cooperation of Vilne *landsmanshafn* abroad, it was assumed in 1947 that approximately 3,500 Jews from Vilnius had survived the Holocaust, 43 per cent of them in the Soviet interior. Some two-thirds of them were 35 years old or younger at war's end.¹⁵ While the primary aim of former Vilne partisans and cultural figures was to get Vilne's cultural assets to safety and to keep communal remembrance alive, for the majority of the (mostly younger) survivors, the most important thing was not to remain mired in the traumatic past, but to shape their own present and future.

After the July 1946 pogrom in Kielce, Jews in Poland began to flee to the West en masse. Most of the Vilne Jews ended up in "displaced persons" camps on German territory. But unlike, for example, survivors from Kaunas¹⁶ the Jews of Vilne did not engage in any noteworthy cultural activity during their time in Germany, nor were they politically active in any significant way within the survivor community. The reasons for this include the late arrival of the Vilne Jews,¹⁷ the dispersal of the group over numerous DP camps in northern Hesse and southern Bavaria,¹⁸ and the fact that their main leaders and cultural figures – those responsible for the community's cohesion in Vilnius and Łódź – had gone to Paris instead of Germany meant that, during the DP period.

By the end of the 1940s, the majority of Vilne Jews had emigrated to Israel and the United States (approximately 1,200 people each). Others settled in Canada, Central and South America, South Africa, and Australia. A few remained in Vilnius or Poland.¹⁹ While Vilne *landsmanshafn* had existed in the United States and Palestine since before the Second World War, during the 1950s, the Vilne survivors set up new

¹⁵ Leyzer Ran, "Di sheyres-hapleyte fun Vilne un umgegnit. Bamerkungen tsu der ershter reshime", in Ran and Korisky, *Bleter vegn Vilne*, pp. 75–77. For the data, see the appendix "Reshime fun lebngelibene yidn fun Vilne un umgegnit" in *ibid.* The survivors from Vilne are listed on pp. 1–27, those from the surrounding area, pp. 28–36. The census period ran from May 1946 to September 1946. A supplementary list of names registered between September 1946 and June 1947 can be found on p. 37. Lists containing the names of survivors living in other countries are on pp. 38–41. In addition to the name, age, place of birth, and information on surviving family members, the lists include occupation, former address in Vilne, and location during the war. As a result, we today have a comprehensive overview of the social structure of the Vilne Jews in Poland between 1946 and 1947.

¹⁶ For more on this, see the contribution by Tamara Lewinsky, "Kultur in Transit. Osteuropäische-jüdische Displaced Persons", *Impulse für Europa. Tradition und Moderne der Juden Osteuropas* [= OSTEUROPA 8-10/2008], pp. 265–278.

¹⁷ Relatively few Vilne Jews were to be found among the Jewish DPs on German territory immediately after the war, as the Nazis had murdered the vast majority of them in 1941.

¹⁸ Archiv Bet Lohahei Hagetaot, file 2,899, Caitwajlike Reszime fun Wilner in Dajczland (1947).

¹⁹ These figures are based on the estimates of my interview partners, the statistics of several Vilne *landsmanshafn*, and the Meed Holocaust Survivor Registry at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington. After the second Soviet-Polish repatriation treaty, 1,000–2,000 more Vilne Jews who had been deported to the interior of Soviet Union in prior to the German invasion managed to immigrate to Israel via Poland in 1956–1957. At most, 5,000–5,500 Vilne Jews can be assumed to have survived the Holocaust.

ones in both places, as well as in all other countries where they settled. For decades, they engaged in communal memorial work, something that remained forbidden in Soviet Vilnius until 1990-1991. This resulted in several exhibitions, numerous publications, and countless events dedicated to the city's Jewish history.

In the United States, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, which had been founded in Vilne in 1925 and transferred to New York in 1940, became the main point of contact for survivors from Vilne. The first official commemoration (*haskore*) in memory of the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto in 1943 was held by a small group at YIVO on 22 September 1947. YIVO Director Max Weinreich opened the event with the following words: "Today's meeting should be like a gathering of children, meeting on the anniversary of the death [*yortsayt*] of their mother.... This evening, the closest family has come together."²⁰

Despite the mourning, it was also important to Weinreich to show continuity. He pointed out that YIVO was a "Vilne institution that has put down roots in New York and has remained a Vilne institution."²¹ Weinreich went on to say that the YIVO archive already contained more material on Vilne than those who had been in the ghetto could ever have imagined. He urged all those present to let his colleagues record their memories of the time before and during the war and called on the survivors to vow to "do his or her utmost... to build Vilne anew throughout the world."²²

YIVO became not only the most important repository of those fragments of the Vilne lifeworld that had been rescued from destruction and of evidence from the German occupation; with its Yiddishist agenda, YIVO embodied, like no other institution, the cultural milieu in which the Jews of Vilne felt at home. In 1953, the cultural association Nusach Vilne was founded on the tenth anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto. Its memorial activities and projects remain to this day closely connected with YIVO. Here, the three-volume photo album *The Jerusalem of Lithuania: Illustrated and Documented (Yerushalayim deLita in vort un bild)* by Leyzer Ran deserves special mention. It was published in 1974 in response to a 1953 architectural history of Vilnius that failed to say a single word about the city's Jewish dimension.²³ In addition to running photographs from the YIVO Archive, Ran painstakingly collected private photographs from more than 260 Vilne Jews from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Great Britain, Holland, Israel, Canada, Cuba, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, Uruguay, and the United States and combined them in a multifaceted visual history of Jewish Vilne.²⁴

Even if the efforts of Nusach Vilne to install a permanent exhibition at YIVO failed in the 1950s, the association's members were very involved in the large exhibition "Vilna. A Jewish Community in Times of Glory and in Time of Destruction", which YIVO

²⁰ Yortsayt denotes the first anniversary of a burial, but in subsequent years is observed not on the date of burial, but on the date of death (according to the Jewish calendar). After the Holocaust, this rite was often transposed onto whole communities. For Weinreich's speech, see YIVO Archives, RG 123, Friends of Vilna Collection, box 23, folder 10, folio 1 "Ovnt tsum yortsayt fun Vilner geto" (22 September 1947), speech by Max Weinreich, manuscript.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²³ J. Grigienė and A. Berman, eds., *Vilnius: Achitektūra iki XX amžiaus pradžios* (Vilnius 1953).

²⁴ Leyzer Ran, *Yerushalayim deLite. Ilustrirt un dokumentirt*, 1-3 (New York 1974); Anna Lipphardt, "The Post-Holocaust Reconstruction of Vilne, 'the Most Yiddish City in the World' in New York, Israel and Vilnius", *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2004), pp. 167-192, here pp. 175-178.

hosted in the spring of 1960. While Nusach Vilne went on to work with the Vilne landsmanshaft in Israel to create a permanent exhibition at the Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz, the association in New York succeeded in creating a modest exhibition at the YIVO offices only in 2002. Before Nusach Vilne officially disbanded in the summer of 2004, it arranged for an Annual Nusach Vilne Memorial Lecture to be held at YIVO every year on 23 September to commemorate the liquidation of the ghetto – even beyond the point when there are no longer any Vilne Jews alive.

In Israel, by contrast, long-term planned memorial projects began only in the mid-1960s. Before that, personal and financial resources were used above all to integrate the Vilne Jews into their new homeland. In 1966, Itzhak Zuckerman, a Vilne native and one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, encouraged the museum at the Ghetto Fighter's Kibbutz to add a permanent exhibition on Jewish Vilne as the spiritual centre of the Diaspora. To this end, the Vilne community outside of Israel was to be mobilised. That same year, the Vilna Memorial Fund Committees that had been created by Nusach Vilne in New York and its counterpart in Israel (*Irgud Yotse Vilnah ve-Hasvivah*) began raising money, planning content, and acquiring objects for the exhibition. In the course of preparations, there were repeated conflicts over the direction content was taking, which were usually sparked by differing assessments of the Diaspora experience. But on 3 September 1972, the 29th anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto (which is observed in Israel according to the Jewish calendar), the exhibition was opened in a ceremony attended by several thousand people, including high-ranking Israeli politicians.²⁵ Until the start of renovation work at the museum in late 2005, the exhibition was visited by more than 10,000 people per year, including Israeli school groups, members of youth organisations, and army recruits. Vilne does not appear in the museum's new concept.

Vilne-related memorial and cultural activities in New York were of a high quality, but were accessible to only a small group due to the almost exclusive use of Yiddish. The Vilne community in Israel, by contrast, managed to communicate better with the younger generation through bilingual projects. In 1968, the local association of Vilne Jews in Haifa noted:

The most important issue... that our association has dealt with in all its years is the question of how to perpetuate remembrance of our Yerushalayim deLita. We have discussed the issue in countless sessions, and eventually came to the conclusion that the very first thing we had to do was to find a way to our young people, in order to instil in them a love for all the values that were cultivated by the Vilne Jews over the course of generations.²⁶

The aim of instilling in younger Israelis a love for the values of a Diaspora community (let alone *the* Diaspora community that bore such honorary titles as *Yerushalayim deLita*, *goles-Yerushalayim* [Jerusalem of the Diaspora], and *kroynshtot fun Yidishland* [capital of Yiddishland]) stood in stark contrast to the basic understanding of Zionism and Israeli national doctrine, which deplored the Diaspora as worthless,

²⁵ For more on this see Lipphardt, "The Post-Holocaust Reconstruction of Vilne", pp. 178–187; idem, "Dos amolike yidische geto. Blick auf das jüdische Viertel in Vilne", *Simon Dubnow Jahrbuch* 4 (2005), pp. 481–505, here pp. 499–501.

²⁶ "Der farband fun Vilner in Haifa", in *Vilner Pinkas*, 1 (July-August 1968), p. 32.

corrupt, feeble, and cowardly. However, the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann – the logistical organiser of the Holocaust – had brought about a change in public attitudes towards the Holocaust, which ultimately also had an effect on the treatment of Jewish history in prewar Eastern Europe.

In the late 1960s, an “adoption” programme for destroyed Jewish communities was launched at kibbutz and public schools. The Vilne Jews were very proud of the fact that 13 schools opted for their city. Vilne was at the top of the list of adopted cities.²⁷ At the Lazarow School in the coastal town Hadera, the project was led by a schoolteacher named Zipora Abtilion. As a child, she had survived the Vilna ghetto with her mother. After liberation, she had decided to start over again from scratch and to forget the years of humiliation and persecution. At first, she did not find it easy to talk to the children:

I was scared to go back. I thought perhaps somebody more objective should tell them. I was afraid that I would arouse within the children sympathy for me, their teacher, instead of understanding. And above all, I did not want to hurt them.²⁸

For eight weeks, the entire school day of grade 6 was focused on the Vilne project. In class, the history of the Jewish community in Vilne was covered, from its beginnings, to its destruction. There were also working groups, which pupils organised on their own: One group collected material on Vilne; others prepared an exhibition, learned about Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, best known as the Gaon of Vilna, or asked survivors about their recollections. One pupil wrote a song of mourning about Ponary, where the Nazis murdered most of the Jewish population of Vilne. The project culminated in a commemoration ceremony, at which the pupils signed a declaration stating that it was their sacred duty to preserve the memory of Yerushalayim deLita. A commemorative plaque was put up in the school library. In an article about the project, Yiddish writer and Vilne native Abraham Karpinovitsch wrote:

It is made of tin with letters painted in black. However, the light that emanates from it cannot be found at any other memorial, even if it is hewn from marble and adorned with bronze lettering. Twelve- and thirteen-year-old children have put up this tombstone.²⁹

The tightly knit international network of Vilne survivors spanned five continents. It received considerable support from the active Vilne *landsmanshaftn* in New York and Israel as well as family ties. It even included the few compatriots who remained in Soviet Vilnius. However, for a long time, only family visits to Vilnius were allowed. For Israelis, even these were prohibited, because the Soviet Union had broken off diplomatic relations after the Six Day War (1967). American tourists usually got to see Vilnius only as part of official *Inturist* city tours. These were mostly very oppressive. Meetings with Jewish friends and relatives in Soviet Vilnius were arranged under extreme caution. A number of these family visits served other ends. For example, research for the

²⁷ Ibid.; Leybl Korski, “Shuln in Yisroel fareybikn Yerusholayim deLita”, in *Vilner Pinkas*, 3 (1969), p. 42.

²⁸ Quoted from Abraham Karpinovitch, “Di Viliye shtromt durkh Hadera”, in *Vilner Pinkas*, 4 (February 1970), pp. 40-41, here p. 40.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

aforementioned Vilne exhibition in Israel and for Josh Waletzky's documentary film *Partisans of Vilna* (1985) was carried out under the guise of such personal trips.³⁰

With the advent of Perestroika, but primarily after with the restoration of Lithuanian independence, hundreds of Vilne Jews returned to their old hometown for a visit. They wanted to use their last chance, before travelling became too arduous for them. They frequently took along their children and grandchildren. Although the former Vilne Jews had maintained a great emotional attachment to their hometown over all those years and across vast distances, direct contact with the city proved extremely difficult. In the meantime, 80 per cent of the population was made up of ethnic Lithuanians who had moved to Vilnius after the war, mostly from the provinces. For them, Vilnius was the historical capital of Lithuania. They had no idea of the city's prewar Polish-Jewish character, nor did the city's new Lithuanian and former Jewish inhabitants share a common language. Their former Polish neighbours had likewise left the city after the war.

With few exceptions, the Vilnius Jewish community, which was officially re-founded in 1991, consisted of people who had moved there after the Second World War. Thus, the city's current and former Jewish inhabitants had no immediate common past to connect them. Furthermore, there were disagreements over relations with the Lithuanian state as well as substantial conflicts of interest pertaining to tangible issues of cultural policy.

One especially tense conflict concerned the political and legal tug-of-war over several cubic metres of YIVO material that had been presumed lost. During the Stalinist persecution, these had been hidden by Antanas Ulpis, then director of the *Book Palace* (*Knygy Rūmai*), so as to keep them out of the hands of the censors. They were re-discovered only at the end of the 1980s. A basic question now arose: Who was the legal heir of this cultural treasure? YIVO in New York or the Jewish community in Vilnius? YIVO, which was supported by the Vilne *landsmanshaftn*, saw itself as the legal successor of the Vilne YIVO, a position that corresponds to international legal practice.

By contrast, Jewish Vilnius was divided. Since Perestroika, great efforts had been made to re-discover, highlight, and integrate Lithuania's Jewish past. A number of eminent Jewish intellectuals of the older generation grouped around the renowned writer Grigorii Kanovich, then the head of the Jewish community, endorsed the transfer to New York. This contradicted the interests of the newly founded State Jewish Museum under Emanuel Zingeris. The museum its main tasks to include collecting Lithuania's Jewish cultural heritage, which had been expropriated and taken away, and making it accessible to the public in the form of a centre for Lithuanian-Jewish studies.

Lithuanian archive directors and politicians also suddenly discovered that the country's Jewish cultural heritage was an integral part of Lithuanian culture. They were unwilling to let these materials go to the United States too easily – or at least not too cheaply. One high-ranking Lithuanian politician even asked whether it was not time to bring YIVO back to Vilnius now that Lithuania was once again an independent and democratic country.

³⁰ Author's interview with Josh Waletzky, Camp Yidish Vokh (Berkshire Hills, NY, 28 August 2001). The film "Partisans of Vilna. Documentary", director Josh Waletzky, producer Aviva Kempner (New York 1986), is available on DVD.

These interest groups repeatedly prevented the ratification of signed contracts securing the transfer of the materials to New York, providing for their microfilming, and offering a complete set of microfilms and extensive technical support to the Lithuanian archival system.³¹ Only in 1995 was an agreement signed and implemented. Over the next four years, all of the documents were sent to New York, where they were restored by experts and microfilmed. The originals were then sent back to Vilnius.

Closing Remarks

One of the most inaccurate conclusions drawn about the effects of the Holocaust is that survivors kept quiet about their past for decades. The example of Vilne's Jews shows that survivors were only too willing to speak. But for a long time nobody was interested in what they had to say. The Vilne Jews are just one of hundreds of *landsmanshaftn* scattered across the globe, even if one of the most productive ones.

The small window of time left in Eastern Europe for asking questions, talking, and listening, for exchange between Jews and non-Jews is going to close in the near future: Now, when it is finally once again possible in Eastern Europe to learn more about the Jewish past, and when there is a sincere willingness in many places to do so, the lives of the last survivors are coming to an end. What remains of the Jewish past, alongside the authentic places of remembrance in Eastern Europe, are the thousands of personal memoirs and survivor accounts that have been compiled in the past decades, numerous exhibitions, memorial books, documents, and collections, which the Jewish *landsmanshaftn* used to keep alive the memory of their home communities.

Researchers who look for information beyond what is available in Eastern Europe and instead set out in search of these fragments, which are strewn around the world in unmet languages, will find not only valuable source material for the study of East European Jewish history. Those who make the effort will find a complex and often contradictory picture of East European Jewry that has little in common with the image reflected in the smooth, polished surfaces of national Holocaust memorials and commemoration ceremonies. They will also find something else that often gets lost in the contemporary, often depressing debates that surround this difficult chapter of shared history: an idea of just how much these people loved their East European hometowns and villages – despite everything.

³¹ This information is based on a series of interviews with the former YIVO Director Sam Norich, who led the negotiations until 1992 (15 November 2002) and his successor Carl Rheins, who brought them to a conclusion (23 May, 2 June, 11 June 2003) as well as numerous informal conversations the author had in Vilnius, while working in Emanuel Zingeris's parliamentary office from 1993 to 1994 and at the Jewish Museum. See also Zachary Baker, Pearl Berger, Herbert Zafren, *Vilnius Judaica. Still Portrait – Dynamic Reality. Report of the CARLJS Delegation on its survey of 'Judaica' in Vilnius (19-26 March 1997)*, pp. 10–11, and Marek Web, "Lithuania Reluctant to Allow Microfilming of Jewish Documents", in *Avotaynu*, VIII, 4 (1992), pp. 3–6.

Katrin Steffen

Forms of Remembrance

The Jews in Poland's Collective Memory

Before the Second World War, over 3 million Jews lived in Poland. Almost all of them were killed during the Shoah. The Communist regime forbade commemoration of the Jews as a special group of victims. That has changed since 1990, but remembrance of the Jews still polarises Polish society. That is shown by the debate over Jedwabne and the postwar pogroms. There exists a competition of victims between Jews and Poles. A mythological and symbolic figure of "the Jew" is still at work in Polish memory. Moreover, a "virtual Jewry" has come into being at former sites of Jewish life.

"Our memory is a place where there are no Jews." This is how cultural anthropologist and ethnologist Joanna Tokarska-Bakir characterised Polish society's collective memory of the Second World War in January 2001. In 2008, Barbara Engelking-Boni confirmed this judgement with respect to Polish historiography:

The historiography on the National-Socialist occupation of Poland has a tradition going back 60 years, with patterns for categorisations and principles of chronology. In most cases, the Jews have no place there. The Holocaust has still not become part of Poland's history.¹

Tokarska-Bakir made her assessment not long after the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross's book *Neighbours*.² In this book, Gross reconstructed how the Polish inhabitants of the small town of Jedwabne murdered their Jewish fellow citizens in 1941. By apportioning a share of the blame for the Shoah to the Poles, Gross triggered the most intense and most emotional postwar debate on Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War.

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¹ Barbara Engelking-Boni, "Dolary skupuję, koty przechowuję", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16 February 2008.

² Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (Princeton 2001). The Polish edition was published in 2000 as *Sąsiedzi: historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Obsesja niewinności", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13-14 January 2001, published in German in Ruth Henning, ed., *Die "Jedwabne-Debatte" in polnischen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften* (Potsdam 2002).

Engelking-Boni expressed her views in a discussion on Gross's latest book *Fear*.³ The book deals with antisemitism in Poland after the Second World War. The public debate sparked by this book in early 2008 was not as intense as the Jedwabne debate of 2001 to 2003.

The topic of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War was left on hold during the Cold War in that it was not possible to discuss it in public in Poland. It did emerge on a superficial level during the 1980s, but it was only during the Jedwabne debate that it moved to the centre of society. Meanwhile, three generations have passed since the war and the Holocaust. Even so, the Jedwabne debate gripped and shocked almost all of society. Some people welcomed it as an admission of Polish guilt and perceived it as a catharsis. Others branded it anti-Polish and feared that it would damage Poland's image throughout the rest of the world. They wanted to defend themselves against such a prospect. This division in society deepened during disputes over other issues related to reassessing the past,⁴ and it has again surfaced during the debate surrounding *Fear*.

This division also reflects a split reality. On the one hand, the assessments made by Tokarska-Bakir and Engelking-Boni are accurate. They are based on the specific, Polish manner in which the nation and state have been created. On the other hand, the Jewish population is very much present in the Polish remembrance culture in three ways. While it is claimed that Jews do not exist as a distinct group of victims, they are still present as something that has been suppressed. Second, there exists a notion of the mythical, symbolic Jew, which is important to the stereotype of Polish self-perception. And third, Jewish history is present in the public sphere in the form of folklore.

The fact that Poland's Jewish population failed to be recognised in Polish memory as distinct victims is rooted in a number of factors. Between 1949 and around 1980, a type of "official remembrance" predominated that was defined by those in power in the Socialist state. It increasingly drew on the traditional historical canon of national history. Although internationalism and friendship among the peoples were promoted in official ideology, the Communists' nationalism, which was designed to stabilise their hold on power, was by contrast highly traditional and xenophobic.⁵ Reflection on Polish history, open and public debates of self-perception over Polishness, patriotism, and the nation, as well as discussions about the Holocaust or the minorities living in Poland were thus prevented.⁶ Topics of this nature tended to be discussed in private, where a counter-memory existed. To this extent, it would be wrong to assume that Poland had only a monolithic, official culture of remembrance. The Jews were very much present in the memory of private individuals. In public, however, they were not

³ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści* (Cracow 2008). On the related debate, see *Wokół Strachu. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa* (Cracow 2008). The arguments that unify Gross' opponents are summed up in Robert Jankowski, ed., *Cena "Strachu". Gross w oczach historyków* (Warsaw 2008).

⁴ Bartosz Korzeniewski, "O polskich debatach historycznych krytycznie", *Znak*, 9 (2006), 14–20, 15 (2006) p. 15.

⁵ Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warsaw 2001), p. 399.

⁶ Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse 1997), pp. 63–74.

mentioned.⁷ This changed significantly only after 1989, when there were no longer any taboos, and historical gaps began to be filled.

Throughout East Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, this was accompanied by a pluralisation of historical memory. Beyond this general political framework, there were numerous other factors that prevented the public mourning of the murder of Poland's Jews.

The Reduction of History

One of these factors, according to historian Marcin Kula, is the distance that separated Jews and Poles before the Second World War. Jews and Poles, he writes, knew little of each other, which is why the Poles were unable to lament the loss of Poland's Jews. Furthermore, he adds, it is difficult to remember people who were viewed negatively; thus negative stereotypes of Poland's Jews would also have been a reason to forget them.⁸ Even if this argument appears plausible at first, the fact is that the two sides were not so ignorant of each other. Many of these 3 million or more Jews – first and foremost, but not only those who spoke Polish – showed a deep-rooted, genuine interest in Polish history and culture. This interest, however, was barely reciprocated and generated little affection in return.

Many of these Jews used the Polish language as writers, journalists, academics, and teachers.⁹ In many Yiddish-speaking families, parents made sure that their children were no longer affected by a severe language division. Isaac Bashevis Singer remembers that: “there was an unwritten law among the wives of Yiddish writers and of the great number of so-called Yiddishists that their children should be raised to speak the Polish language.”¹⁰ Historians and the general public have yet to delve into the prewar interests and contacts between Jews and Poles. To this day, the divisive features of this relationship have stood front and centre, not least because the contemporary discourse on Polish-Jewish relations in Poland and elsewhere has been dominated by 20th-century events, particularly the Holocaust. In this way, the legacy of 1,000 years of living among one another as neighbours has been reduced to just under 100 years of exclusion, mistrust, hostility, and despair. Consequently, the fact that the history of the Jews in Poland-Lithuania and Poland was more than a history of exile, persecution, and isolation, let alone something that should be reduced to “ghetto history”, is all too easily

⁷ Aleksander Smolar, “Tabu i niewinność”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12-13 May 2001, first publ. *Aneks*, 41–42 (1986), in German as: “Unschuld und Tabu”, *Babylon*, 2 (1987), pp. 40–71; Piotr Madajczyk, “Kriegserfahrungen und Kriegserinnerungen. Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Polen”, in Jörg Echternkamp, Stefan Martens, eds., *Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Europa. Erfahrung und Erinnerung* (Paderborn et al. 2007), pp. 97–111, here p. 104.

⁸ Marcin Kula, “Amnesie – ein nur teilweise selbstverschuldetes Leiden”, in Friedhelm Boll, Peter Hengstenberg, eds., *Europäische Gesellschaften und der Holocaust* (Warsaw 2004), pp. 69–75, here p. 70.

⁹ Katrin Steffen, *Jüdische Polonität. Ethnizität und Nation im Spiegel der polnischsprachigen jüdischen Presse 1918–1939* (Göttingen 2004); Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918–1939* (Portland 2004); Anna Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech...: asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warsaw 2006).

¹⁰ Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Love and Exile. An autobiographical trilogy* (New York 1984), p. 187.

forgotten. This history is also the history of a Jewish homeland, Jewish presence, as well as specific types of Jewish modernity in Eastern Europe.¹¹ From the moment the first Jews arrived in Eastern Europe – especially in Poland – in search of a haven from persecution in Western Europe during the late 11th century, they strived to achieve equal rights as citizens, while at the same time preserving their cultural differences. Everyday, it was necessary to find a compromise between Jewish religious law and concepts, on the one hand, and state law and practises, on the other. Living conditions among the Jews in Poland were therefore contingent upon the result of cultural, political, economic, and legal arrangements between Jews and other ethnic and confessional population groups. These arrangements were neither ideal, nor did they result solely in conflict. They varied according to the situation. Jews and non-Jews lived alongside each other in clearly defined structures. Each group had its own administration and autonomy. At the same time, there were spaces where the groups came into contact with each other, whether in the tavern run by a Jewish innkeeper or when trading at the market. These arrangements and contacts took place whenever religious, national, ethnic, or other groups encountered one another. They form an important and lasting part of Polish-Jewish history. After the Second World War, however, this history was perceived almost solely as a history of destruction. “Auschwitz” has become the universal catchword for this destruction, a symbol that goes far beyond the German-Polish-Jewish framework of remembrance.

The Nation’s “Foreigners” or the Right to a Homeland

Another reason why Jews have been excluded from Polish collective memory is related to the history of the Polish nation’s formation, during which the concept of a nation without a state was created.¹² At the end of the 18th century, Austria, Prussia, and Russia partitioned the Polish Commonwealth. For Poles, the desire to re-establish the state became so powerful that nationalist ideas gained the upper hand over other political ideas, such as liberal ones. During the late 19th century, the concept of the exclusive, ethnically homogeneous nation-state had already gained dominance over the idea of a shared republican identity for all citizens, regardless of their nationality and faith.¹³ National self-identification took on forms that were accompanied by drawing of clear boundaries between the Poles and the other, who were treated as foreigners.

¹¹ Katrin Steffen, “Zur Europäizität der Geschichte der Juden im östlichen Europa”, *H-Soz-u-Kult Forum “Zur Europäizität des östlichen Europa”* <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2006-06-006>>; Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley 2004).

¹² Kula, “Amnesie”, p. 71.

¹³ Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York and Oxford 2002), pp. 157–232; Maciej Janowski, “Polen im 19. Jahrhundert: Europa an der Weichsel?” in Claudia Kraft, Katrin Steffen, eds., *Europas Platz in Polen. Polnische Europa-Konzeptionen vom Mittelalter bis zum EU-Beitritt* (Osnabrück 2007), pp. 131–155, here p. 143; Maria Janion, “Spór o antysemityzm. Sprzeczności, wątpliwości i pytania”, in *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (Warsaw 2000), pp. 127–166, here p. 157.

Antisemitism, the roots of which extended back to Christian anti-Judaism, became an important element in Polish society's mentality.¹⁴

That the construction of the nation was accompanied in political and cultural terms by a hostility towards the Jews is not unique to Poland.¹⁵ Every nation strives for homogeneity. The fact that such homogeneity is a fiction, since antagonistic and plural elements are intrinsic to every collective, was ignored.¹⁶ In its concept of the nation, a majority within Polish society frequently defined the Jews as the epitome of the "foreign element", as the "enemy within", which was hollowing out and destroying the "healthy" national and social fabric.

In the wake of the partition of Poland, a Romantic and messianic understanding of history became popular among Poles. In this perception of history, the suffering of the divided Polish people was defined as a moral distinction.¹⁷ The sense of moral superiority that ensued negatively influenced popular relations with the Jews. Religion was also important in shaping these relations. The Roman Catholic faith was considered the guardian of Polish national identity and played an important role in the formation of the nation-state.¹⁸

Already before the modern era, the religious identity of the Jews had made them the "others", the "foreigners". In the eyes of many Christians, the Jews were a prime example of the non-believers, while the national element in Poland was in turn largely based on Christianity.¹⁹ The religious, ethnic, and social antisemitism that existed in Poland during the pre-modern era saw the Jews as the embodiment of a demonic "anti-Christ", assigned to the Jews an "unsafe place" that could vanish from the face of the earth at any time.²⁰ The Jews retained this demonic role during the Second Republic, from 1918 to 1939. Nationalism, which reached its peak in Europe at this time, also held sway in Poland. Nationalist concepts also played a role in numerous other political movements beyond the Roman Dmowski's right-wing oriented party National Democracy.²¹

¹⁴ Tomasz Gąsowski, "The Second Republic and its Jewish Citizens", in Sławomir Kapralski, ed., *The Jews in Poland*, 2. (Cracow 1999), pp. 125–136, here p. 127.

¹⁵ Peter Alter, "Einleitung", in Peter Alter, Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, Peter Berghoff, eds., *Die Konstruktion der Nation gegen die Juden* (Munich 1999), p. 8.

¹⁶ Maria Janion, "Der Gründungsmythos des polnischen Antisemitismus", in Boll, *Europäische Gesellschaften*, pp. 13–55, here p. 35.

¹⁷ Claudia Kraft, "Geschichte im langen Transformationsprozess in Polen", in Helmut Altrichter, ed., *GegenErinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument im Transformationsprozess Ost-, Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas* (Munich 2006), pp. 129–150, here p. 137.

¹⁸ Anna Landau-Czajka, *W jednym stali domu... Koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w publicystyce polskiej lat 1933–1939* (Warsaw 1998), p. 57.

¹⁹ The equation between Poles and Catholicism had its roots in the 17th century, and was rejected during the period of reform by the promoters of the enlightenment among the nobility before enjoying a renaissance in the 19th century. Hans Henning Hahn, "Die Gesellschaft im Verteidigungszustand. Zur Genese eines Grundmusters der politischen Mentalität in Polen", in Hans Henning Hahn, Michael G. Müller, eds., *Gesellschaft und Staat in Polen. Historische Aspekte der polnischen Krise* (Berlin 1988), pp. 15–48, here p. 27

²⁰ Joanna Tokarska Bakir, "Żydzi u Kolberga", *Res Publica Nowa*, (July-August 1999), pp. 30–38, here p. 38.

²¹ Krzysztof Kawalec, *Wizje ustroju państwa w polskiej myśli politycznej lat 1918–1939. Ze studiów nad dziejami polskiej myśli politycznej* (Wrocław 1995), p. 17; Jerzy Jedlicki, "Polish Concepts of Native Culture", in Ivo Banac, Katherine Verdery, eds., *National Char-*

The effect that National Democracy had on many Poles should not be underestimated. The writer Kazimierz Brandys called Dmowski, the author of several antisemitic works, a devastating figure for the Polish intelligentsia, the man “responsible for greater intellectual damage than the partitioning powers, since this damage poisoned the minds of three generations”.²² During the 1930s in particular, Poland was dominated by a dichotomous view of the world, which was divided into “ours” and “the other”. Depending on one’s political views, the enemy could be a Fascist, a Communist, a capitalist, a Freemason, a spy, or indeed a Jew.²³

Between 1918 and 1939, antisemitism was widespread among most political parties and within society. The political sphere was dominated by national attributions and categories from the 19th century.²⁴ These included the antisemitic scenario that the Jews posed a threat. It was insinuated that they wanted not only to damage Poland, but to destroy it. Jews became the subject of numerous debates and were encouraged to leave the country.

In cultural and literary circles, antisemitism was considered to be almost *de rigueur*. So it was that in 1933, the well-known writer Karol Irzykowski announced in the Jewish newspaper *Nasz Przegląd* that he was also willing to become an antisemite: “I, too, will have to write an antisemitic article at some point.”²⁵ He picked up on this thought again in 1937 and began his contribution by noting that an antisemitic article had been on his mind for a long time. In the article, he called the Jews “Poles with reservation”, since a Jew could easily stop being a Pole, while non-Jewish Poles were bound to their fatherland for better or worse. He then called for an “intelligent antisemitism” as opposed to a violent antisemitism.²⁶

The language and ideas used in reference to the Jews were frequently pejorative during this period. A young writer called Zbigniew Uniłowski described the largely Jewish district surrounding Warsaw’s Nalewki Street as an “urban abscess” with a “sickly vitality” and as a gloomy “ghetto” where the residents were unhappy and anaemic.²⁷ Such notions of the urban environment of the Jews contributed to the development of certain ideas of Jewishness. Jews were regarded as a backward mass of city dwellers who voluntarily cut themselves off from the rest of society, and who turned the cities into unpleasant places simply by their mere presence.²⁸

The importance of the interwar years and the attitudes that developed during this time should not be underestimated with regard to later developments. Many unresolved so-

acter and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe (New Haven 1995), pp. 1–22, here p. 21.

²² Kazimierz Brandys, “Oktober 1978”, *Warschauer Tagebuch. Die Monate davor 1978–1981* (Frankfurt am Main 2002).

²³ Kawalec, *Wizje*, p. 166.

²⁴ Kula, “Amnesie”, p. 71.

²⁵ S. Pomer, “Intelektualiści polscy o prześladowaniu żydów w Niemczech. Ankieta ‘Naszego Przeglądu’ wśród przedstawicieli polskiego świata intelektualnego”, *Nasz Przegląd*, (28 April 1933).

²⁶ Steffen, *Jüdische Polonität*, p. 296.

²⁷ Zbigniew Uniłowski, “Błaski i nędze”, in *Jesteśmy w Warszawie, Przewodnik literacki po stolicy. Praca zbiorowa staraniem Związku Zawodowego Literatów Polskich* (Warsaw 1938), pp. 43–53, here p. 43.

²⁸ Katrin Steffen, “Connotations of Exclusion – ‘Ostjude’, ‘Ghetto’ and Other Markings”, *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Institutes*, 4 (2005), pp. 459–479, here p. 479.

cial and national problems, such as the failure to implement land reform or the minorities policy, which erupted in bloodshed during and after the war, have their origins in the Second Republic.²⁹ To this day, it still casts a long shadow over the prospect of mutual understanding between Poles and Jews. Many Jews had hoped that, with Polish independence, they would obtain equal rights in that country that they had helped to create. These hopes were for the most part dashed. Writer Zusman Segalowicz, for example, described the city of Warsaw as a shared achievement of Poles and Jews.³⁰ Singer expresses a similar view in his memoirs:

The Poles still considered us aliens, but the Jews had helped build this city and had assumed an enormous participation in its commerce, finance, and industry. Even the statues in this church represented images of Jews.³¹

Few Poles were at the time willing to express such a view so clearly as writer and journalist Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who noted in 1960 that Poland's Jews should not have been denied their right to a homeland, because they had helped to create the country over the centuries.³² Most people between the wars saw things differently: Many continued to consider the Jews "foreign" and "disloyal", no matter how much they had acculturated to the majority population. The nation-state required homogeneity and clarity. Flexible notions of identity among Jews, which by no means entailed disloyalty to Poland, appeared not to fit in.

The Murder of the Jews and Its Repercussions

The murder of almost all of Poland's Jews during the Second World War did not lead to a change in Polish attitudes. Instead, it deepened both the fictitious and the real divisions.³³ This occurred, for one, due to the isolation of the Jews through the German policy of ghettoization and then their murder. Furthermore, there were, to a limited extent, some Poles who played an active part in the Holocaust. It became known that others, after being forced by the National Socialists into the highly compromising role of witnessing the Holocaust, they allowed themselves to be tempted into exploiting the situation and demanded large payments for providing hiding places for Jews or blackmailed Jews for these services.³⁴ On many occasions, these Poles may have saved the lives of the Jews concerned, but their conduct created new rifts.

Memories of the war period also created divisions. The memories of the Jews and the Poles drifted far apart from each other. For the Jews, the Shoah formed the basis of all

²⁹ Kazimierz Brakoniecki, "Bez znieczulenia. O antysemityzmie polskim szkic osobisty", *Przegląd Polityczny*, 87 (2008), pp. 32–41, here p. 34.

³⁰ Zusman Segalowicz, "Tłomackie 13, czyli trzy szkice o żydowskim środowisku literackim w Warszawie", in Elżbieta Traba, Robert Traba, eds., *Tematy żydowskie* (Olsztyn 1999), pp. 201–245, here p. 203.

³¹ Singer, *Love and Exile*, p. 209.

³² Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "Antysemityzm ludzi łagodnych i dobrych", in idem, *Druza twarz Europy* (Warsaw 1990), pp. 57–76, here p. 67, first published in *Więź*, 5 (1960).

³³ Jerzy Jedlicki, "Polacy wobec zagłady Żydów", *Polityka*, (10 February 2001).

³⁴ Engelking-Boni, "Dolary skupuje".

remembrance of the Second World War. Non-Jewish Poles mourned their own, immense sacrifice. Due to the historical constellation of the August 1939 German-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression, the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland, and the establishment of the Communist system after 1944, the history of the Second World War is in Polish cultural memory above all the history of a confrontation with Stalinist Soviet Union as well as Nazi Germany.

In Polish memory, the support for Communism among a small part of the Jewish community was exaggerated and generalised. Although many Jewish Communists did not see themselves as Jewish, they were nonetheless perceived precisely as such and, with that, as different from other Communists: They were considered collaborators in the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland after the Hitler-Stalin pact and accomplices in establishing the Communist system in Poland after the war.³⁵

No Language for Remembrance

Remembrance of the Jewish population after the war was also difficult because almost all of the Polish Jews had been murdered, and most of the survivors had emigrated. As a result, by the early 1950s, there were relatively few bearers of collective memory. Such a collective memory usually has an appellative, trans-generational character: Those who are born later commit themselves to shared memories and thus compensate for the passing of the generation that experienced the events first hand.³⁶

The non-Jewish members of Polish society failed to take on this role. The sociologist Hanna Świda-Ziemia has made an interesting observation on this subject: After the war, the “Jewish question” was treated among young people as if the world had gone back to the prewar period and the Holocaust had never happened. For this reason, society was again dominated by either the adherents of antisemitism, who continued to invoke the arguments of the prewar era, or their staunch opponents. This emerged from a certain sense of time: Whereas the postwar era was assuming an indistinct shape for Polish youth, the war era was set apart as a closed matter. By contrast, the prewar years were perceived as very much alive. The unpleasant realities of the war and the insecurities of the present were blotted out.³⁷ This situation, Świda-Ziemia wrote, resulted in the preservation of antisemitic attitudes, which were then passed on to the next generation and polarised the intelligentsia. This constellation should not be underestimated either, when it comes to the issue of remembrance.

The few Holocaust survivors who remained in Poland were either unwilling to acknowledge their Jewish origins in the light of the postwar pogroms, or they were so traumatised by their wartime experiences that they suppressed the memory of what had happened to them. There was no question of their becoming bearers of remembrance.³⁸ Furthermore, right after the war, there was quite simply no language availa-

³⁵ Madajczyk, “Kriegserfahrungen”, pp. 103–106.

³⁶ Aleida Assmann, “Wozu ‘nationales Gedenken’?”, in Ewa Kobylińska, Andreas Lawaty, eds., *Erinnern, vergessen, verdrängen. Polnische und deutsche Erfahrungen* (Wiesbaden 1998), pp. 111–119, here p. 112.

³⁷ Hanna Świda-Ziemia, *Urwany lot. Pokolenie inteligentniejszej młodzieży powojennej w świetle listów i pamiętników z lat 1945–1948* (Cracow 2003), pp. 92–94.

³⁸ Kula, “Amnesie”, p. 71.

ble to describe what these two groups – separated from one another, yet side-by-side – had experienced in the same country during that period. The unimaginable could not be articulated at first.

Warsaw as Paradigm

The killing of 3 million Poles of the Jewish faith had destroyed social structures, not just Jewish ones. The middle classes and the intelligentsia, including the Jewish intelligentsia, had been murdered, and those who had survived had lost the settings in which they had acted. Warsaw is a clear example of the lack of ability to articulate the grief over the murder of the Jews. The fact that the entire Jewish quarter around Nalewki Street and the 380,000 Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw were simply no longer there, was not discussed. This was due not only to the traumas that they had experienced, but also to the fact that Warsaw was an empty city after the war. All that remained was the dust on the rubble.³⁹ Following the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, the city had lost over 50 per cent of its prewar population. Warsaw had to integrate thousands of people who had never lived there. The Polish capital changed dramatically as a result.

When it comes to remembering Polish-Jewish relations, Warsaw is almost a paradigm. Remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 was overshadowed by remembrance of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, during which 180,000 people died and thousands of Warsaw families lost their relatives, even if in the official Communist propaganda, no mention of the Warsaw Uprising was permitted. This ban on remembrance tended to have the opposite effect in the memories of many Polish families.

That the Ghetto Uprising was the first armed conflict involving street-by-street, house-to-house fighting in a German-occupied city in Europe, or that the Ghetto Uprising could have provided inspiration for the Warsaw Uprising, was not an interpretation of events that came from Polish historians. However, the Bulgarian-born writer Tzvetan Todorov has shown that the arguments presented by Jewish and Polish underground leaders were strikingly similar.⁴⁰

On the other hand, according to Marcin Kula, the Ghetto Uprising tends to be degraded in the minds of many Poles to a form of self-defence and is denied the honourable label “uprising” in Polish history.⁴¹ Already during the Second World War, it was not regarded as a Polish tragedy. According to historian Tomasz Szarota, the tragedy of their murdered Jewish fellow citizens did not provoke the same kind of response as the crimes that Germans committed against non-Jewish Poles in the Pawiak prison. According to Szarota, “We will avenge the ghetto” was never written on the walls of Warsaw as justification for the Warsaw Uprising, only “We will avenge Pawiak”.⁴²

Due to the influx of immigrants to Warsaw from the countryside after the war, the memory of the Holocaust was lost. The city was no longer multinational. There was

³⁹ Jerzy Pilch, “Zaleta warszawskich wad”, *Więź*, 4 (2006), pp. 29–34, here p. 32.

⁴⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, “Skazani na heroizm”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (18-19 April 1998).

⁴¹ Kula, “Amnesie”, p. 72.

⁴² Tomasz Szarota, “Powstanie warszawskie jako odwet za niemieckę okupację”, in Kazimierz Krajewski, Tomasz Łabuszewski, eds., *Powstanie warszawskie. Fakty i mity* (Warsaw 2006), pp. 21–26, here p. 23.

hardly anyone left to keep alive the memory of the old Warsaw.⁴³ At the same time, the national Communist ideology that pursued the vision of a homogeneous culture and nation was consolidated. Even sculptor Nathan Rapaport's well-known monument to the ghetto fighters, which was erected in 1948, was in keeping with this ideology. With its mythologised, proletarian figures depicted in a mix of Romanticism and Socialist Realism, the monument is saturated in proletarian ideology, thus successfully eradicating the religious affiliation of the insurgents as a mark of their identity. Jews were not to be recognised as such; they were instead instrumentalised as the fighting proletariat. In this way, the monument contributed more to forgetting than to remembering.⁴⁴

Only writer Hannah Krall's famous 1976 interview with Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Ghetto Uprising, and the translations of works by Nobel Prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer in 1978 showed the Poles just how interesting and varied Warsaw once was. For while the city was for many Poles the mother of the patriotic resistance, for many Jews it was one of the largest Jewish cities in Europe, a centre of religious and political thought, of literary life, a kind of "new Jerusalem".⁴⁵

These two memories were not reconciled after the war, not in Warsaw, nor anywhere elsewhere in Poland. To the contrary: Until the 1980s, Jewish memory simply did not exist. This is one of the reasons why there remains to this today only limited knowledge of the fact that Warsaw was also a Jewish city before the war. However, the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto also spawned feelings of guilt, as one observer diagnosed: The Poles suffered from a "guilt by neglect", from the guilt of being witnesses.⁴⁶ A further result of this trauma is that there is hardly anything in Warsaw's public spaces to remind us that a Jewish quarter ever existed there. The "ghetto" established by the Germans is now an empty space, a place that does not recall the ghetto's destruction, a place that has been filled with residential buildings, but that calls on the observer to interpret the empty space.⁴⁷

Possibly, this empty space can be filled to some extent by the Museum of the History of the Jews in Poland, which is currently under construction.⁴⁸ It remains to be seen whether this can compensate for the suppression of memories, that were so difficult to process emotionally. Those who participated in the atrocities or made money from the Jews during or after the war had a vested interest in this suppression. Furthermore, many Poles were also ashamed of their negative attitude towards the Jews.⁴⁹ Sometimes, their incapacity to show sympathy veered to anger, aggression, and antisemi-

⁴³ Antoni Libera, "Czy Warszawa da się lubić?" *Więź*, 4 (2006), pp. 25–28, here p. 26.

⁴⁴ Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds., *The Neighbors Respond* (Princeton 2003), p. 6.

⁴⁵ Marta Zielińska, "Stracona i odzyskana, Warszawa w lekturach", *Więź*, 4 (2006), pp. 52–56, here pp. 52–53.

⁴⁶ Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish? Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley et al. 2002), p. 57.

⁴⁷ Jacek Leociak, "Aryjskim tramwajem przez warszawskie getto, czyli hermeneutyka pustego miejsca", in Lidia Burska, Mark Zaleski, eds., *Maski współczesności. O literaturze i kulturze XX wieku* (Warsaw 2001), pp. 75–87, here p. 83.

⁴⁸ See also the contribution by Zofia Wóycicka in this volume, pp. xxx–xxx.

⁴⁹ Kula, "Amnesie", pp. 72–73.

tism due to feelings of guilt. At any rate, the events of the Second World War left deeply wounded memories.⁵⁰

Competition among Martyrs and Victims

The way in which the Ghetto Uprising and the Warsaw Uprising have been treated is an example of what is known as competition of victims. At times, this competition has dominated the dialogue between Poles and Jews and contributed to the failure to remember Jewish life in Poland as well as Jewish suffering. The almost inflationary use of the term “victim” today is in historical debates always linked to an assumption of innocence. Jan Philip Reemtsma has also spoken of the interpretative authority of the victim, “as if great suffering could only generate insights, rather than hinder them at the same time”.⁵¹ Moreover, victims and guilt are not only to be understood as opposites; they can certainly function in a complementary manner. Against the backdrop of the aforementioned romantic paradigm, which created a victim myth in Poland that “is so rooted in our awareness that we regard it as historical reality”,⁵² there developed among Poles a type of self-immunisation against the view that their own victim status did not protect them from taking responsibility for injustices done to others. The human rights activist Jacek Kuroń put it this way in May 2001: “The problem is that... we have cultivated ourselves as a nation of martyrs and have difficulty recognising that there are other nations of martyrs.”⁵³

The competitiveness between Poles and Jews goes back a long way. It can already be found in the messianic ideas of Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz. Both peoples, he claimed, were chosen by God. Poles and Jews had to travel the road of exile and suffering in order to be “redeemed”. Failure as a nation could thus be re-interpreted as a sign of “God’s grace”. Such a self-image was able to convert a history of defeat and victimisation into an expression of a “divine plan”. Feelings of inferiority could thus be tempered and reinterpreted as strengths. Here, parallels can be seen in the concepts of identity and the memory of both Poles and Jews.⁵⁴

Under the influence of growing nationalism, an identity competition emerged from these parallels. It manifested itself in debates on how much Jewish blood was flowing in the veins of certain Poles: In the interwar years, several court cases were held that aimed to prove that the individual in question was not of Jewish origin. The issue was discussed with regard to poet Mickiewicz and composer Chopin. After 1989, presidential candidate Tadeusz Mazowiecki had to field questions in public as to whether he was a Jew. Those individuals who look “Jewish” find it necessary to explain themselves or are publicly forced to do so.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, pp. 43-45.

⁵¹ *Berliner Zeitung*, (12 June 2006).

⁵² Ks. Janusz Salamon, “Uwolnić się od strachu”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (6 March 2008).

⁵³ Quoted from Henning, “Die ‘Jedwabne-Debatte’”, pp. 16–17.

⁵⁴ Steffen, *Jüdische Polonität*, pp. 125–129 and p. 374.

⁵⁵ Irena Grudzińska-Gross, “Podejrzone pochodzenie jako kategoria kultury polskiej”, in Maria Janion, Claudia Snochowka-Gonzalez, Kazimierza Szczuka, eds., *Inny. Inna. Inne. O inności w kulturze* (Warsaw 2004), pp. 98–109, here p. 101.

Since 1945, the competition of victims has been expressed by the fact that many Poles, given their own suffering, find it difficult to acknowledge the victim status and unique nature of Jewish suffering during the Shoah. A symptomatic example from the 1960s is the entry “concentration camp” in the new Great Encyclopaedia. Here, a distinction was made between concentration camps and extermination camps, with Treblinka and Birkenau being included in the latter. This was met with protests by the nationalist oriented faction within the Polish United Worker’s Party led by Mieczysław Moczar, who claimed that all concentration camps had been extermination camps, and that the Polish people had also been threatened by extinction. According to this logic, the history of the Polish Jews should not be granted a unique status.⁵⁶ The competition of victims was repeatedly reflected in the way the symbolic site of the concentration camp and killing centre Auschwitz was treated. The Communist government made Auschwitz a symbol of the persecution and resistance of the Polish nation, while the murder of the Jews was to a large extent ignored. After the visit of Pope John Paul II to the memorial site in 1979, the camp gained a new religious, Polish Catholic significance as well, which resulted in numerous conflicts after 1989. One need only recall the controversy surrounding the Carmelite nunnery in a building bordering the camp and the crosses erected there in the former gravel pit.⁵⁷ This unilateral appropriation of Auschwitz has since then been corrected: Today, Auschwitz is for many Poles a Polish, Jewish, multi-national, and universal symbol.⁵⁸

Treatment in Historiography

After the war, Polish historiography failed to make any contribution to the process of coming to terms with the Holocaust. The terror of the German occupation, the martyrdom of the Polish nation, and the heroic armed struggle against the occupiers took centre stage. In general, Polish historiographers regarded the Poles and the Jews as separate subjects of enquiry.⁵⁹ This tendency can also be found in other nationally oriented historiographies, such as Jewish or German historiography. Since the late 1960s, Polish historiography has become somewhat more complex, and the fate of the Jews has to some extent been incorporated into studies on the Second World War. However, the emphasis has remained on the political history of the occupying regime.⁶⁰ Until the 1980s, the Jews were omitted from the history of Poland and were not treated as a distinct victim group in official works on the war.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Karol Sauerland, “Literarische und mediale Erinnerungskultur(en) in Polen”, in Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Jürgen Zinnecker, eds., *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und Vertreibung. Polnische, jüdische und deutsche Kindheiten im besetzten Polen* (Weinheim and Munich 2007), pp. 19–41, here p. 22.

⁵⁷ Stanisław Musiał, “Die Wahrheit über das Kreuz in Auschwitz”, *Transodra*, 18 (1998), pp. 78–81.

⁵⁸ Marek Kucia, “Auschwitz in der öffentlichen Meinung Polens”, *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 2002, pp. 189–216, pp. 205–206, here p. 214.

⁵⁹ Włodzimierz Borodziej, “Abschied von der Martyrologie in Polen?” in Martin Sabrow et al., eds., *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte. Große Kontroversen seit 1945* (Munich 2003), pp. 288–305, here p. 293.

⁶⁰ Madajczyk, “Kriegserfahrungen”, p. 99.

⁶¹ Smolar, “Tabu”.

During the 1980s, the traditional stories of armed resistance and the heroic conduct in Poland during the occupation were put into perspective. The impulses for this came from international research on the Holocaust, which described the Polish population's behaviour as marked by passivity, indifference, or *schadenfreude*. The indifference among the Poles to the genocide of the Jews was also the thesis of the essay "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto", with which literary critic Jan Błoński unleashed the first broad debate on Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War.⁶² After 1990, the genocide of the Jews became the subject of intense study, which led to a wave of popular representations in films, works of art, and video installations. Academic research also had a great deal of catching up to do. Independent research on the Holocaust in Poland had been possible only from 1945 to 1947 and to a certain extent during the early 1960s – and then with only limited public impact.⁶³

New Frameworks of Memory: Remembrance after 1989

Since 1990, the persecution of the Jews during the Second World War has been the subject of intense examination. The fact that all of the killing centres were located on Polish soil makes this examination particularly dramatic and historically explosive. The close spatial connection between the genocide of the Jews and the persecution of non-Jewish Poles in places such as Auschwitz raises such questions as: What kind of national and international remembrance is appropriate? What does balanced commemoration involve?⁶⁴

The location of the extermination camps has repeatedly focused world public attention on Poland. Some Poles regard this international dimension as a burden, because they fear Poland's standing in the world will be damaged, something that cannot be reconciled with the Polish self-image of moral superiority. As a consequence, there is a competition in Poland between Polish and international remembrance, which is obvious, for example, when Israeli youth delegations visit Auschwitz-Birkenau and have hardly any contact with the Polish population. They have little interest in contemporary Poland or the fact that numerous Poles also lost their lives during the Second World War in general and at Auschwitz in particular. It's the same with the annual "March of the Living", which is held in Poland every April.

At the same, however, Poland is also part of the international developments that have taken place since 1989 and is involved in shaping them. In the early 1990s, seemingly fixed constructs of memory from the immediate postwar years started to crumble throughout Europe. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, a rather stable collective memory had taken shape in the countries concerned. At the core of these constructs was the uncontested fact that Nazi Germany bore responsibility for the Second World War and had caused great suffering to Europeans in the course of the conflict. Issues

⁶² Jan Błoński, "Biedni Polacy patrzą na Getto", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 11 January 1987; Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, "Die Erinnerung an die Besatzung während des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Polen. Transformationen und Kontinuitäten der polnischen Erinnerungskultur 1980–2005", in Bernd Faulenbach, Franz-Josef Jelich, eds., "*Transformationen*" der *Erinnerungskulturen in Europa nach 1989* (Essen 2006), pp. 55–78, here p. 63.

⁶³ Bömelburg, "Erinnerung", p. 66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

of collaboration with the National Socialists were suppressed. In many countries, a myth of resistance was created.⁶⁵

In Poland, the effects of this myth have not been eliminated completely. It was only during the debates over *Neighbours* and *Fear* that the many different degrees of collaboration and culpability became known. This development is due not least of all to the fact that the generations that experienced these events are dying in increasing numbers. Since 1989, a fundamental, Europe-wide shift has taken place away from memory of the war to cultural memory. The Holocaust became the centrepiece of these cultural memories, but so did the genocide of the Sinti and Roma and the persecution and murder of homosexuals and the disabled.⁶⁶

However, the fact that the Holocaust has become a type of “negative founding myth”, particularly for Europe’s west, cannot simply be carried over to “the east”. Remembrance cannot be homogenised in the name of a common European culture: Nobody can be forced to remember in accordance with a particular norm. The Holocaust cannot play the same role for Polish society as it does for German society. Nonetheless, Poles are also demanding that the Holocaust be recognised as a universal event, as a never-ending mourning ritual, in which the Poles should also participate. This mourning should be an ethical attitude, according to literary critic Maria Janion, who quotes a thought by Maria Czapka that was published in the Paris-based exile magazine *Kultura* in 1957:

The most terrible genocide in the history of mankind, the massacre of several million Jews in Poland, which had been selected by Hitler as the place of their execution, the blood and ashes of the victims, which seeped into Polish soil, form an important bond linking Poland to the Jewish nation, and it is not in our power to release ourselves from this bond.

This obligation, Janion adds, applies equally to Poland and to Europe.⁶⁷ She calls on her countrymen to show an empathy hitherto withheld, to lament the Holocaust, and to re-write the history of Poland. Similarly, the writer Kazimierz Brakoniecki appeals to Poles to respect Jewish pain and sorrow, for they are the inheritance of all mankind.⁶⁸ According to Janion, this path can be followed by taking a critical approach to one’s own myths.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Tony Judt, “The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Post-War Europe”, in Jan Werner Müller, ed., *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge 2002), pp. 157–183, here p. 163.

⁶⁶ Michael Jeismann, “Die Holocaust-Erinnerung als Passepartout. Geschichte ohne Erfahrung – Erfahrungen ohne Geschichte: Wie das kollektive Gedächtnis der Gegenwart eine Prognose stellt”, in Joachim Landkammer et al., eds., *Erinnerungsmanagement. Systemtransformation und Vergangenheitspolitik im internationalen Vergleich* (Munich 2006), pp. 257–264, here p. 259.

⁶⁷ Maria Janion, “Polen in Europa”, in Kraft, Steffen, *Europas Platz*, pp. 31–66, here pp. 59–60.

⁶⁸ Brakoniecki, “Bez zniczulenia”, p. 39.

⁶⁹ “Opowiadać o ludzkim cierpieniu. Z prof. Marią Janion rozmawia Andrzej Franaszek”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, (6 February 2007).

The Jedwabne debate must be seen as a step along this path, which leads through a differentiation and pluralisation of memories.⁷⁰ The fact that this is not a linear or irreversible process lies in the nature of memory.⁷¹ A secure consensus that is shared by all and never again called into question is unknown to democracy. Thus, after the Jedwabne debate, a general consensus was not reached, for this debate was then followed by a counter-wave of renewed heroisation and a return to a confrontational history of the war, as if a shock reaction to the loss of innocence.⁷²

This was seen immediately after the Jedwabne debate in the history policy that the then government was promoting so as to generate a positive sense of community, an “affirmative patriotism”, and a favourable image of Poland abroad.⁷³ The same can be said for the controversy over German plans to create a *Centre against Expulsion*. Among this history policy’s advocates, the Jedwabne debate had raised the question: “If we agree on a collective sense of shame, why can’t we reach an understanding on a collective sense of pride?”⁷⁴

To some observers, it now appeared as if history policy had been initiated in order to eliminate the topic of Polish-Jewish relations from the public sphere.⁷⁵ That this did not, and could not, succeed has been shown by the recent discussion of Gross’s book *Fear*. According to Gross, Polish antisemitism, which he confirmed was widespread in postwar society, can be traced back to fears on the part of the Poles that they would have to return Jewish assets to returning Holocaust survivors as well as to feelings of guilt arising from their conduct during the occupation.

The positions taken by representatives of the national right-wing parties and of the episcopate have made it particularly clear that they are not yet willing to part with the old myths. Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz wrote in an open letter to the Catholic publishing house of *Fear* that its task was not to stir the demons of anti-Polishness and anti-semitism. He also claimed that the book created an atmosphere of tensions among the nationalities in Poland.⁷⁶ However, in a democratic society, controversies and debates over self-perception are an indispensable component of political culture and a measure not only of its existence, but its quality as well. Such debates do not aim for acquittal, or conviction, but for insight and understanding. The ongoing discussion of Polish-Jewish relations in Poland is nothing more than a Polish-Polish, democratic debate over self-perception. As such it is incapable of blocking the Polish-Jewish dialogue, as sociologist Ireneusz Krzemiński said it was.⁷⁷ To the contrary, the Polish-

⁷⁰ Marek Ziółkowski, “Pamięć i zapomnianie. Trupy w szafie polskiej zbiorowej pamięci”, *Kultura i społeczeństwo*, 3–4 (2001), pp. 2–21, here p. 20.

⁷¹ Gesine Schwan, Birgit Schwellung, “Einleitung”, in Gesine Schwan, Birgit Schwellung, eds., *Demokratische politische Identität. Deutschland, Polen und Frankreich im Vergleich* (Wiesbaden 2006), pp. 9–34, here p. 29.

⁷² Adam Krzemiński, “So viele Kriege wie Nationen” (6 April 2005), <www.perlentaucher.de/artikel/2299.html>.

⁷³ Korzeniewski, “O polskich debatach”, p. 15; Katrin Steffen, “Ambivalenzen des affirmativen Patriotismus. Geschichtspolitik in Polen”, in *Quo vadis, Polonia? Kritik der polnischen Vernunft* (Berlin 2006) [= OSTEUROPA, 11–12/06], pp. 219–233.

⁷⁴ Marek A. Cichocki, “Historia powraca”, *Rzeczpospolita*, (14 December 2004).

⁷⁵ “Żydzi a polityka historyczna”, *Midrasz*, 9 (2006), pp. 41–45, here p. 44.

⁷⁶ “List otwarty Kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza”, in *Wokół Strachu. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa* (Cracow 2008), pp. 74–75.

⁷⁷ “Książka Grossa blokuje dialog”, *Rzeczpospolita*, (6 February 2008).

Polish debate can if anything support the Polish-Jewish dialogue, since one's own memories are a prerequisite to showing empathy for the memories and the suffering of the others.

The "Mythical" Jew

As these debates have shown, hardly anybody in Poland, whether it be among historians or the general public, is indifferent to this topic. Few "if any narratives in contemporary European history are as fractured as that of Polish-Jewish relations in the Second World War".⁷⁸ This brokenness has lasted to this day, and there continues to be no other historical subject that has such a polarising effect in Poland: Moral sensibilities collide with anger and resentment.⁷⁹ After all, for a significant share of Polish public opinion, the "Jewish question" in the 20th century meant more than just the task of shaping the co-existence with a community that had another religion, different customs, and in part different professions. The "Jewish question" formed the core of the worldview of Poland's national right-wing parties, the core of their worldview on social, political, economic, and spiritual issues. In this worldview, the Jews seemed to be the embodiment of satanic evil, treason, and perfidy. As such, they were the central figure of this worldview.⁸⁰

Since nobody else could take on this demonic role, the "symbolic, mystical Jew" survived in society's collective imagination even though there were hardly any Jews left in Poland after the war. Since then, a symbolic Jew has existed in the Polish consciousness. This symbolic Jew constitutes a key element of the auto-stereotype of many Poles.⁸¹ That is why it is possible to revive the image of the "perfidious" Jew in any political crisis. This image appeals in different ways to existing patterns of thought. These range from Jews as Communists or capitalists, to dissidents or Zionists who are hiding behind the scenes, conspiring against the Poles, and secretly pulling the strings.⁸² The result is a Judaisation of the rejected "other" – and it has never been left to the Jews or the "others" to decide who was a Jew and who were the "others". Those who are drummed out of the national corpus by means of definitions or oppose such putatively absolute values as Catholicism or the family, which have always been regarded as the pillars of the nation, can pose a potential threat. Formerly, it was the Jews who bore the brunt of this argument; nowadays, it affects others, according to historian Andrzej Walicki.⁸³ In the perception of the political right, these are primarily feminists and homosexuals.

⁷⁸ John Connelly, "Poles and Jews in the Second World War: the Revisions of Jan T. Gross", *Contemporary European History*, 4 (2002), pp. 641–658, here p. 641.

⁷⁹ Jedlicki, "Polacy wobec zagłady".

⁸⁰ Jerzy Jedlicki, "Problem winy i odpowiedzialności", in *Wokół strachu*, pp. 32–42, here p. 34.

⁸¹ Ibid; Ireneusz Krzemiński, "„Neuer“ oder „alter“ Antisemitismus? Anmerkungen auf der Grundlage soziologischer Untersuchungen in Polen und der Ukraine", in Bernd Kauffmann, Basil Kerski, eds., *Antisemitismus und Erinnerungskulturen im postkommunistischen Europa* (Osnabrück 2006), pp. 53–87, here p. 59.

⁸² Jedlicki, "Problem winy", p. 34.

⁸³ Andrzej Walicki, "Mit jedności narodu", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (19 August 2006).

With regard to the stigmatisation of homosexuals, the arguments put forward today are astonishingly similar to antisemitic sentiments of the 1920s and 1930s: Homosexuals are considered the enemy within, just like the Jews, without their own territory; both are branded as being anti-Polish, as “foreign”, and as an internal danger for the Polish family, the pillar of the nation. At demonstrations, direct comparisons are sometimes made in terms as in the slogans: “We’ll do to you what Hitler did to Jews” (*Zrobimy z wami co Hitler z Żydami*) and “It’s no myth, it’s so true: where there’s a gay, you’ll find a Jew” (*To jest prawda a nie mit, tam gdzie gej tam i żyd.*)⁸⁴

This recourse to antisemitic set pieces is not representative of Polish society. It is used by right-wing and extreme right-wing parties. Most Poles, particularly younger Poles, do not share these attitudes. However, this recourse shows that pre-modern, antisemitic thinking and the antisemitism of the interwar years are still alive.

Here, one has to ask what it is that Jews or homosexuals threaten. For those who harbour this worldview and the media that propagate it, such as the popular *Radio Maryja* or the daily newspaper *Nasz Dziennik*, their own identity is at stake. They fear losing the traditional family, which they regard as the foundation of the nation. What Jews and homosexuals have in common is their place in the construct of a national, Catholic identity structure.⁸⁵ The symbolic Jew is still present, as is also shown in the use of the term “Jew” – in different linguistic forms – in public discourse and set phrases.⁸⁶ In colloquial speech, on the streets, where children use the word “Jew” to insult one another, in the football stadiums, where the opponent is vilified as “Jewish”, in everyday conversations while shopping or talking to workmen, in which Jews stand for a symbol of whatever is fickle, unreliable, dirty, perfidious, fraudulent. “The Jew”, this “abstract negative symbol”, as he has been defined by Leszek Kołakowski, remains a traditional object of aggression.⁸⁷

As a foil to the presence of the “mythical Jew”, initiatives and associations such as *Borussia* in Olsztyn, *Pogranicze Sejny*, or the German-Polish project *Spurensuche* have begun to pluck the Jewish life from oblivion. Their way of life, their streets and squares, their works and buildings, synagogues and customs are to be made visible on site. These initiatives are frequently organised by non-Jews. This results in the creation of what Ruth Ellen Gruber calls “virtual Jewish”: a putative Jewish culture without Jews. There is always a danger of a folklorisation of Jewish life and its clichéd distortion. Klezmer music and Jewish restaurants are booming in Berlin just as they are in Kazimierz in Cracow, places that used to be centres of European Jewish life, and where there are no longer any Jews left. However, klezmer music and Jewish restaurants are flourishing there precisely because there are no longer any Jews remaining.⁸⁸ This appears to be the alternative: Jewish culture will either be forgotten, as has generally been the case in Warsaw to date, or it will become virtual. But this also

⁸⁴ Agnieszka Graff, “Gej, czyli Żyd”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (25 June 2006).

⁸⁵ Adam Ostolski, “Żydzi, geje i wojna cywilizacji”, (*op. cit.*, 2 (2005)).

⁸⁶ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, “Legends o krwi (z cyklu *Obraz osobliwy*)”, *Teksty drugie*, 4 (2007), pp. 47–72, here p. 47.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 51–54.

⁸⁸ Konstanty Gebert, “Nieautentyczność?”, foreword to Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Odrodzenie kultury żydowskiej w Europie* (Sejny 2004), pp. 11–16, here p. 13.

means that notions of the East European Jews and who they were will increasingly be defined by this virtual Jewishness.⁸⁹

Paths of Remembrance

In the attempt to summarise the different levels of remembrance of the Jewish population, it is noticeable that, since 1990, the landscape of remembrance in Poland has changed dramatically despite certain continuities. The process of analysing the entangled history with the Jews, as well as Polish-Ukrainian, Polish-Russian, and Polish-German history, can be observed in historiography and numerous public debates. Former Foreign Minister Stefan Meller sees these debates about the past as a blessing for his country in the long term.⁹⁰ In its treatment of the past, Poland is going through an interregnum. The past can no longer be found where it used to be. The country is poised between different myths, of which some are not yet accepted, while others no longer are.⁹¹ On the one hand, received attitudes towards the persecution of the Jews are now being questioned, attitudes that to date tended to be remembered as giving assistance to persecuted Jews or as standing by helplessly.⁹² On the other hand, there is a gap between the Polish general public and historiography as to how the limited participation of some Poles in the Shoah should be classified. It is impossible to predict whether an integrated culture of remembrance can be achieved, or whether in the long term there will be two separate remembrance communities that hardly communicate with each other, if at all. Historiography, which is currently scrutinising the period of the German occupation, will find it just as difficult as the general public to ignore the fact that despite the ghetto walls, the Poles were involved in the fate of the Jews in a number of ways and to a far greater extent than has been assumed to date.⁹³ Those who wish to pursue the path of an integrated history and culture of remembrance, those who wish to abandon an exclusive way of remembering that separates the Poles from the Jews in favour of an inclusive remembrance that incorporates the two groups in their shared history will probably have to leave behind the level of nation-state, or at least question it critically. To date, the point of reference in most debates is the nation-state, which is conceived as being mono-ethnic. However, the Polish people were never mono-ethnic. The modern nation-states were not really ethno-national entities, but emerged from historical constructs and are based on myths. In European history, the nation and the nation-state have been an extremely strong gravitational force in the forging of identity, and this phenomenon also applied not least to the Zionists among the Jews. The nation continues to provide an important point of reference. However, a mentality that adheres to a portrayal of history that focuses solely on the nation-state tends to create a clear division between national

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁰ "Ein wundes Land. Noch ist die Vergangenheit in Polen nicht vergangen – Gespräch mit dem Historiker Stefan Meller", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, (27 August 2007).

⁹¹ Jeismann, "Holocaust-Erinnerung", p. 260; Judt, "The Past", p. 180.

⁹² Bömelburg, "Erinnerung", p. 74.

⁹³ Borodziej, "Abschied", pp. 293 and 297.

groups, even though, as is still the case today, these people by no means regarded themselves as being as purely “Polish” or “Jewish” as the nationalists imagined.⁹⁴

Leaving behind the level of the nation-state also presents an opportunity, since in this way, a national self-image based predominantly on continuity and homogeneity becomes more difficult. The current Polish debates are so painful precisely because they have departed from the national (protective) space as transnational debates over self-perception. The Holocaust, for example, has also become a universal point of orientation in commemoration as well as political reception, albeit with very different functions.

But maybe this is what is needed for an open historical memory: leaving behind the nation-state, opening oneself up, and searching for other points of reference that can be researched and debated. In this way, memories of history can become less vertical and more horizontal. Differences, rather than homogeneity, can come to the fore.⁹⁵ If it is possible to overcome the current incompatibility within national remembrance, without apportioning blame or pursuing a competition of victims, to adhere to the principle of self-questioning, while recognising the suffering of others and one’s own guilt, then the normative exclusivity of the individual stories among Jews and Poles could itself be consigned to the past.

⁹⁴ Claudia Kraft, Katrin Steffen, “Europas Platz in Polen”, in idem, *Europas Platz*, pp. 7–30, here p. 11.

⁹⁵ Jeismann, “Holocaust-Erinnerung”, p. 262.

The Place Does not Speak

Photography in Auschwitz

“Could you take a picture of me, please?” asks the friendly tourist, hands over the camera, poses, and indulges in every imaginable cliché – including fingers held up in a “V” sign. It is not the Eiffel Tower in the background, however, but the camp gates at Auschwitz. This is only one of countless photographs taken on this day. More than 1 million people visit the former extermination camp every year – and almost all of them bring a camera. There are not many places in Europe where more photographs are taken than here.

Perhaps all of these pictures are an expression of insecurity. You can hold onto the camera and keep your distance. At each gas chamber and every gallows, you get behind your camera and look at everything on a smaller scale, through the viewfinder or on the screen. “The very activity of taking pictures is soothing, and assuages general feelings of disorientation.”¹

But taking photographs can also have more than a soothing effect. It can facilitate understanding, encourage reflection. For these reasons, the International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim (Auschwitz) has for several years been organising the photo seminar “Hopes” for young photographers from Israel, Poland, and Germany. In 2008, 20 participants spent ten days photographing the Auschwitz camp and the town of Oświęcim, meeting witnesses, discussing photos, and working through the night in the darkroom in order to prepare an exhibition. The resulting pictures tell very different stories of the confrontation with the past. Often it is an examination of the surface, which seems so banal as it is: grass, stones, sand. But everything is contaminated with history. At the same time, “at the site of the mass graves [...] the grass is no less green than elsewhere”.² Only our impressions adapt themselves to our imagination.

Some people prefer to rely on themselves. They have to touch the objects. They pick up stones, find old spoons and buttons, and still cannot understand. To be certain of at least this, they photograph themselves doing such things. These will be the pictures to remember the lack of memory.

For the place does not speak, it leaves you alone. It offers no spatial perspective that could also be temporal. There are no explanations here. Everything feels empty, actually there is nothing to see here.

The glimpse through the viewfinder is suddenly more distressing than soothing.

Ansgar Gilster, Berlin

¹ Susan Sontag, *On Photopraxis* (New York 1977).

² György Konrád, “Aufruhr”, in *Geschichtspolitik und Gegenerinnerung. Krieg, Gewalt und Trauma im Osten Europas* [= OSTEUROPA, 6/2008], pp. 7–11, here, p. 11.



Hadas Tapouchi, Israel



Karolina Kosowicz, Poland



Karolina Kosowicz, Poland



Ansgar Gilster, Germany



Michał Sznajder, Poland



Hadas Tapouchi, Israel



Inbal Gat, Israel



Ansgar Gilster, Deutschland



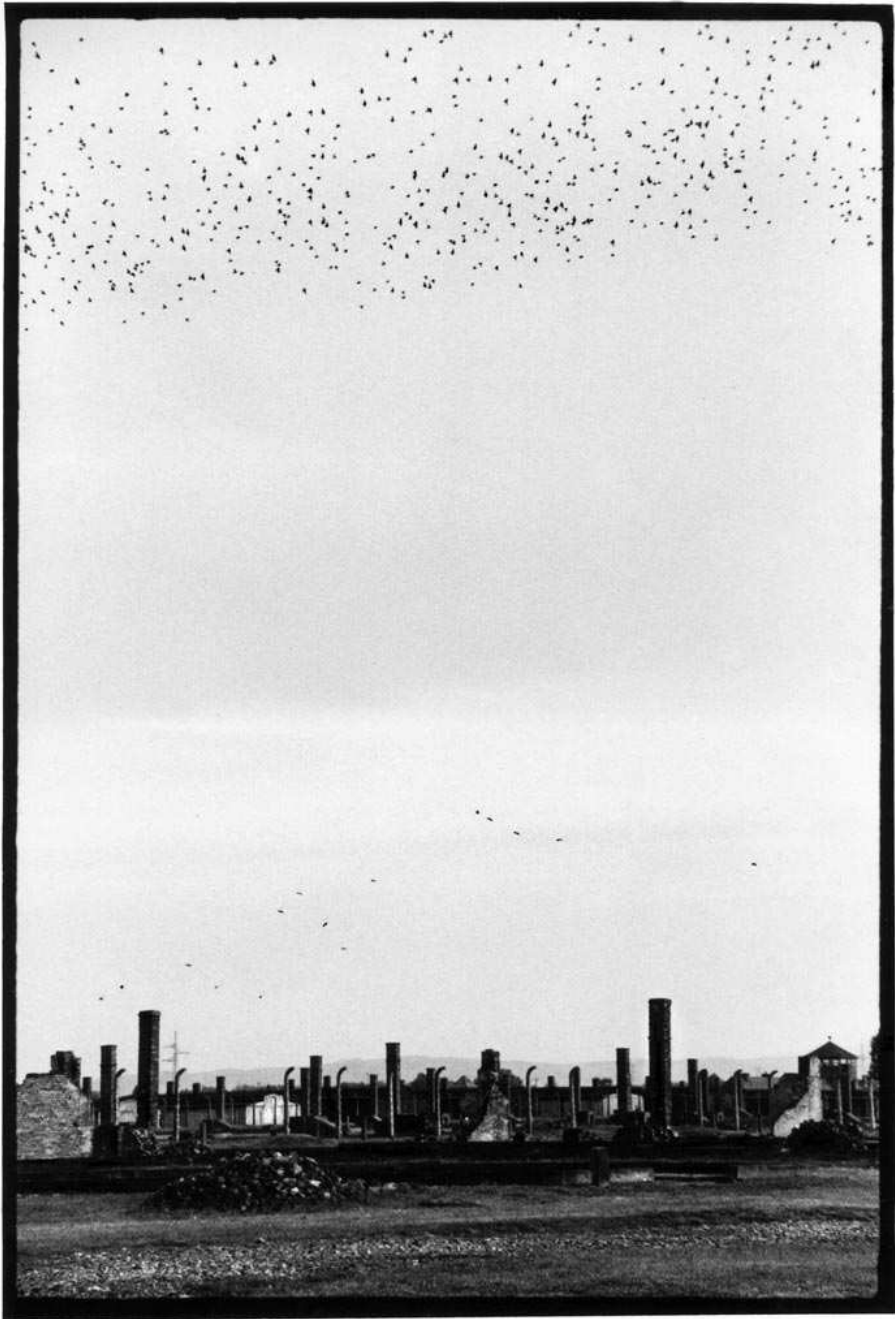
Beide: Hamutal Davidi, Israel



Ansgar Gilster, Germany



Neil Hickey, Germany



Sonja Zell, Germany

Magdalena Waligórska

Fiddler as a Fig Leaf

The Politicisation of Klezmer in Poland

Klezmer music has become very popular in Poland. The Festival of Jewish Culture in Cracow has gained national and international significance. Nonetheless, this is about more than music. The festival has become a litmus test, by which changes in the country's political mood and its attitude towards its Jewish heritage is measured.

*Jews in Poland are important. As a subject.
A subject significant to everyone, to some – obsessive.*

Stanisław Krajewski, *Żydzi, Judaizm, Polska*¹

*Even a Communist government wants to be popular.
Rock 'n' roll costs nothing, so we have rock festival at
the Palace of Culture.*

Jan in Tom Stoppard's *Rock 'n' Roll*

“There is no music without ideology”, said Dmitrii Shostakovich. In Poland, which constitutes a major East European market for commercialized *yidishkayt*, and which is still struggling to acknowledge the Jewish perspective in its collective remembrance of the past, the recent revival of Jewish folk music reverberates not only in concert halls. While klezmer music² accompanies anti-fascist demonstrations in Germany, and clarinetist Giora Feidman, “the king of klezmer”, is honoured with the Great Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the political significance of the klezmer revival has not been lost on Germany's eastern neighbours either.

To be sure, the politicization of this Jewish musical heritage is not a new phenomenon. In the interwar years, it was not uncommon for klezmer *kapelyes* (bands) to accompany political rallies or marches in Eastern Europe.³ Even in the Weimar Republic, East European Jewish folk songs were frequently used by various Jewish

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¹ Stanisław Krajewski, *Żydzi Judaizm Polska* (Warsaw 1997), p. 153.

² The term “klezmer” originally denoted the traditional instrumental music of East European Jewry. However, with the revival of the genre in recent decades, the term has expanded to include new compositions and vocal pieces. In Poland, the label klezmer is often used to market a diverse mix of music ranging from Hebrew folk songs to Polish-language songs by Jewish composers and songwriters. I use the term “klezmer” here according to this contemporary usage.

³ Yale Strom, *The Book of Klezmer* (Chicago 2002), pp. 129–130.

organizations to generate Jewish group identities in the age of dissimilation.⁴ Jewish folk music is also a part of the founding myth of Birobidzhan, a district for the Jews that was established in eastern Siberia. New Yiddish songs celebrating the prosperity of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast within the Soviet Union entered the canon of Yiddish songs throughout the Communist bloc.⁵

By contrast, in the United States, where klezmer arrived along with East European Jewish refugees at the turn of the 20th century, the genre remained politically neutral for a long time. Klezmer then “faded from view”, because “[n]o movement, whether political or religious, had claimed this kind of music”.⁶ This situation changed with the klezmer revival of the 1970s and 1980s. The beginnings of the U.S. klezmer revival are to be found in the protests of the 1960s generation against the Israel policy of American-Jewish leaders.⁷ In fact, one of the features of the klezmer revival in the United States – a “counter-culture phenomenon” in the words of author and performer Yale Strom – was the search for a cultural reference point other than Israel.⁸

In today’s Poland, interest in the country’s Jewish heritage is booming. New festivals of Jewish culture are popping up across the country, former Jewish quarters are being renovated, and Jewish folk music has even made its way onto Saturday evening television. It therefore comes as no surprise that this revival had also attracted the attention of local authorities, politicians, and the media. Klezmer music, an accessible and media-effective form of Jewish heritage, has become the *pars pro toto* of Jewish culture in general. What is more, it corresponds to David Lowenthal’s definition of heritage as “a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes”.⁹

Klezmer: Political Correctness for All Occasions

Klezmer music embellishes all kinds of official events in Poland. Klezmer bands played, for example, at a celebration honouring Poland’s Righteous among the Nations, a meeting of Bishop Stanisław Gądecki with Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and at a commemoration ceremony of the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. It seems that klezmer has become an all-purpose “politically correct” genre that can be successfully employed not only within the context of interreligious dialogue and Holocaust-related events, but as the soundtrack for occasions where there is no obvious reason for using Jewish music.

Klezmer has even become a part of the political discourse. Unsurprisingly, the revival of Jewish heritage music serves as a prime example of Polish-Jewish reconciliation and dialogue and comes in very handy as a counter-image when xenophobic and antisemitic acts of violence occur in Poland. Large-scale manifestations of Jewish heritage, such as the Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow are particularly powerful

⁴ Philip Bohlman, *Jüdische Volksmusik – eine mitteleuropäische Geistesgeschichte* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar 2005), p. 27.

⁵ A collection of Yiddish songs from Birobidzhan were reprinted also in German Democratic Republic: Lin Jaldati, Eberhard Rebling, eds., *Es brennt, Brüder, es brennt. Jiddische Lieder* (Berlin 1985), p. 213.

⁶ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Sounds of Sensibility”, *Judaism* 47, 1 (1998), p. 57.

⁷ Rita Ottens, Joel Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik* (Munich 1999), p. 296.

⁸ Michael Alpert quoted in Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, p. 224.

⁹ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge 2005), p. x.

symbols. The final concert is broadcast on public television and watched by several hundred thousands of Poles. Consequently, these flagship cultural events of Jewish heritage are employed in public discourse to illustrate Polish society's positive attitude towards Jews.

Cracow's first Jewish Culture Festival in 1988 immediately caught the media's attention and was acclaimed as "a cultural event of great importance" and "unprecedented not only in Poland, but also in the socialist bloc [sic!]"¹⁰ Local commentators, who at that time were unaware of East Berlin's Days of Yiddish Culture (*Tage der Jiddischen Kultur*, 1987–1996), believed that the first festival marked the start of an ideological thaw in the Communist bloc, and that Jewish heritage could be more freely presented. One journalist described the festival as a groundbreaking event: It "blazed a new path and new course of action in a field that had been especially neglected and denied"¹¹.

This "new path" meant not only educating Poles about the Polish-Jewish past, but strengthening Polish-Israeli relations as well. At a time when Israel did not have an embassy in Warsaw, the presence of Israeli diplomats at the festival was a clear political statement that could be interpreted as a harbinger of change. The organizers of the second, this time international festival in 1990 visibly profited from the systemic change underway in Poland. The public display of Jewish heritage marked a symbolic end to the Communist state's monolithic model of culture.¹²

As the festival grew in size and importance, the political significance ascribed to it by the media increased accordingly. Reporting on the festival's final concert in 1995, the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* wrote that the development of Polish-Jewish dialogue is easier to carry out by "means of culture" than by "listing the wrongs suffered".¹³ The official Web site that promotes Polish culture abroad wrote in 2002 that the festival was "the best way of bringing together these two nations – the Polish nation and the Jewish nation"; this was made possible "[m]ainly thanks to the music, which is a special form of cultural transmission and which is omnipresent at the festival".¹⁴ Similarly, the weekly *Polityka* interpreted the festival's final concert in 2004 as a "symbol of reconciliation, forgiveness, and victory of life over death, recognizable in Poland and in the world".¹⁵ Clearly, the impact ascribed to the revival of Jewish heritage in Poland, epitomized by Cracow's Jewish Culture Festival, has come to be measured in universal values. The festival, presented as both a symbol and means of reconciliation, is no longer anchored in its particular Polish, spatial, and temporal context, but has come to be identified with transcendent, long-term historical processes.

Polish politicians were likewise prompt to adopt the revival of Jewish musical heritage as a showcase of a successful multicultural policy. Former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski spoke of the Cracow festival as a platform for dialogue, a contribution

¹⁰ Oskar Sobański, "Więcej niż fascynacja", *Film*, 27, 3 July 1988, cited in *Powiększenie*, 1–4 (1990), p. 250, and Janusz Michalczak, "Swoi i obcy", *Dziennik Polski* (20 May 1988), cited in *ibid.*, p. 251.

¹¹ Sobański, "Więcej niż fascynacja" cited in *Powiększenie*, 1–4 (1990), p. 250.

¹² Krzysztof Gierat and Janusz Makuch, *II Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej, Kraków 1990* (Cracow 1990), p. 11.

¹³ Grażyna Lubińska, "W blasku synagogi Tempel", *Gazeta Wyborcza Kraków* (19 June 1995).

¹⁴ Jean Kahn in <www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/wy_fe_kultura_zydowska_2002>.

¹⁵ Katarzyna Janowska, "Festiwal Żydowski. Duch Kazimierza", *Polityka*, 28 (2460), (10 July 2004), p. 58.

to integration, and a part of “common heritage”.¹⁶ Similarly, Warsaw Mayor Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz expressed his belief that his city’s Festival of Jewish Culture “serves the present Polish-Jewish dialogue and ... spreads the idea of tolerance”.¹⁷ For Cracow Mayor Józef Lassota, the Jewish Culture Festival in his city was even the antithesis of Auschwitz. He opened the fourth festival with the words:

I hope that, just as Auschwitz became the symbol of extermination, Cracow will become the symbol of the preservation of what can be conserved – the memory of Polish Jews and their culture.¹⁸

Some have interpreted the successful revival of Jewish heritage in Poland as proof of Poland’s traditional openness and a rebuttal of claims that Poland is an antisemitic country. Mayor Marcinkiewicz spoke of the Jewish festival in Warsaw as an event that allows its visitors to “get to know and remember Warsaw as a city open to a variety of cultures and religions”.¹⁹ Addressing the participants of the Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow, then Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek wrote that the city had “always been open and hospitable”.²⁰ One reviewer wrote: “No-one who attended this great feast of Jewish music in Kazimierz is ever going to believe that Poland is an anti-Semitic country.”²¹

This public narrative of the festival as a success story of peace and reconciliation, not only for its organizers and participants but for the entire Polish nation, is occasionally forced to confront acts of antisemitism parallel to the “feasts of Jewish music”. *Gazeta Wyborcza* reported during the 1994 Cracow festival that a Jew had been beaten up by skinheads “in full view” of the festival audience, and that several grave-stones at the Jewish cemetery had been damaged.²² More recently, in 2007, on the day of the festival’s final concert in Cracow, neo-fascists marched in nearby Myślenice to celebrate the anniversary of anti-Jewish riots that took place before the Second World War.²³ While the story of the festival tends to be framed as if it were shared by the citizens of Cracow or the Polish nation as whole, the bitter counterpoints to this optimistic depiction are considered exceptions.

Battle for Primacy of Heritage

The revival of Poland’s Jewish heritage, however, is instrumentalised not only by those Poles who see in it a panacea for Poland’s antisemitism, but also by those who deny the very existence of the malady. Some political figures in Poland are particular-

¹⁶ Aleksander Kwaśniewski in *11. Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej w Krakowie* (Cracow 2001), p. 3.

¹⁷ Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz in *Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej Warszawa Singera* (Warsaw 2006), p. 5.

¹⁸ Józef Lassota in *4. Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej w Krakowie. 19.–26. czerwca 1994* (Cracow 1994), p. 2.

¹⁹ Marcinkiewicz in *Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej Warszawa Singera*, p. 5.

²⁰ Jerzy Buzek in *11. Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej w Krakowie* (Cracow 2001), p. 4.

²¹ Elżbieta Morawiec, “Polska leży w Europie”, *Nowy Świat* (23 June 1992), printed in *4. Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej w Krakowie. 19.–26. czerwca 1994* (Cracow 1994), p. 55.

²² Dorota Szwarzman, Grażyna Lubińska, “IV Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej w Krakowie 19–26 czerwca. Klezmerzy nowocześni”, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (28 June 1994), p. 11.

²³ Bartłomiej Kuraś, “ONR z poparciem PIS?”, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (2 July 2007), p. 4.

ly sympathetic to certain concerns voiced by their voters and see the promotion of Jewish heritage as undesirable, even detrimental to advancing Polish values.

Shortly after being sworn in as Polish prime minister, Jarosław Kaczyński put this point of view into words on the Catholic TV channel *Telewizja Trwam* in July 2006. After a viewer called the studio to complain about the partiality of public television, which had broadcast “some klezmer band” during the final concert of the Jewish festival, but had made no reference to a pilgrimage of the country’s “best Poles, that is, Catholics and patriots” to the shrine of the Black Madonna in Częstochowa, Kaczyński responded:

Here, I fully agree with you, the example was terrific. Something important is taking place in Częstochowa, something that should be broadcast, and at length, and nothing is said about it. On the other hand, there is an event of, frankly speaking, city-, district-level, maybe municipal-level significance, and it is shown. I have nothing against it being shown, but there is a certain hierarchy. And it should be respected.²⁴

The hierarchy to respect is, in this case, Polish, i.e. Catholic, heritage first. The broadcast of the Jewish festival in this case is interpreted as a sign of the public media’s inadequate support for the Kaczyński government’s politics, and klezmer music as the antithesis of “true” Polish heritage.²⁵

Although nationalist-Catholic media – such as *Telewizja Trwam* and the daily *Nasz Dziennik* – use the symbolic force of initiatives such as the various festivals of Jewish culture to emphasise Polish benevolence to the Jews, they also resent the public visibility of such events.²⁶ As was illustrated by recent protests against the monument of David the Psalmist, which was erected in Zamość in 2007, the “defenders” of Polishness consider any representation of Jewish heritage “alien to [Polish] culture and national identity”.²⁷ In this battle for primacy of heritage, space dedicated to Jewish heritage is, from their perspective, lost space for Polish heritage. The same principle may be what motivates those who, with unwavering determination, year after year, paste large tags reading “called off” (*odwołane*) on the posters advertising the Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow. However, this symbolic act, which is marginal relative to the far-reaching publicity given the festival, exemplifies the persistent rejection of Jewish heritage among some Poles.

The organizers of the Cracow festival complain less about such individual acts of vandalism than they lament the general lack of interest on the part of authorities in promoting other less spectacular local initiatives aimed at preserving the city’s Jewish heritage. Cracow festival director Janusz Makuch says that Polish politicians are losing an opportunity to change Poland’s image abroad where Polish-Jewish relations are concerned.²⁸ Although Cracow’s Jewish Culture Festival is supported in part by the

²⁴ Jarosław Kaczyński cited in “Premier Kaczyński w Radiu Maryja, Rozmowy niedokończone, 23 lipca Radio Maryja i Telewizja Trwam”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29–30 July 2006, p. 16.

²⁵ On the world view of the Kaczyński government, see *Quo vadis, Polonia? Kritik der polnischen Vernunft* [= OSTEUROPA 11–12/2006] (Berlin 2006).

²⁶ See, for example, the letter of the Patriotic League of American Polonia (Patriotyczna Liga Polonii Amerykańskiej) published in “W obronie prawdy”, *Nasz Dziennik* (3 August 2007), available at <www.naszdziennik.pl/index.php?dat=20070803&typ=po&id=po51.txt>.

²⁷ Mariusz Kamieniecki, “Niechciany pomnik”, *Nasz Dziennik* (22 May 2007), available at <www.naszdziennik.pl/index.php?dat=20070522&typ=po&id=po33.txt>.

²⁸ On this, see the contribution by Katrin Steffen in this volume, pp. 195–217.

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and takes place under the honorary patronage of the president of Poland, Makuch believes that Polish politicians still do not fathom the festival's true significance:

I never stop urging politicians to realize the festival's value. I believe that our politicians still treat this festival as just any other event, without understanding the fact that it is an expression of certain hopes, expectations, and wishes originating from the fact that 3.5 million Jews once lived here, and now there is a void.²⁹

Zev Feldman, one of the pioneers of the American klezmer revival, both a musicologist and a performer who is a regular guest at the Cracow festival, notes the discrepancy between the positive image generated by the festival and the real problems of Polish-Jewish relations, which remain unresolved. Feldman, observing the political situation in Poland in the summer of 2007, remarked:

I can see that in this situation anything that makes Poland seem like a fair, liberal, honest country would serve the interests of the people representing Poland to the world. And it's the kind of thing that would look positive, even if all the underlying issues were never resolved at all. It's possible for a country to have a festival like this and still have an antisemitic party in charge of education.³⁰

Makuch is also aware of the fact that the festival often serves as "a fig leaf to conceal the real problem". He resents the festival being used as a "rhetorical device" in politicians' speeches and dreams of Polish authorities recognizing the didactic importance of the event, around which one could build "a programme of mental changes" in Poland:

People have to realize the dimensions of the enormous evil that was done here and understand that it is important to cleanse themselves of it. The festival creates a confessional space that should help people realize what happened here and what we have lost. We have to ask ourselves the question why we lost it, what our guilt is, what our Polish complicity is in the fact that this Jewish world is not only gone, but will never return.³¹

Unfortunately, as part of the public discourse about the revival of Jewish heritage in Poland indicates, there is vehement opposition to a collective discussion on Polish complicity in the disappearance of the "Jewish world". The messianic tradition, by which Poland has endured repetitive historical wrongs as the "Christ of the Nations" in order to redeem Europe, encourages Poles to dwell on Polish losses, rather than to

²⁹ Interview with Janusz Makuch, 3 May 2007.

³⁰ The interview with Zev Feldman was carried out on 23 August 2007, when Roman Giertych, the leader of the extreme right-wing League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*) was minister of education and deputy prime minister in the Kaczyński government.

³¹ Makuch, 3 May 2007.

sympathize with the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust.³² And the “obsession of innocence”³³ celebrated in public discourse impedes critical perspectives on anti-Jewish violence, the appropriation of Jewish property, and the widespread moral indifference towards the Holocaust. Rather than serving as a starting point of painful therapy, the Jewish heritage boom is flaunted as ultimate proof of perfect health.

Klezmer and World Politics

The revival of Jewish heritage in Poland is not only politicized in the public discourse at home, but is also affected by political events around the world. Like a seismograph, the Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow registers shock waves emanating from international political upheaval, particularly those originating in the Middle East.

In 2002, news of the stand off between Fatah militants and the Israeli Defence Forces at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem triggered an immediate response aimed at the Jewish festival. A group of Polish veterans, represented by their spokesman Jerzy Bukowski, composed an open letter to the Cracow municipal authorities and the organizers of the Jewish Culture Festival, urging them to cancel the event. The authors of the letter, who justified their appeal with “concern for the safety of the festival’s participants, particularly the guests of Jewish origin as well as Arab restaurant owners in Cracow”,³⁴ requested that the financial means devoted to organising the festival be redirected to rebuild the damaged fragments of the Bethlehem church. Shortly thereafter, the signatories, together with activists from the Polish-Arab Cultural Association, organized a demonstration against the Israeli occupation and again demanded that the Jewish Culture Festival be called off.³⁵

The line of argument connecting the festival with the conflict in the Middle East was striking in that it reflected domestic partisan considerations more than any true concern for the Israelis or Palestinians. Although protest organizers feared that the Cracow festival might become a scene of violence, they were particularly outraged by the “merciless attack of the Israeli army on one of the holiest sites of Christianity”.³⁶ The Jewish Culture Festival, as one of the most successful and far-reaching manifestations of Jewry in Poland, was thus turned into a screen onto which anti-Israeli sentiment and stereotypes of Jews as enemies of Christianity could be projected.

The Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow, which, like many other similar initiatives in Poland, concentrates primarily on the heritage of East European Jews, has also fostered good relations with Israel and Israeli culture. The Embassy of Israel in Warsaw is among the festival’s sponsors, Israeli artists are frequent guests, and the 2008 festival included many special events to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel. In fact, festival director Makuch makes it clear that he has no intention of disowning the State of Israel, and in moments of military or political tension in the Middle East, he

³² The concept of national messianism was developed in Poland by primarily Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) in his drama *Dziady*, where he presents a vision of Poland as the crucified Christ among the nations of Europe. This messianic philosophy has since been used to frame Polish national suffering in the pattern of redemption.

³³ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste* (Sejny 2004), p. 13–15.

³⁴ “List otwarty do władz miasta Krakowa i organizatorów Festiwalu Kultury Żydowskiej”, *Gazeta Wyborcza Kraków* (10 April 2002), p. 2.

³⁵ “Przeciw okupacji i festiwalowi”, *Gazeta Wyborcza Kraków*, 13 April 2002, p. 4.

³⁶ “List otwarty”, p. 2.

does not hesitate to express his open support for Israel. At the 2006 festival, which coincided with the conflict in Lebanon, Makuch introduced the open-air concert of the Israeli drummer Shlomo Bar, saying: “Shlomo Bar is the voice of the desert, the voice of Israel, with which we all share in solidarity.”³⁷ Thus, the final concert of the festival was also presented as a gesture of solidarity with the Jewish state at war.

With the special focus on Israel, it was all but inevitable that the 2008 festival would also turn into a political event. Even though festival organizers distanced themselves from the political dimension of the 60th anniversary of Israel’s founding by declaring that the festival was not to “celebrate a political act”, but to “present the great melting pot of cultures in Israel”,³⁸ their statement did not prevent an extreme nationalist group from demonstrating against Israel in front of one of the synagogues during the address by the Israeli ambassador. The organisation behind the protest, the *Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski* (National Renaissance of Poland) – which is notorious for its antisemitic publications and fascist inclinations – framed its manifestation in terms of a human rights protest, accusing Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians. The organizers of the festival reacted to the protestors by forming a human chain to hide the nationalist banners. Thus, by treating the festival as a symbolic extension of Israel, Polish nationalists appropriated the festival’s space and turned it into a political showdown.



Volunteers block a nationalist banner at the Cracow Festival in 2008.

³⁷ Interview with Janusz Makuch, 8 June 2006.

³⁸ Makuch quoted in Ryszard Kozik, “W izraelskim tyglu kultur”, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (27 June 2008), p. 18.

The festival also can also turn into an arena for spontaneous political statements not necessarily related to the State of Israel. Given that many of the artists performing at the festival come from the United States, commentaries on U.S. foreign policy have made their way into klezmer concerts. Lisa Mayer, a Jewish-American musician who gave a concert of Hassidic music at the 2003 festival, recalls an incident that took place one evening during a klezmer jam session:

Because it was July 4, I asked them if it was okay if I could just sing some American songs in honour of my country. And the first thing was someone screaming: “Get out of Iraq!” And I looked at them, and I said, “I didn’t vote for this president. I’m really sorry.”³⁹

The anti-American mood caused by the war in Iraq thus manifested itself in this quite unexpected context, making the Jewish festival again a forum for political comments. Developments in Polish domestic politics are likewise reflected at the festival. The traditional presidential letter to the participants of the festival has been missing since Lech Kaczyński of the party Law and Justice became president at the end of 2005. This absence has been particularly conspicuous in the festival’s official programme, where the president’s greeting used to appear on the first page. Current political events, whether in Poland or the Middle East, reverberate at the Jewish Culture Festival, even if it is not the organizers’ intent. The Cracow festival has become a litmus test by which Poland’s changing political mood and attitudes towards its Jewish heritage can be measured.

Musicians Without a Message?

Coming down from the highest echelons of power to the music itself, it is interesting to see to what extent musicians themselves use klezmer’s political potential. Messages of social or political critique are in fact not uncommon on the international klezmer scene. The celebrated American group the *Klezmatiks* not only advocate progressive gender politics in their songs, they also refer to 9/11 in their Yiddish version of Holly Near’s “I Ain’t Afraid”.⁴⁰ The American all-female klezmer band *Mikveh* emerged from a feminist campaign to stop violence against women.⁴¹ Other U.S. klezmer revivalists accept the Socialist content of songs of the anti-Zionist General Jewish Labour Union, the Bund, and have even recorded the Yiddish version of the “Internationale”.⁴²

Meanwhile, new, unorthodox klezmer songs are being made in Germany. The Jewish-American singer-songwriter Daniel Kahn, currently based in Berlin, made headlines

³⁹ Interview with Lisa Mayer, 23 August 2007.

⁴⁰ Abigail Wood, “The Multiple Voices of American Klezmer”, *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 1, 3 (2007), pp. 385–388.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

⁴² “The Upward Flight. The Musical World of S. An-sky”, a CD accompanying, Gabriella Safran, Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century* (Stanford 2006).

with his song about the Vilnius-born Jewish partisan Abba Kovner (1918–1987).⁴³ His controversial song “Nakam (6000000 Germans)”, describes Kovner’s terrorist cell *Nakam* (Hebrew: vengeance), which sought to carry out spectacular acts of revenge for the Holocaust. Their goal: one German for every victim of the Shoah.

In this context, it is perhaps surprising to note that political and social dissent is actually avoided by Polish klezmer musicians. One searches in vain for Socialist or Communist songs in the repertory of Polish artists. In fact, the entire revolutionary legacy of Yiddish songs remains taboo in Poland. What is more, even when Jan T. Gross’s book *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* was sending shock waves through Polish society in 2001 – as well as more recently when his latest work *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz* appeared in Polish translation in early 2008 – not a single song was dedicated to the Jedwabne pogrom, voiced empathy for the victims, or objected to the antisemitic sentiments unleashed by the debate. Although the Polish-Jewish past is a subject of deep political significance, the revivalists of Jewish heritage in Poland tend to divorce their work from politics.

Some Polish bands admit that they do not want their music to be “contaminated” by politics, or that they do not play klezmer music “for ideological reasons”.⁴⁴ Do Polish musicians avoid political overtones because the klezmer revival has been instrumentalised in public discourse? Or do they distrust the combination of “Jewish” and “political” as often employed in antisemitic propaganda in Poland?

Right-wing nationalist politicians and publicists began to link “Jewishness” with Communism back in the 1920s, when the term “Judeo-Communism” (*żydokomuna*) was coined. Inspired by the French for “Judeo-Masonry” (*judéo-maçonnerie*), the term was the Polish expression of the commonplace 19th-century European perception of Jews as conspiring to seize control of the world.⁴⁵ The myth of Judeo-Communism postulated that all Jews were Communists, and all Communists were Jews.

After 1945, the stereotype was based on two assumptions: that the Jews had supported Communism before the Second World War and had made up a majority within the Communist Party of Poland, and that they had imposed the Communist regime on the Poles after the war, enjoyed a privileged position within the regime, and benefited from it.⁴⁶ Historians have dismantled this stereotype, pointing out that Jews were no more supportive of Communism than Poles, even though the percentage of high-ranking party officials of Jewish descent was higher than the percentage of Jews in Polish society. This, however, was due to a higher literacy rate among Jews as well as the fact that many in Poland’s postwar Jewish community survived the Holocaust in the Soviet Union and saw in the Communists – first in the Polish Workers’ Party, then the Polish United Workers’ Party – the only force that could protect them after the war. Second, Jews did not necessarily profit from their leftist inclinations, given that

⁴³ Tom Segev describes the story of Abba Kovner in *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York 2000). The song *Nakam* is available at <<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=83093214>>.

⁴⁴ Interviews with Jarosław Bester, 17 April 2004, and Marcin Wiercioch, 30 June 2006, respectively.

⁴⁵ Aleksander Klugman, *Żyd – co to znaczy?* (Warsaw 2003), p. 171; Michael Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona: polska pamięć Zagłady* (Warsaw 2001), p. 64.

⁴⁶ Gross, *Fear*, p. 192.

the Polish United Workers' Party grew increasingly antisemitic over time and ultimately expelled the Jews from Poland in 1968.⁴⁷

At the peak of political hostility towards Jews in 1968, official antisemitic discourse also revolved around political issues. After the Six-Day War in 1967, when Poland's Communists sided with the Arabs, Polish Jews were depicted as a "fifth column", collaborating with "ex-Hitlerites", denigrating the Polish nation's martyrdom, and blaming Poles for the Holocaust.⁴⁸

The key features ascribed to the "anti-Polish Zionists" in 1968 were linked to their supposed political engagement (for the other side). Jews were depicted as members of some kind of "political, financial, or cultural establishment" and even assigned mutually exclusive identities, for example, that of both "Stalinists" and "agents of American imperialism". The Jew as the universal enemy provided the regime with a scapegoat for Stalinism's crimes.⁴⁹ As a result of this antisemitic campaign, around 20,000 Jews were forced to leave the country. With that, Poland lost almost all of its remaining Jews.

Are Polish musicians wary of the echoes of 1968 in their reluctance to make political statements in Jewish music? Would songs from the Bund on a Polish stage invoke the spectre of Judeo-Communism? Daniel Kahn and his band *Painted Bird*⁵⁰ – whose very name prompted a Polish journalist to remark: "They came to provoke" – explore complicated elements of Polish-Jewish history, but do so in Berlin.⁵¹

Polish klezmer musicians prefer to stay away from political connotations and controversy. But can Poles speak of an honest revival of Poland's Jewish heritage without addressing the Jewish revolutionary legacy and antisemitic depictions of Jews as Communists?

Conclusion

If music's relationship to politics is best expressed by the prepositions "for", "against", "despite", or "thanks to", the same is true for how politics positions itself vis-à-vis music.⁵² In Polish public discourse, it is clear that numerous prepositions are in circulation. Klezmer music functions in Poland as a metaphor for the popular interest in the country's Jewish heritage. The nature of this interest and its implications, however, are rarely probed. While some critics raise issues such as the commercialisation of Jewish heritage by mostly non-Jewish artists, the clichéd depictions of Jews within the klezmer scene, and the reduction of Jewish culture in public perception to folkloric images of shtetl life, these protestations rarely reverberate in official discourse.⁵³

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 199; Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona*, pp. 65–66.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴⁹ Dariusz Stola, "Fighting against the Shadows: The Anti-Zionist Campaign of 1968", in: R. Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca and London 2005), pp. 284–300.

⁵⁰ *The Painted Bird* is the title of one of Jerzy Kosiński's novels, which was accused by some Polish critics as anti-Polish. *The Painted Bird* was banned in Poland until 1989.

⁵¹ Mariusz Wiatrak, "Kabaret makabryczny", *Gazeta Wyborcza Kraków* (29 June 2007), p. 7.

⁵² Stephan Eisel, *Politik und Musik. Musik zwischen Zensur und politischem Missbrauch* (Bonn 1990), p. 13.

⁵³ See *Midrasz*, 3, 107 (2006); Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Odrodzenie kultury żydowskiej w Europie* (Sejny 2005); Henryk Halkowski, *Żydowskie życie* (Cracow 2003); Bartosz Hlebowicz,

The revival of Jewish heritage, as embodied by klezmer, is presented as a symbol of and an actor in social processes. Klezmer stands in the public discourse for reconciliation between Poles and Jews and is at the same time believed to provide the social context for its achievement. The actual impact of the klezmer revival on its participants and the contribution of such events as Jewish festivals to the dialogue between Jews and non-Jews in Poland are not being called into question here. These issues have already been discussed elsewhere.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the evidence presented in this article suggests that the klezmer revival has become a rhetorical device, a phenomenon that can also be invoked conveniently to deflect public attention from stubborn, latent antisemitic attitudes in Poland.

Poland's klezmer revival is instrumentalised in many contradictory ways. It is brought up as a counter-argument in debates on anti-Jewish prejudice, but it is also presented as antithetical and even threatening to Polish national heritage. Klezmer music in the Polish public discourse has clearly become a symbol that goes far beyond the actual musical phenomenon. The theatre director Michał Zadara confessed in a recent interview that he associated Poland with "the Shoah, klezmer music ... Communism, Wałęsa, and Chopin".⁵⁵ The reference to klezmer as a hallmark of Poland within such a list of symbols put forward by a prominent contemporary artist indicates that the term not only circulates widely in public discourse, but has become an indicator of contemporary social processes in Poland.

"Wierzchołek nieistniejącej góry", *Tygodnik Powszechny* (3 July 2005), available at <<http://tygodnik2003-2007.onet.pl/1548,1235372,0,dzial.html>>.

⁵⁴ See Ruth E. Gruber, "The Kraków Jewish Culture Festival" in Michael C. Steinlauf, Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polin. Focusing on Jewish Popular Culture and its Afterlife* (Oxford and Portland 2003), pp. 357–367; Erica Lehrer, "Bearing False Witness? Vicarious Jewish Identity and the Politics of Affinity", in Dorota Glowacka, Joanna Zylińska, eds., *Imaginary Neighbors* (Lincoln and London 2007), pp. 84–109; Magdalena Waligórska, "A Goy Fiddler on the Roof. How the Non-Jewish Participants of the Klezmer Revival in Kraków Negotiate Their Polish Identity in a Confrontation with Jewishness", *Polish Sociological Review*, 4, 152 (2005), pp. 367–382.

⁵⁵ Jacek Cieślak, "Kapitaliści nigdy nie mają pieniędzy", *Rzeczpospolita* (29 February 2008), available at <www.rp.pl/artykul/100027.html>.

Zofia Wóycicka

1,000 Years in a Museum

The History of Polish Jews

In 2011, Warsaw's Museum of the History of Polish Jews will open. A millennium of Jewish history in Poland is to be told on 4,000 square metres of exhibition space. The museum will also serve as a national culture and education centre. The building itself – which involved the collaboration of an international team of historians, architects, and exhibition designers – will be one of the most modern museum facilities in Europe.

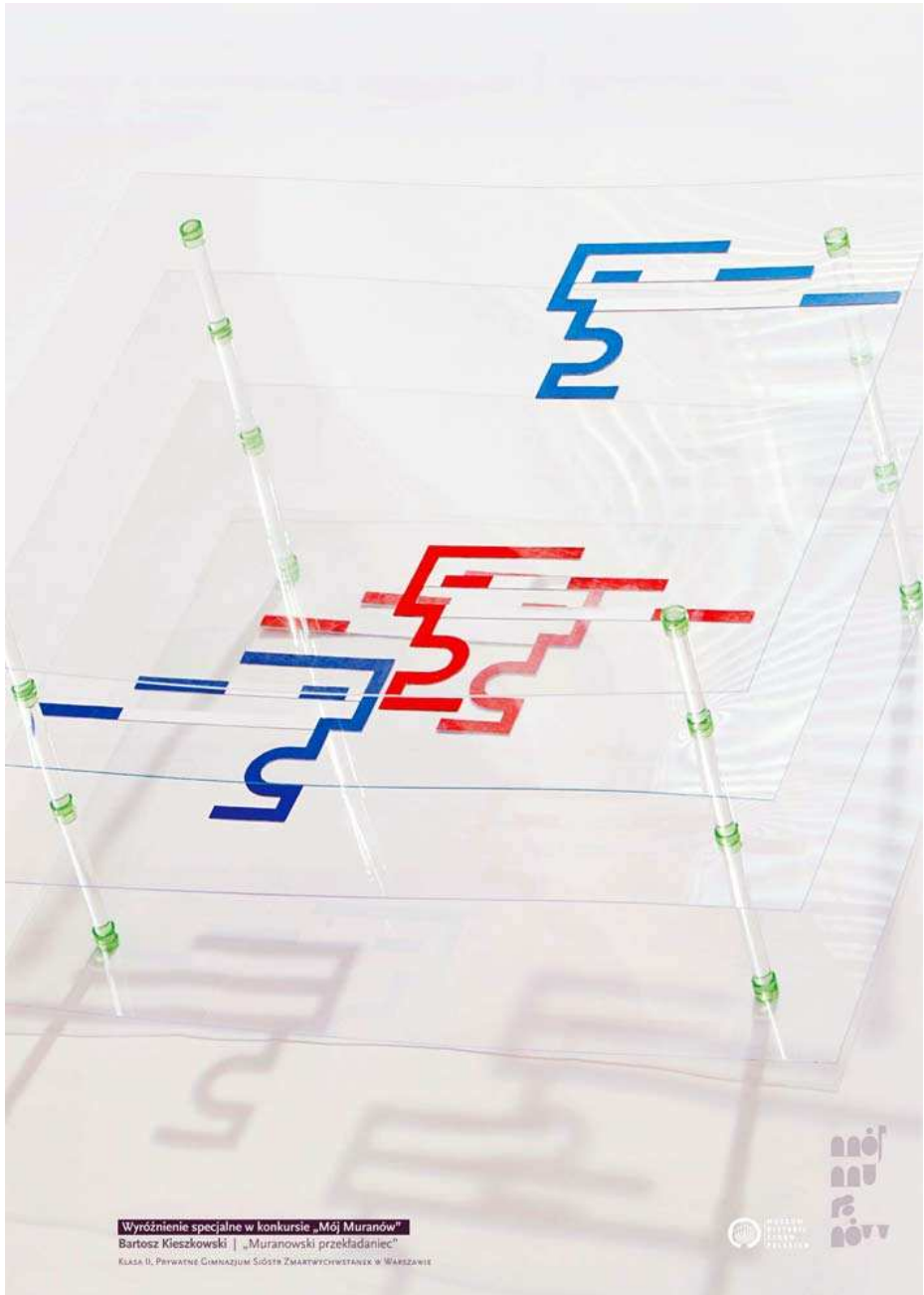
With over 3 million Jews – about 10 per cent of the overall population – Poland was the largest centre of Jewish life in Europe before the Second World War. Over 300,000 members of the Jewish faith lived in Warsaw alone. The Polish capital was one of the most important centres of Jewish spiritual and cultural life. Most of Warsaw's Jews lived in what was known as the Northern Quarter, now called Muranów. The Germans erected a ghetto there in the autumn of 1940. Over 400,000 people were confined to just a few square kilometres. This was the largest ghetto in occupied Europe. In summer 1942, around 300,000 inhabitants of the ghetto were deported to the killing centre Treblinka. The ghetto's remaining inmates incited an uprising in April 1943. Roughly one month later, after the uprising had been suppressed, the Germans razed the entire ghetto to the ground. Following the war, a new residential area made up of buildings in the Stalinist “wedding cake” style was built over the rubble.

Today, there are only a handful of relics to serve as a reminder of this area's Jewish heritage. A few streets may still have their old names, but today, most follow a much different route. Just a few centimetres beneath the soil, however, lay the ruins and foundations of a “lost city”, and the current residents of Muranów, most of whom moved to Warsaw after the war, have but a vague notion of what existed there before 1939.¹

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews will open in 2011 across from the Monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and at the corner of what used to be the intersection of Zamenhof Street and Gęsia Street. In an exhibition space of 4,000 square metres, the museum will present the history of Polish Jews from the Middle Ages to the present.

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¹ *Muranów i Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich: tożsamość, pamięć miejsca, postrzeganie dzielnicy i jej żydowskiej historii. Raport z badań jakościowych dla Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich.* Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami i Pracownia Badań Środowiskowych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Maria Lewicka, Katarzyna Kuzko, Agata Maksimowska, et al., eds., (Warsaw 2007), pp. 7, 14–23.



Installation “Muranów Layer Cake” by Bartosz Kieszkowski (2nd year pupil at gymnasium).

While the Second World War will occupy an important place in the exhibition, the institution will not be a Holocaust museum. The founders' main mission is to present the richness and variety of Jewish culture and tradition in Poland. This approach is to make visible what Poland and Europe lost in the Shoah. It also aims to show that Jewish life in Poland was not completely extinguished in the Holocaust. It is the institute's mission to fill these gaps in memory and so contribute to create a better understanding of the history shared by Poles and Jews with roots in Poland.

Project History, Structure, and Financing

The idea to found the museum was first broached in the mid-1990s by Jeshajahu Weinberg, one of the founders and the first director of both the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Born in Warsaw, Weinberg immigrated to Palestine with his family in 1933. Work on the museum concept was initiated by Grażyna Pawlak, who was at the time the director of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute (*Stowarzyszenie Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*) in Poland. The role of project manager was given to Jerzy Halberstadt, now the museum's director and a former employee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. To support the project, a committee was formed. It was soon joined by many notable people in public life, such as two previous foreign ministers, Władysław Bartoszewski and the recently deceased Bronisław Geremek, and the world famous film director Andrzej Wajda.²

Then Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski assumed patronage of the project and Israeli President Shimon Peres – at the time Israeli prime minister – was made chairman of the international honorary committee established to support museum construction. In 1997, the City of Warsaw settled on the plot of land that was to become the site of the future museum. It is located across from the Monument to the Ghetto Uprising. Only in 2003, however, did the museum receive approval from the state for long-term financial support. Poland's 2004 budget for the first time allotted funding to support work on the museum: 1.5 million złoty (then about €320,000). The means were approved in a special session of Poland's parliament, the Sejm, after a representative from Catholic National Movement (*Ruch Katolicko-Narodowy*), a small party, filed a motion to eliminate the funding. In the end, 299 representatives voted in favour of the funding, 94 against it.³ Financial support for the project was also promised by Lech Kaczyński, Warsaw's mayor at the time. In 2005, the museum was officially registered as a joint cultural institute (*instytucja kultury*) of the City of Warsaw and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute.

² For information on the members see

<www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/articles.php?miId=154&lang=en>.

³ Most of the votes against the project were from members of the right-wing nationalist party League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*) and the agrarian, populist Self-Defence (*Samoobrona*). Both of these parties voted against funding the museum. Representatives of the Union of the Democratic Left (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*), Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*) and Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) voted with the majority in favour of funding the museum; <<http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata4.nsf>>; <<http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/SQL.nsf/glosowania?OpenAgent&4&65&120>>.

The museum is the only public-private initiative of its kind in Poland. The City of Warsaw, the Polish Ministry of Culture, and the Association for the Jewish Historical Institute are the museum's supporting organisations.⁴ This means that the mayor of Warsaw and minister of culture are obliged to bear the costs of funding the museum as an institution, its ongoing activities, salaries, and administration. The city owns and oversees the land where the museum will be constructed. The association will finance work on the plan for the permanent exhibition and its furnishing, the furnishing of other facilities within the museum complex, and most of the public events and educational projects. The association solicits funding from other public and private foundations in Poland and abroad. It is supported by national committees for the museum's construction. Such committees have already been formed in the United States, Israel, Great Britain, Germany, France, and other European countries. The museum received a donation of €5 million from the German government in November 2007. The Polish Ministry of Culture and the City of Warsaw have promised approximately €61 million for construction. To date, the association has raised about €12 million for the project and museum facilities as well as for the permanent exhibition. Another €24 million is still needed. The museum director will be named by the administration of the City of Warsaw in consultation with the Ministry of Culture and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute. The same procedure will be used to select the 15 members of museum's board of directors, which has not yet been formed. In the selection of board members, consideration will be given to candidates from institutions that have donated more than €1 million. However, the share of board members representing patrons is not to exceed one-third of the board.

The Building

An international competition was conducted in summer 2005 for the museum building. Well-known architects such as Daniel Libeskind, Zvi Hecker, Kengo Kuma, Peter Eisenman and David Chipperfield were among the entrants.⁵ First prize was awarded to a project submitted by the Finish architect Rainer Mahlamäki.⁶ The call for submissions stressed that the building should be modern and should possess great artistic value; yet at the same time, it should open up to the adjacent park and blend into the rather bleak surroundings of the 1960s apartment blocks.⁷ The

⁴ Statute of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/articles.php?miId=205&lang=en.

⁵ The eleven architects invited to the second round of the competition included Andrzej Bulenda (Poland), Marek Dunikowski (Poland), Josep Luis Mateo (Spain), Jesus Hernandez Mayor (the Netherlands), and Gesine Weinmiller (Germany).

⁶ For more information on the 12 entries in the second round see "Międzynarodowy Konkurs Architektoniczny na budynek Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich w Warszawie", in *Komunikat SARP*, 7–8 (July–August 2005), pp. 32–57; Międzynarodowy Konkurs Architektoniczny na budynek Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich w Warszawie, Końcowy komunikat z posiedzenia Sądu Konkursowego w dniach 28–30 czerwca 2005 r.

⁷ Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich. Program funkcjonalno-użytkowy budynku, April 2005; Międzynarodowy Konkurs Architektoniczny. Końcowy komunikat; Rozdarte wnętrze. Komentarz Bohdana Paczowskiego, przewodniczącego jury międzynarodowego konkursu na

building should not appear to the Muranów residents as a foreign body intended only for foreign visitors. It should look inviting and serve as a cultural centre for the neighbourhood and the entire city of Warsaw.

It was important to founders of the museum and the jury that the building not overshadow the Monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The monument by Nathan Rapaport, which was unveiled in 1948 to honour the uprising's fifth anniversary, had to remain a central point of reference for the surrounding area after the museum's completion.⁸ In Mahlamäkis's design, the monument will even be an important component of the museum through an opening in the museum's entry hall. The interesting symbolism and history behind the monument's construction will be discussed in the museum's permanent exhibition. Other parts of the exhibition will refer to the history of Muranów and thus underscore the authenticity of this "place of memory without relics".

In Mahlamäkis's interpretation, the large chasm in the building should recall the Jews crossing of the Red Sea, the miraculous rescue of the people of Israel from the clutches of the Pharaoh, and the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt.⁹ The chasm should not represent the Shoah as a gap in the history of Polish Jews; to the contrary, it should represent a "symbolic gateway to the history of Jews in Poland".¹⁰

The simple exterior shape of the building stands in contrast with the curved, limestone-coloured walls of the interior, which are intended to call to mind Palestine's landscape and its limestone caves.

The museum was conceived not only as a place for historical exhibitions, but as a "modern, multimedia cultural and educational centre".¹¹ The permanent exhibition will be located below the ground floor. The ground floor and the three upper floors will house temporary exhibitions (with 670 m² of available space), the media centre, an information centre with access to databanks and secondary literature, the education centre, a playroom for children, the museum shop, a restaurant, a large auditorium with stage and projection screen, two additional smaller cinemas, and office space.

The Exhibition

In 2006, the museum director appointed a team of historians to prepare exhibition concept. This team includes many recognised specialists from Poland, Israel, and the United States: Professor Hanna Zaremska (Polish Academy of Sciences), Dr. Adam Teller (Haifa University), Professor Marcin Wodziński (University of Breslau), Professor Samuel Kassow (Trinity College Hartford), Dr. Barbara Enkelgling-Boni (Polish Academy of Sciences), Dr. Jacek Leociak (Polish Academy of Sciences),

budynek Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, Biuletyn Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich (Summer 2005), pp. 3–9.

⁸ Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich. Program funkcjonalno-użytkowy, p. 6.

⁹ Międzynarodowy Konkurs Architektoniczny. Końcowy komunikat.

¹⁰ According to Bohdan Paczowski, chairman of the jury. "Muzeum żydowskie z 'magicznym wnętrzem'", *Gazeta Wyborcza* (12 October 2005); <www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/press_news.php?miId=119&lang=pl&nId=1006>.

¹¹ Misja Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich; <www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/articles.php?miId=127&lang=pl>.

Dr. Helena Datner (Jewish Historical Institute Warsaw), and Professor Stanisław Krajewski (Warsaw University).¹²

The exhibition concept is being developed in collaboration with British exhibition designers Event Communications. The team has already participated in several larger museum projects, such as the design for the permanent exhibition at In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres and – in collaboration with Daniel Libeskind – the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. Under the direction of Dr. Renata Piątkowska, the museum's exhibition department is responsible for co-ordinating work on the core concept as well as for overseeing archival research, the search for historical objects, and the collection of interviews with witnesses.

The exhibition team, which includes 13 historians, the exhibition department, and the designers from Event Communication, is led by Professor Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (Tisch School of the Arts, New York University), an ethnographer and specialist in museum studies. The exhibition is arranged as a narrative. The point of departure is not the collection, but the history to be told. The exhibition should be accessible and engaging for visitor groups with various interests and varying levels of background knowledge. To this end, the exhibition designers have integrated many elements from stage set design. For example, the section that covers the interwar era is conceived as an abstract Jewish street in a large Polish city. With its use of various media and interactive elements, the museum aims to encourage active learning and inspire visitors to discover history on their own. The exhibition consists of nine chapters:

1. The forest (entrance)
2. First encounters – first settlers (11th–15th century)
3. Paradisus Judeorum (16th-17th century)
4. The shtetl (mid. 17th–18th century)
5. The encounter with modernity (19th century)
6. The street (interwar era)
7. The holocaust
8. The postwar years
9. The heritage (probably an art exhibition)¹³

The basic partitioning of the exhibition is chronological, and within the individual time periods, the exhibition will be arranged chronologically and thematically. The individual sections will be assigned various topics. For the exhibition on the 18th century, the social structure and topography of a shtetl inhabited by Jews will be reconstructed. The rooms dedicated to the 19th century are to be seen as a history of the various facets of modernisation. Topics to be discussed here include migration from the shtetl to the big cities, the formation of the Jewish working class, the founding of the General Jewish

¹² Participants in the first phases of the project also included Professor Michael Steinlauf (Gratz College Philadelphia), Dr. Havi Ben Sasson (Hebrew University Jerusalem), and Professor David Assaf (University of Tel Aviv). Project consultants include Dr. Igor Kąkolewski (German Historical Institute Warsaw), Dr. Magdalena Micińska (Polish Academy of Sciences), and Professor Elchanan Reiner (University of Tel Aviv).

¹³ More information is available at www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/articles.php?miId=95&lang=en.

Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia (best known as the Bund), the emergence of Zionism, assimilation and the emancipation of Jewish women.

Poland and its shifting historical borders will be considered throughout the exhibition. For example, with regard to the 15th-18th centuries (and the 19th century as well) the entire expanse of the dual-monarchy Poland-Lithuania will be addressed, in other words, areas that are today part of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. The chapters on the Middle Ages and postwar years will also devote attention to the history of the Jews of Breslau-Wrocław. It would have made little sense to separate these histories because the Jews of Vilnius (Wilno, ווילנע), Hrodna (Grodno, ענדאָרג), Warsaw (Warszawa, עשׂר־אָוו), Cracow (Kraków, Krakau, עקאָרק), Lublin (לובלין), L'viv (Lwów, Lemberg, לעמבערג), or Luts'k (Łuck, לוצק) were all members of a shared cultural and linguistic space.

It is also a premise of the exhibition that the history of Polish Jewry be presented not as an isolated phenomenon, but as an integral part of the history of Poland and in a broader Polish context. To name one example, this means that the position of Jewish settlers in medieval cities founded on German law is to be explained against the backdrop of the general structure of such cities. A visitor unfamiliar with Polish history will thus be able to learn something about the Polish past as well.

The historians at work on the exhibition concept do not claim to present a comprehensive history with a binding interpretation. In a few places at least, it should be made clear to visitors that history is only an attempt to reconstruct the past with the help of preserved records, and that its interpretation is often the subject of intense debate.

Educational Programme

An educational centre for the future museum has existed since spring 2007. The staff's mandate is, first of all, to develop an educational programme and to provide support to the exhibition team so that the exhibition meets didactic requirements. Second, the centre is to start realising various educational projects now. These also serve as test projects for later work.

The museum's most important target groups are adolescents and young adults. They should develop an awareness of Jewish history and culture not as something foreign – as it is often taught in Polish schools – but as an important component of Polish history and Polish cultural heritage. In the future, continuing education seminars for teachers will also be organised.

Young Israelis and Jewish school groups from other countries, which come to Poland every year in order to visit memorials for concentration camps, are to be convinced that it is worth including the museum on their itinerary. They are to learn that Poland was not only the site of the Holocaust, but also home to many of their ancestors and a country that was for centuries one of the largest and most important centres of Jewish life. The museum is directed at adult visitors as well. As one of the most modern museums in Warsaw and all of Poland, the museum is already destined to become one of the most important tourist attractions in the capital. Public events, lectures, book presentations, and film screenings will also be targeted at families and older members of the public. The educational programme is to reach not only museum goers but the broader public as well. Materials for school children and teachers and on-line databanks will help

achieve this goal. Two on-line portals connected with the museum will be launched soon. At the first of these, viewers can find information about history, memorials, and other remnants of Poland's Jewish communities. This information will be supplemented by audio and visual materials as well as excerpts from interviews with witnesses. The second portal will be dedicated to Poles who rescued Jews during the Second World War. In addition, the exhibition team is working on another databank with testimony from witnesses. The "Records on the Jewish World in Poland" will also be partially available on-line.

Although it was once a multicultural country, Poland today is a nearly homogenous nation-state with very few ethnic and religious minorities. In comparison to Germany, France, and other West European countries, there are also very few immigrants, which could very well change in the coming decades. The museum's main objective is to convey knowledge about the history and culture of Polish Jews and Polish-Jewish relations. By working through this past experience with multiculturalism, the museum seeks to make a contribution to overcoming xenophobia. The aim is to promote tolerance and to stir curiosity about other cultures and religions.

The museum is already at work on a number of educational projects. For the past three years, the educational centre has run an exchange programme for Polish and Israeli school children and university students. A further programme is to begin in 2008: The museum is organising joint day projects for young Poles and Israelis visiting Poland on school trips. Other museum programmes are aimed at Muranów and the residents of Warsaw at large. In the spring of 2008, an art competition entitled "My Muranów" was announced. Children and youth from all over Warsaw were encouraged to harness art to depict the former Jewish quarter and the ghetto area as it was then and as it is now. Almost 250 entries were submitted. Another project – "School Children Discover Muranów" – is targeted at 19 schools close to the future museum. During the 2008-2009 academic year, students will get a chance to learn more about the area's history and Jewish culture in general through a cycle of three workshops.

Conclusion

To date, there have been no major public debates about the future museum. This may be due in part to the fact that the Polish media are mainly interested in current events. It seems that the Museum of the History of Polish Jews has already found acceptance. None of the parties represented in the Sejm call the museum into question. Representatives from various parties seem to have merely differing views of the museum's mission. General agreement prevails, however, on the need for a museum of this kind. The museum has already achieved a strong position internationally. That does not mean that the museum does not face a certain amount of pressure, especially from the various patrons in Poland or abroad. Thanks to the museum's three-tiered patronage and the international team of historians, the museum can truly maintain its sovereignty vis-à-vis the various interest groups involved in the politics of memory.

Translated by Amy Pradell, Berlin

Semen Charnyi

Integration and Self-Assertion

The Jewish Community of Russia

After decades of discrimination, it has been possible to observe a renaissance of Jewish life in Russia since Perestroika. Despite the large-scale emigration of Jews, there is an active community life with schools, media, cultural facilities, and associations that look after Jewish interests. State antisemitism belongs to the past.

The first mention of the presence of Jews on the current territory of the Russian Federation appears in the 1st century CE and is associated with the Bosporan Kingdom on the shores of the Kerch Strait. In the 7th-10th centuries, the Khazar Khaganate existed along the Volga, the Don, and in the northern Caucasus. Its rulers adopted Judaism in the 8th century. From the Mongol invasion of the 13th century, which destroyed the existing Judaic communities, up until the end of the 18th century Jews appeared on the territory of Russia rather infrequently. The situation changed after the partitions of Poland, when, between 1772 and 1795, territories populated by nearly a million Jews entered into the composition of the Russian Empire. But even then, nearly all the territory of modern-day Russia was excluded from the Pale of Settlement. Only a few parts of previously Polish lands were incorporated into what is today Russian Federation territory: the southern part of the modern Pskov Oblast, the western and northern part of Smolensk and Tver oblasts, the western part of Bryansk Oblast, as well as the cities of Rostov-on-Don and Taganrog. Only certain categories of Jews received special permissions to live beyond the bounds of the Pale of Settlement. In 1897, when the first All-Russian census was conducted, 314,000 Jews were residing outside the pale; this accounted for a mere 6 per cent of the overall numerical strength of the Jewish population of the Russian Empire. The Pale of Settlement was formally retained until 1917.¹ As a result of mass migration from the small towns, the *shtetlekh*, of the former pale, the Jewish population of the *Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic* grew precipitously to 585,000 persons in 1926 and 956,000 persons in 1939.²

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¹ Norbert Franz, Wilfried Jilge, „Rußland, Ukraine, Weißrußland, Baltikum (Lettland, Estland)“, in: Elke-Vera Kotowski et al.: *Handbuch zur Geschichte der Juden in Europa*, vol. I (Darmstadt 2001), pp. 167–227, here p. 186. For the former Pale of Settlement, see map 1, insert I.

² Ibid. p. 200. The social cultural consequences of this migration in Moscow are discussed in Gabriele Freitag, *Nächstes Jahr in Moskau! Die Zuwanderung von Juden in die sowjetische Metropole 1917–1932* (Göttingen 2004).

In the 1920s, the Soviet state pursued a double-edged policy towards the Jews. On the one hand it repressed representatives of the religious and national elite, and on the other, it undertook active measures to promote the development of the Jewish minority. In 1934, a Jewish Autonomous Oblast, with its centre in the new city of Birobidzhan, was founded in the Far East, some 200 kilometres from Khabarovsk. Until the end of the 1940s, the authorities organized several planned relocations from the areas of the former Pale of Settlement to this region. The aim of the Birobidzhan project was the creation of a Jewish territorial formation as a counterweight to the Zionist idea of the founding of an independent Jewish state. The Jewish Autonomous Oblast remains a part of the Russian Federation to this day. At the end of the 1930s, the majority of Jewish organisations were closed and their leaders were repressed.

During the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet leadership was forced for considerations of foreign policy purposes to allow the formation of a Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (chaired by Solomon Mikhoels) and to permit the publication of a newspaper in Yiddish.

More than half a million Soviet Jews, among them inhabitants of the Russian Federation, fought in the Red Army during the Second World War, or the Great Patriotic War as it is known in the Soviet Union. Around 150 Jews were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Nearly half of the Jewish soldiers fell in combat. The vast majority of the Jews remaining on the territory occupied by the Nazis were annihilated during the time of the Holocaust.

At the end of the 1940s, within the framework of the new domestic-policy course of the Soviet Union, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the existing Jewish cultural organisations were closed, while their leaders and functionaries ended up in jails or were annihilated. Mikhoels was killed in 1948, while nearly all the outstanding figures of Yiddish culture were shot on 12 August 1952. A severe purge of the leadership of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast was carried out.³

For several years, the sole officially recognized Jewish institution in Russia remained the synagogue. But even the number of synagogues significantly dwindled during the anti-religious campaign of 1958–1964. The majority of Russian Jews were subjected to acculturation, severed themselves from religious traditions, and gave up their native language for Russian. At the same time, it was none other than they who accounted for a significant part of the Soviet intelligentsia. A specific kind of Jewish identity took shape and was retained throughout the existence of the Soviet Union, the successor states, and even in emigration. Stronger than previously known forms of Jewish identity, it was primarily ethnic and secular. The Jewish population of the Russian Federation continued to decline from 807,900 persons in 1970, to 700,700 persons in 1979, and 551,000 in 1989.⁴ The reasons for this were primarily a low birth rate and emigration. Starting in the 1960s, there existed in the Russian Federation an independent Jewish movement. Its most important centres were Moscow and Leningrad, where it was even possible to build quasi-community structures in the 1970s. The first issue of the journal *Sovyetish heymland*, which became the official centre of the “Jewish literary

³ Ibid. p. 201.

⁴ *Sovetskii Soiuz. Etnicheskaia demografiia sovetskogo evreistva* [= *Kratkaia Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia*, tom 8] col. 293–305 ; <<http://www.eleven.co.il/article/15423>>.

renaissance” in Yiddish, appeared in Moscow in 1961. It was renamed *Di yidishe gas* in 1992 and continued to appear until 1999.

To impede the self-organisation of the Jews, the Soviet regime founded the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Society (*Antisionistskii komitet sovetsoi obshchestvennosti*) in 1983. The first legal Jewish organisations in the Russian Federation came into being in Moscow in 1988 – the Jewish Cultural Association (*Evreiskaia Kul'turnaia Assotsiatsiia*) and the Moscow Jewish Cultural Enlightenment Society (*Moskovskoe Evreiskoe Kul'turno-prosvetitel'skoe obshchestvo*). In 1989, Soviet Jews established their first umbrella organisation in the Soviet Union: the Vaad USSR, which continued to exist until the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Its activity aimed at the re-establishment of Jewish community life in the Soviet Union. At the same time, a mass exodus of Soviet Jews from Russia set in.

Jews in Russia Today

Since 1991, around half a million Jews have left Russia for Israel, the United States, and the Federal Republic of Germany. According to the 2002 census, Russia's Jewish population numbers 233,400 persons, most of whom live primarily in large cities.⁵ Around 70 per cent of the Jewish population lives in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. However, most representatives of the Jewish community and experts consider this figure to be greatly understated, because Jews remain reluctant to this day to disclose their nationality, and because some communities could simply have chosen to ignore the census. In 2004, the demographer Mark Kupovetskii estimated the “demographic potential” of Jews in Russia to be 850,000 persons.⁶

In addition to the Ashkenazi Jews, Russia is home to communities of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, in particular Mountain Jews from Azerbaijan and Dagestan. The 2002 census states that there are 3,000 Mountain Jews and 100 each Georgian and Bukharan Jews, but these figures cannot be taken seriously. It is likely that some of these Jews eluded the census, while others were recorded simply as Jews or gave their citizenship instead of nationality and were recorded as Azerbaijani, Uzbek, or Georgian. It is estimated that there are tens of thousands of Georgian, Mountain, and Bukharan Jews, who live mostly in Moscow. But there are also communities in the Northern Caucasus in Derbent, Makhachkala, and Nal'chik. The Worldwide Congress of Mountain Jews is located in Moscow. It was formed in 2003 and is a member of the Eurasian Jewish Congress (*Evroaziatskii Evreiskii Kongress, EAEK*) and the affiliated Foundation for the Development of Jewish Culture. In addition, there are around 1,000 Karaim, 150 Krymchaks, and several thousand “Subbotniks”, descendants of Russian peasants converted to Judaism in the 18th and 19th centuries.⁷

⁵ Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia, Ofitsialnye rezul'taty perepisi naseleniia 2002 g. <www.perepis2002.ru/ct/doc/TOM_04_01.xls>.

⁶ Mark Kupovetskii, *K otsenke chislennosti evreev i demograficheskogo potentsiala evreiskoi obshchiny v SSSR i postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh v 1989–2003 gg.* (Kiev 2005) [= *Evroaziatskii evreiskii ezhegodnik*, 5765 (2004/2005)] Kiev 2005, S. 91.

⁷ Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia, Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naseleniia 2002 g. <www.perepis2002.ru/ct/doc/TOM_04_01.xls>.

Organisation, Communities, Associations

An important Jewish umbrella organisation in Russia is the Federation of Jewish Organisations and Communities (Vaad of Russia), which was founded in 1992. Its president, Mikhail Chlenov, is at the same general secretary of the EAEK. The Russian Jewish Congress (*Rossiiskii Evreiskii Kongress*) has existed since 1996 and is headed by Viacheslav Kantor. In addition, there are also associations for three Jewish religious communities: Chabad, Reform Judaism, and traditional Rabbinical Orthodoxy (Misnagdim). The numerically largest and most influential of these forms of devotion is the Chabad, a Hasidic group that originated in the shtetl of Lubavich near Smolensk. Chabad has over 200 communities united in the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia (*Federatsija Evreiskikh Obshchin Rossii*, FEOR) under Chief Rabbi Berl Lazar and President Alexander Boroda.⁸ FEOR presently supports communities with more than 1,000 Jews in the construction of community centres. In 2007, 11 synagogues and community centres were built as part of this programme.

The first Reform communities appeared in Moscow at the end of the 1980s. At present, they are united in the Association of Religious Organisations of Modern Judaism in Russia (*Ob'edinenie religioznykh organizatsii sovremennogo iudaizma v Rossii*) under Irina Shcherban. The Federation of Orthodox Jews of Russia (*Federatsiia ortodoksal'nykh evreev Rossii*, FOER), which is in the process of registering, represents Orthodox communities. Like the Association of Religious Organisations of Modern Judaism in Russia, FOER is a member of the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organisations of Russia (*Kongress evreiskikh religioznikh obshchin i organizatsii Rossii*, KEROOR), which was founded in 1993. It is headed by Chief Rabbi Avraam (Adolf) Shaeovich and Rabbi Zinovii Kogan and includes circa 100 communities, of which approximately 40 are Reform communities. Such a co-existence of representatives of Orthodox and Reform Judaism within the framework of one organisation is unique.

In January 2004 and March 2006, FEOR attempted to form a single Jewish community and to take over KEROOR. However, KEROOR and almost all of its member communities rejected this proposal.

Since the election of entrepreneur Arkadii Gaidamak as president of KEROOR in May 2005, this organisation has experienced an upswing. It looked as if it could displace the Russian Jewish Congress, which had dedicated itself completely to commemorating the victims of the Holocaust. More recently, KEROOR has been wrestling with structural problems. At present, Russia's Jewish community has two chief rabbis. In the eyes of KEROOR, Chief Rabbi Shaeovich, elected to this position in 1993, is entitled to the office. FEOR, on the other hand, considers Chief Rabbi Lazar the only legitimate rabbi.

Russia's Jews are organised in "national-cultural autonomies", whose existence is stipulated by a special federal law, adopted in 1996. These are national secular organisations that are to guarantee the national distinctiveness of the Diaspora with regard to language, culture, and education. The law on national-cultural autonomies established the legal relationship between the Diaspora and the state. In all, there are 40 regional Jewish

⁸ Itogi raboty FEOF v 2007 godu, Agentstvo evreiskikh novostei, 25 December 2007. <www.aen.ru/index.php?page=article&article_id=1247&category=tradition>.

autonomies and several dozen autonomies of a local level.⁹ The Federal Jewish National-Cultural Autonomy (*Federal'naia evreiskaia natsional'no-kul'turnaia avtonomiia*) was founded in 1999. Mikhail Chlenov has been its president since 2003. Aleksandr Mashkevich has been chairman of the board of trustees since 2004.

The Vaad of Russia and the Russian Jewish Congress were co-founders of EAK and are represented in its general council. In 2002, at the initiative of FEOR and EAK, the Worldwide Congress of Russian-Speaking Jewry (*Vsemirnyi Kongress ruskoiazynhogo evreistva*) was founded with headquarters in Moscow. Boris Shpigel became president of the congress in 2007. The council of the Worldwide Congress of Russian-Speaking Jewry includes representatives of the Vaad of Russia and FEOR. At the end of July 2005, the founding congress of the Council of Sephardic Jews of the Commonwealth of Independent States took place in Moscow.

In all there are around 600 Jewish organisations active in Russia, including representations of Sokhnut (Jewish Agency for Israel) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). JDC oversees a network of charity organisations that reach more than 150,000 persons. Since 2004, Sokhnut and JDC have reduced their activity in Russia. In early 2005, a branch of the Jewish National Fund was opened in Russia. Founded in 1901 in order to raise money for the purchase of land in Palestine, it today supports the construction of apartments and promotes the development of agriculture in Israel.

Education, Academia, Research

Jewish organisations are also involved in education. There are 45 Jewish basic schools and 60 Sunday schools functioning in Russia. In addition, there are several pre-school educational institutions, yeshivot, and pedagogical colleges. Most are financed from the state budget, but many receive support from organisations such as the foundation Or Avner, Sokhnut, Society for Crafts and Agriculture among Jews (*Obshchestvo remeslennogo i zemledel'cheskogo truda sredi evreev*) as well as international religious associations.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Jewish Studies have been experiencing a renaissance in Russia, as evidenced by the numerous institutions that have been founded in the interim.¹⁰ In 1989, the *Institute for Jewish Studies* was founded in Moscow under the leadership of Rabbi Adin Steinsalz. It has published Russian translations of parts of the Talmud and the Aggadah. At the University of the Humanities in Moscow, there is the *Russian-American Centre for Biblical Studies and Jewish Studies*. Since 1992, Moscow has been home to the *Maimonides State Jewish Academy*. There is a chair of Jewish Studies at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University. The International Institute of the XXI Century (*Mezhdunarodnyi institut XXI veka*) was founded in 2003.

Farther north, the Petersburg Jewish University – now *Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies* – was founded in 1992. In 2000, this institute, together with the Department of Philosophy at Saint Petersburg University, inaugurated a *Centre of Biblical and Jew-*

⁹ Reestr natsional'no-kul'turnykh avtonomii, Ofitsial'ny sait Federal'noi registratsionnoi sluzhby <www.rosregistr.ru/index.php?menu=3015000000>.

¹⁰ For a more detailed overview see the article of Dmitrii El'iashevich in this volume, pp. 255–270.

ish Studies. In cities with Jewish communities, lectures are held at Jewish centres for adult education.

In 1994, the Sefer Centre was founded in Moscow. It organises annual interdisciplinary conferences, offers courses for older pupils, students, young scholars, and doctoral candidates, and publishes collections and monographs as well as the journal *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta. Istoriia. Kultura. Tsvivilizatsiia*, which has become the leading Russian-language periodical in the field of research.

The Institute of Social and Community Workers, which was founded by JDC in Krasnoarsk, also organises conferences and publishes material. Yiddish is taught at the Social Sciences and Humanities Academy Birobidzhan. In June 2005, a reading room for Hebrew and Yiddish literature was opened at the Oriental Centre of the Russian State Library, where the Schneerson Library is located.¹¹

Since the turn of the century, archaeological excavations have gotten underway on the Taman Peninsula of the Volga Delta, where it is thought that Itil, the capital of the Khazar Khaganate, was located.

The Holocaust Foundation and Holocaust Centre have made valuable contributions to assessing the Holocaust.¹² It was possible to introduce the term “Holocaust” into a draft curriculum for the teaching of history. The Holocaust Foundation is working on a concept for a memorial complex with joint education centre called Genocide – Holocaust – Tolerance as well as on an encyclopaedia of the Holocaust on the territory of the former Soviet Union. The foundation also holds history competitions for schools and organises trips to the sites where the Holocaust was carried out.

Community Life, the General Public, Culture

Many Russian Jewish communities are quite active. Religious and secular community organisations are being founded, vacation camps for children and adolescents are being organised, and symposiums and continuing education seminars for teachers are being held. Some places have active chapters of the international Jewish youth organisation Hillel.

Before Perestroika, *Sovyetish heymland* was the only permitted Jewish periodical. Otherwise, Jewish publications appeared only in *samizdat*. Today, there are over 100 titles. In Moscow, *Mezhdunarodnaia evreiskaia gazeta* [International Jewish news], *Evreiskie novosti* [Jewish news], the FEOR publication *Evreiskoe slovo* [Jewish word], and the Sokhnut newspaper *Vestnik EAR (Evreiskaia agenstvo v Rossii, Jewish agency in Russia)*. The newspaper *Ami* is published in St. Petersburg. The Association of Adult Education Centres for Jewish Culture, with the support of the EAEK, has been publishing the journal *Korni* [Roots] since 1994. Since January 2006, the Or Avner has been putting out the journal *Iunior*. Several regional communities have their own newspapers. Jewish Internet media has existed since the end of the 1990s.

¹¹ The Schneerson Library is part of a 235-year-old collection of religious texts – books and manuscripts – maintained by the first five Lubavitcher Rebbes, the spiritual heads of the Chabad Hasidic movement. The collection was captured first by the Nazis in 1939 and then by the Soviets towards the end of the Second World War.

¹² Il’ia Altman, „Shoah! Gedenken verboten! Der weite Weg vom Sowjettabu zur Erinnerung“, in: *Kluffen der Erinnerung Rußland und Deutschland 60 Jahre nach dem Krieg* (Berlin 2005) [= OSTEUROPA, 4–6/05], pp. 149–164

The most popular of these is the portal <www.Sem40.ru>. Its strongest competitor is <www.Jewish.ru>, which is supported by FEOR. In February 2003, the first Jewish news agency went on-line: the Agency for Jewish News (Agenstvo evreiskikh novostei, <www.aen.ru>), which is also supported by FEOR and Worldwide Congress of Russian-Speaking Jewry. KEROOR supports the project <www.jjew.ru>.

The largest publishing house producing Russian-language books on Jewish topics today is *Gesharim / Mosty kultury*. Its backlist includes around 400 different titles. Since 2002, it has been the publisher of the bibliography *Evreiskii knigonosha* and since 2007 the magazine *Lekhaim*. There are also the publishing houses *Dom evreiskoi knigi*, which puts out the magazine *Paralleli*, as well as the publishing houses *Daat / Znanie* and *Feniks* in Rostov-on-the-Don. Since 2005, the publishing houses *Evreiskoe slovo* and *Tekst* have been producing the series *Proza evreiskoi zhizn'* [Prose of Jewish life]. In 2007, they launched the series *Cheisovskaia kolleksiia*, in which non-fiction literature appears. Ze'ev Vagner has been publishing the Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia since 1994. To date, six of the nine volumes planned have come out. The oldest Jewish bibliographic journal in Russia is the bulletin *Narod knigi v mire knig* [The people of the book in the world of books], which has been appearing in Saint Petersburg since 1995.

The Jewish theatre *Shalom* has been operating in Moscow since 1988 under the direction of Aleksander Levenbuk. A year later, the Solomon Mikhoels Cultural Centre (Kul'turnyj tsentr im. Solomona Mikhoelsa) was opened under the management of Mikhail Gluz. Since 1998, Gluz has also been running an annual Solomon Mikhoels Art Festival. Klezfest, a festival of klezmer song, has been taking place in St. Petersburg since 1995. The Leonid Sonts International Competition of Performers of Jewish Music and Dance and the Yurii Pil'ner International Festival of Jewish Culture have been taking place in Kazan' since 2001. In Birobidzhan, the Jewish Musical-Dramatic Theater Kogelet is in operation, and an International Festival of Jewish Culture has been held there annually since 1997. A Tat language Jewish theatre took up its work in Derbent in July 2005. The popular actor Efim Shifrin and the singer Efim Aleksandrov use Jewish subject matter for their performances in the programme *Songs of the Shtetl*. It is important to mention that the directors Vladimir Dvinskii, Galina Evtushenko, and others are making films about the life of Soviet Jews. At present, planning is underway for two state Jewish museums: the Museum of Jewish Culture and Everyday Life in Saint Petersburg and the Museum of the Holocaust in Moscow. FEOR is likewise preparing to open a Museum of Tolerance in Moscow. A Museum of Judaism was opened in Birobidzhan in November 2005.

Antisemitism

According to sociological research, 6-9 per cent of the Russian population is ardently antisemitic. Individual negative stereotypes regarding Jews are present in various degrees among 17-64 per cent of the population.¹³ Antisemitic vandalism, such as offensive graffiti on the walls of synagogues and the desecration of cemeteries, is also present in Russia. In the 1990s, Holocaust deniers could be heard in Russia. Starting in 2005, the ritual murder myth re-emerged in Krasnoiarsk, Istra, and Lipetsk. A leg-

¹³ Data of a survey by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), January 2007, <www.wciom.ru/?pt=9&article=2291>.

end specific to Russia is the spread of the “Khazar myth” during the 1990s. This links the misfortunes of Rus’ and Russia with the Khazars, who converted to Judaism, and their descendants, who supposedly seized power in 1917. Anti-Jewish tirades are limited to the mass media supported by marginal opposition parties and organisations. Antisemitism in the Russian Federation remains an integral element of ultra-right, conservative politics and is not particular to any one party or party chairman. Among the adherents of antisemitism are radical nationalists, neo-Nazis of various hues, and fundamentalists from the Orthodox tradition and currents of the Russian Orthodox Church as well as from Islam and neo-paganism.

Nonetheless, state antisemitism disappeared with the demise of the Soviet Union. The highest representatives of the Russian government regularly speak out in public against racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism. In January 2005, during a speech at ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviet Army, then President Vladimir Putin said that he was ashamed that antisemitic tendencies still existed in the country that defeated Fascism. Jews are not the only object of ethnic phobias. Far more widespread and far more radically expressed are prejudices against people from the Caucasus, Roma (Gypsies), and others. A consensus is gradually spreading in the political class that antisemitic comments from politicians are unacceptable. Nonetheless, antisemitism remains a problem that has to be taken seriously.

Translated by Stephan Lang, Toronto

Dimitrii El'iashevich, Maksim Mel'tsin

A Stormy Turn for the Better

Jewish Studies in Russia

After a long hiatus under Soviet rule, Jewish Studies in Russia has taken a stormy turn for the better since Perestroika. Schools and institutions for adult education have been established. Numerous publications, research institutes, and information centres now address Jewish topics. The emphasis is on ethnographic field work and history, especially with regard to the 20th century. But Russian academia still refuses to recognise Jewish Studies as an independent field of study. A decline in private donations has hit Jewish Studies in Russia particularly hard. And to this day, official schoolbooks remain silent about Russia's Jewish heritage.

After flourishing in the late 19th century, Jewish Studies in Russia languished throughout the Soviet era. Only since the end of the 1980s has the field begun to reassert itself – quite literally out of nothing. The first new specialists were individual enthusiasts, academics who often came from quite different fields of study. The reawakening of national consciousness, the struggle to emigrate, and participation in Russia's democratisation had also stirred a desire among the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia to take a closer look at Jewish history and culture.¹

Academic work in Jewish Studies developed primarily within Russian academia, not within Jewish organisations. Not every field of Jewish Studies had been forbidden in the Soviet period. For example, the study of Dead Sea Scrolls undertaken by the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences enjoyed official recognition. There was also an Israel department within the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Within the philosophy faculties of major universities, first and foremost at the state universities in Moscow and Leningrad, some aspects of Hebraic Studies and Biblical Studies could be addressed. This “official” side of Jewish Studies, which often had a political propaganda component, gradually underwent a transformation and ultimately provided the foundation for the field's further development.²

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¹ Dimitrii Eliashevich, “Russia”, in M. Davis, ed., *Teaching Jewish Civilization: A Global Approach to Higher Education* (New York and London 1995), pp. 67-70.

² S. Charnyi, “Pozdnesovetskaia i postsovetskaia iudaika”, in A. Epshtein, ed., *Evrei v postsovetskikh stranakh: samoznanie i obrazovanie, sbornik statei* (Jerusalem 2008), p. 262.

The first attempts to legalise unofficial Jewish Studies was made in 1981, when the editors of the Yiddish monthly *Sovyetish Heymland* set up a Moscow Historical-Ethnographic Committee within its editorial offices.³ In a short time, this committee was able to find the most important academics who wanted to study Jewish topics. Among those that gathered around what was then the only Jewish publication in the Soviet Union were many later well-known figures, such as Rashid Kaplanov, Il'ja Dvorkin, Igor' Krupnik, Mark Kupovetskii, Abram Torpusman, Valerii Engel', Anatolii Khazanov, Vladimir Chernin, and Mikhail Chlenov. October 1987 saw the founding of the Jewish Historical Society, which offered lectures on Jewish history and culture. In 1989, the Leningrad Society of Jewish Culture was formed. Among the forums for Jewish research topics were the Leningrad Jewish history seminar, annual symposiums on the "Ethnography of Petersburg-Leningrad" at the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Ethnography, the ethnographic commission of the Moscow branch of the Geographic Society, and many others. Shaul Shtampfer, a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, played a major role in founding Jewish Studies in Russia. While working at Rabbi Adin Steinsalz's *Academy of World Civilisations* in Kuntsevo (Moscow), Shtampfer advised numerous up-and-coming academics and provided them with literature from Israel and the West.

Reconstruction

In the last 20 years, Jewish Studies has gone from unofficial associations that emerged from the semi-underground circles to full-fledged, partly state academic institutions and education facilities. Most of these institutions combine research and education under one roof.

In the early 1990s, research and education centres for Jewish Studies began to appear throughout Russia and the post-Soviet realm. One of the first major events was an international conference called "The Historical Fate of Jews in Russia and the USSR: the Beginning of Dialogue", which was held in Moscow in December 1989 and included historians from the Soviet Union, Israel, and the United States.⁴ In November 1989, the Petersburg Open Jewish University was founded. At about the same time in Moscow, the *Jewish University in Moscow*, the *Maimonides State Jewish Academy*, and the Department of Jewish Studies at the Russian State University for the Humanities were established. In Ukraine, the International Solomonov University in Kiev opened its doors in 1992.

The oldest establishment of Jewish higher education in Russia is the Petersburg Open Jewish University, from which the Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies (*Peterburgskii Institut Iudaiki*, PII) emerged in 1997.⁵ The institute is the only accredited private establishment of higher education in Russia that specialises in Jewish Studies. It has a history and a philology faculty and trains qualified specialists in the history, culture, ethnography, and epigraphy of East European Jewry. These topics also represent the core of the

³ Arkhiv Vaada Rossii. Putevoditel'; <<http://www.memo.ru/history/DISS/vaad>>.

⁴ Leonid Praisman, ed., *Istoriia Evreev Rossii. Uchebnik* (Moscow 2005), p. 659.

⁵ Dimitrii El'iashevich, "Petersburg Jewish University – New Beginnings: Studies in Jewish Education", in W. Ackerman, ed. *Origins: The Beginnings of Jewish Educational Institutions VII* (Jerusalem 1995) pp. 124-127.

institute's research and publication output. In the 1990s, PII organised a series of expeditions to record and preserve key elements of Jewish material culture.⁶ To foster cooperation among Jewish general education schools founded after 1991, PII organised conferences on Jewish pedagogy and published the journal *Evreiskaia Shkola* [Jewish school] from 1993 to 1996. Together with the Chais Centre at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, PII published the journal *Evreiskoe obrazovanie* [Jewish education] from 2000 to 2004, as well as a range of educational and teachers manuals.

PII's contribution to the development of academic Jewish Studies was extremely important. In addition to sponsoring the aforementioned expeditions, which marked the start of the systematic study of Jewish traditions and epigraphy in the former Pale of Settlement (1791-1917) and in Central Asia, the institute's lecturers and staff prepared and published a series called *Trudy po iudiake* [Works on Judaica], the first publication of its kind in Russia for 70 years. Several international conferences dedicated to the study of the Jewish cultural heritage in the former Soviet Union were arranged. Finally, in the 1990s, PII also revived the tradition of publishing of academic reference works on Judaica, a tradition going back to the pre-revolutionary European Historical and Ethnographic Society. These included archival and bibliographic editions that opened up a tremendous wealth of sources and literature for academia.⁷

The private Jewish University of Moscow (*Evreiskii Universitet Moskvy*, EUM) opened in 1991.⁸ Since 2003, it has been known as the Simon Dubnov Advanced School for Humanities (*Vyshshaia gumanitarnaia shkola imeni S. Dubnova*, VGSh). It now has three faculties: history, philology, and social psychology, with the three strongest disciplines being East European Jewish History, Biblical Studies, and Sociology. The first Russian-language academic journal in Jewish Studies, *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve* [Messenger of the Jewish university in Moscow], started publishing in 1993. The Moscow magazine *Diaspora*, which appears under the aegis of VGSh, also plays an important role in the study of Russia's Jewish communities.⁹ VGSh has been experiencing serious financial difficulties since September 2005 and is now on the verge of being forced to close.¹⁰

The Maimonides State Classical Academy (*Gosudarstvennaia klassicheskaia akademiia imeni Maimonida*), formerly the Maimonides State Jewish Academy, was founded by a decree of the government of the Russian Federation in Moscow on 29 December 1991.¹¹ With that, one of the first institutions in the field of Jewish Studies acquired state status. The academy has the widest possible range of faculties, includ-

⁶ The expeditions in the 1990s were a continuation of the work on Jewish material cultural heritage done by enthusiasts in the 1980s (I. Dvorkin, B. Khaimovich, V. Lukin). The materials collected laid the foundation for the archive of the PII and have been used widely for publication and academic work.

⁷ Dimitrii El'iashevich, comp. *Dokumental'nye materialy po istorii evreev v arkhivakh SNG i stran Baltii. Predvaritelnyi spisok arkhivnykh fondov* (St. Petersburg 1994); V.E. Kel'ner and D. El'iashevich, comp. *Literatura o evreiakh na russkom iazyke, 1890-1947. Knigi, broshury, ottiski statey, organy periodicheskoi pechati. Bibliograficheskii ukazatel'* (St. Petersburg 1995) (together with the Russian National Library).

⁸ <www.jum.ru/rusjum/rvsatboardoftr.htm>.

⁹ A. Epshtein, "Russkoiazycznaia iudaika: dostizheniia i problemy", *Narod moi*, 19 (383), (16 October 2006).

¹⁰ Charnyi, "Pozdnesovetskaia i postsovetskaia iudaika", p. 278.

¹¹ <www.gka.ru/obchie.html>.

ing medicine, law, and music. Several of them offer special courses on Jewish topics; Jewish Studies in the actual meaning of the word is located with the Faculty of Jewish and Hebraic Studies. The chairman of the faculty is the renowned ethnographer Mikhail Chlenov. The faculty specialises in Modern Hebrew and Semitic Philology. There is a compulsory two-year programme in Yiddish language and literature. Academy graduates teach Hebrew (both modern and Biblical) in practically all the Jewish grade schools and schools of higher learning in Moscow.

In 1991, the Institute of History and Archival Science in Moscow introduced a programme of study called Jewish Languages, Culture, Texts, and Archives. This was the result of co-operation with the Jewish Theological Seminary and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York. Originally, this was to train specialists to read, analyse and record systematically the Jewish documents held in Russian archives. With the integration of the Institute of History and Archival Science into the Russian State University for the Humanities (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet*, RGGU), the range of tasks for the Department of Jewish Studies already at the University for the Humanities broadened considerably. In 1993, the university's Department of History and Philology established the programme Jewish Languages, Literature, and History. Given the presence of these two programmes, the Russian-American Centre of Biblical and Hebraic Studies (*Rossiisko-Amerikanskii Tsentr Bibleistiki i Iudaiki*, TsBI) opened at RGGU; the Department of Jewish Studies was merged into TsBI.¹² The American partner programme was called Project Judaica. Since 2001, TsBI has published the series *Judaica Rossica*, which was turned into a magazine in 2004. At present, TsBI, together with separate faculties at RGGU, trains experts in Jewish history and culture: archivists, historians, philologists, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists, who have specialised in intercultural relations and the contemporary ethnic identity of Jews and have mastered Hebrew and Yiddish. RGGU's offerings include courses in medieval and modern Jewish philosophy, Hebrew palaeography, modern and contemporary Jewish history, socio-linguistics of Jewish languages, and the history of antisemitism. Courses in Biblical studies and Biblical Hebrew are offered not only at TsBI but elsewhere at RGGU: the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Theology Faculty. Since early 2008, budget cuts have put the TsBI and RGGU in a difficult financial situation.

Among the Moscow schools of higher learning offering Jewish Studies are the Institute for Jewish Studies TURO, which is run by Shlomo Gendel', and the Institute for Progressive Judaism, which existed from 1992 until April 2008.¹³

Founded in 1993, the private Institute for the Study of Israel – which was known from 1995 to 2005 as the Institute for the Study of Israel and the Middle East and was renamed the Institute for the Middle East in 2005 – is the largest Russian centre dedicated to the study of Israel. Emphasis is given to research in politics, economics, and religion in contemporary Israel. The institute also boasts an extensive publishing programme.¹⁴

In Ukraine, the International *Solomonov University* (*Mizhnarodnyi Solomonovi universytet*, MSU) in Kiev is the oldest institution of higher education that trains special-

¹² <www.sem40.ru/edu/1057408305.shtml>.

¹³ <www.mignews.com/news/disasters/cis/160408_94353_76744.html>.

¹⁴ <www.iimes.ru/rus/about.html>.

ists in Jewish Studies.¹⁵ The MSU's Department of Jewish Studies trains historians and philosophers.

Networks and Exchange

The Sefer Centre for specialists in Jewish Studies has a special place among the institutions and organisations mentioned here.¹⁶ It came into being at the initiative of two professors in Jerusalem, Nehemia Levtzion and Shaul Stampfer, as an independent department of the International Centre for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, which is located at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The Sefer Centre was officially registered in December 1994. Its goals are to network scholars and co-ordinate the activities of various organisations. Among the up-and-coming scholars, the centre is a highly recognised institution.

The annual international interdisciplinary conferences that have been organised under the aegis of the Sefer Centre since 1994 are very productive for academic exchange.¹⁷ The differentiated system of sections, the growing number of participants from around the world, and the diversity of topics convey an impression of the state of the Jewish Studies in the post-Soviet realm and make these conferences the highlight of the Jewish academic year. The academic level of the first Sefer conferences was rather low: Many participants, especially those from the provinces, lacked the academic tools of the trade, and they were not aware of the state of international research.¹⁸ Gradually, however, the level has grown considerably as the publications show.

Since summer 1996, Sefer has organised similar conferences for young scholars. Every year since 1997, the most interesting contributions from these conferences have also been published in collections within the series *Tirosh – Trudy po iudaïke*. Together with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Sefer conducts an annual conference dedicated to topics related to the Jewish-Slavic cultural dialogue. Another Sefer activity are the Jewish summer and winter schools for students and doctoral candidates. Each year up to ten such schools take place with several hundred participants. Furthermore, since 2003, field schools have been organised where methods of field research are taught.

The Sefer Centre holds continuing education courses and re-education seminars for university instructors, who are overwhelmingly from the provinces. Since 1997, young specialists have been sent to Israel for a year-long internship within the framework of the Eshnav programme. The programme is aimed at young scholars who are pursuing their research projects and young instructors who are preparing classes on Jewish topics. The Sefer bureau organises lecture series and courses by leading experts at provincial universities.

Sefer's multi-faceted activity touches on many areas of Jewish education and academic research. The centre offers methodical help in the conception of curricula in the field of Jewish Studies, organises themed seminars, and offers help in putting together academic libraries.

¹⁵ <www.isu.edu.ua/ru/index0.html>.

¹⁶ <www.Sefer.ru/>.

¹⁷ Charnyi, "Pozdnesovetskaia i postsovetskaia iudaika", p. 269.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

From Flourishing to Waning

By the mid-1990s, the number of new institutions in the field of Jewish Studies declined somewhat. But the market for research and teaching, which had looked satiated, began to grow again and went through a second boom at the turn of the century.

In 1998, the Centre of Jewish Studies and Jewish Civilisation (*Tsentra iudaiki i evreiskoi tsivilizatsii*) was founded under the auspices of the Institute of Asian and Africa Studies at Moscow State University on the basis of a tripartite agreement between the Moscow State University, Jewish University of Moscow, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The centre's director was Arkadii Kovel'man, historian of antiquity and Talmud specialist, on the Russian side and Professor Israel Bertal on the Israeli side.¹⁹ The centre offers bachelor and master's programmes in Jewish history, philology, and the economics of modern Israel. The centre's offering of courses is compiled with the Chais Center for Jewish Studies in Russia, an affiliate of the Hebrew University, and is co-ordinated with the programme at the Simon Dubnov Advanced School for Humanities. The centre also offers individual courses at the historical and philosophical faculty of Moscow State University. The chair of Jewish Studies created at the centre in 2005 is held by Kovel'man.

An analogous institution was created along the same lines at the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science at St. Petersburg University and – the Centre for Biblical and Hebrew Studies (as of 2002, the Centre for Biblical and Jewish Studies, *Tsentra bibliestiki i Iudaiki*) was a joint project between St. Petersburg University, the Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.²⁰ In addition to Biblical studies, this centre teaches medieval studies and the history and culture of East European Jewry. In 2003, it began to publish a multi-lingual journal: *Jewish Studies. Texts and Research. The Center "Petersburg Judaica"* (*Mezh-fakul'tetskii tsentr "Peterburgskaia iudaika"*) of the European University at St. Petersburg opened its doors in 1999.²¹

Since 2002, special courses in Jewish Studies have been on offer in St. Petersburg and Moscow for older school students. These courses were initially developed by individual Jewish schools of higher learning and are co-ordinated today by an inter-university centre.

Among the new institutions was also the International Research Centre for Russian and Eastern European Judaism (*Mezhdunarodnyi issledovatel'skii tsentr rossiiskogo i vostochnoevropenskogo evreistva*), which opened in Moscow in 2003. It is headed by Oleg Budnitskii and awards stipends to scholars in Jewish Studies.²² The centre combines scholarly research with the functions of a foundation. Together with the Sefer Centre, it organised the VIII Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Moscow. At the end of 2007, International Research Centre de facto suspended its activities due to a shortage of funds.

¹⁹ <www.jum.ru/rusjum/rvdeps/rveducatproject.htm>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ <www.eu.spb.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=96&Itemid=109>.

²² <www.worldhist.ru/science/center/Iudaei.htm>.

The Centre for Middle Eastern Research (*Tsentr blizhnevostochnykh issledovaniï*), part of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, came into being in 2004. The director is Andrei Fedorchenko, a leading specialist on the Israeli economy.²³

The new boom is not limited to the Russia's two major cities. There is, for example, a Centre for Israel and Jewish Studies (*Tsentr Izrailevedeniia i Iudaiki*) at the Ural State University in Ekaterinburg.²⁴ The Krasnoïarsk Institute for Social Workers co-operates primarily with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and, since 2000, has organised conferences under the rubric "The Jews in Siberia and the Far East: Past and Present".²⁵

Jewish higher religious education has also developed in Russia. In February 1989, Rabbi Adin Steinsalz founded the Academy of World Civilisations under the auspices of Soviet Academy of Sciences. Since 1992, the academy has been known as the *Institute for the Study of Judaism in the CIS (Institut izucheniia iudaizma v SNG)*. Within the Academy of World Civilisations was the educational centre Mekor Khaim, the first legal Jewish religious educational establishment in the Soviet Union.²⁶ Today there are several yeshivas in the country, most of which belong to the Tomchei Tmimim ("supporters of the pure ones") network of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. There is also a Jewish school of higher learning for women, the Institute Makhon Khamesh, under the auspices of the Federation of Russian Jewish Communities. The Institute Makhon Khamesh offers religious and secular education.²⁷ In 2003, the Chabad founded a similar institution for boys in Moscow: the International Institute of the 21st Century (Hebrew University) (*Mezhdunarodnyi institut XXI veka [Evreiskii universitet]*).²⁸

New centres for Jewish Studies also came into being in Ukraine. In 1998, the eastern Ukrainian branch of the International Solomonov University opened in Kharkiv. It has an international centre for research of the khazar culture and publishes its own journal. Additional facilities that deal with the study of Jewish culture are the *Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies* and the Judaica Institute (founded 1993), from which the Centre for Research on the History and Culture of East European Jewry emerged.²⁹ This centre also has de facto suspended its activity due to financial difficulties. In 2008, a restructuring of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine resulted in the creation of a *Centre for Jewish History and Culture (Tsentr ievreiskoi istorii i kul'tury)*.³⁰

The offerings in Kiev include an interdisciplinary programme in Jewish Studies at the Kiev-Mohyla Academy. Jewish Studies are also offered at Donetsk State University and the Horlivka Pedagogical Institute as well as via individual courses in L'viv, Simferopol', Mykolaïv, Chernivtsi, and elsewhere in Ukraine. In Odessa, the Orthodox religious organisation Or sameach supports training in the field of Jewish Studies. It includes a secondary school, a cheder, a yeshiva, and a local branch of the *Crimean University for the Humanities*. The *Maor Centre*, which was recently founded in

²³ <www.mgimo.ru/nksmi/cbi/index.phtml?text=full>.

²⁴ <<http://fir.usu.ru/research/israel/>>.

²⁵ The conference papers appear in the series *Istoriia Evrei v Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke*.

²⁶ <www.religare.ru/article13081.htm>.

²⁷ <www.chamesh.ru/>.

²⁸ "Evreiskaia zhizn'. Itogi 2003 goda", *Russkii arhipelag* (Setevoi proekt *Russkogo mira*), <www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/religio/resume/euro2003/>; "Ob"iavlenie o nabore abiturientov na 2004-2004 uchebnyi god", http://base.ijc.ru/o_vyz19.html>.

²⁹ <www.judaicacenter.kiev.ua/index.php?lang=1>.

³⁰ <www.ipiend.gov.ua/?mid=106>.

Ukraine, co-ordinates the activities of all Ukrainian schools of higher learning that offer Jewish Studies.³¹

In Belarus, the most important centre for teaching Jewish Studies was the International Institute of the Humanities, founded in 1999 as part of Belarus State University. Its programme was divided between Jewish art and culture. Since the authorities liquidated the institute in 2004, the key centre for Jewish Studies has been the Museum of the History and Culture of Jews in Belarus, in Minsk.³²

In Moldova, Jewish culture is researched at the Moldovan Academy of Sciences within the Institute of Interethnic Research and the Institute of Cultural Heritage. Hebrew is taught (together with Romanian!) at the State University of the Republic of Moldova. Corresponding offerings are to be found at the State University at Tbilisi in Georgia and the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University in Bishkek.³³

Until recently, it was possible to characterise post-Soviet Jewish Studies as enjoying a period of vibrant growth. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, an institutional foundation for a steady stream of new research topics and young scholars was created. However, organisational efforts alone do not yield scholarly results. It will take a certain amount of time until a new generation can produce full-fledged academic work. If the positive trends of the late 1990s and recent years continue, Jewish Studies in Russia could in the near future achieve important results and reach international standards. However, in late 2007 and early 2008, the situation changed noticeably. One part of the institutions ceased operating, and another is now in financial crisis. The private institutions have been hit hardest, but state schools are struggling with insufficient funding as well.

Jewish Studies in the post-Soviet realm were initially financed mainly by the JDC, which was replaced by the Jewish Congress of Russia and a number of private foundations outside Russia. In the meantime the JDC has completely suspended its activities in this field, while the Jewish Congress of Russia has cut the means for education and research by 60 per cent. At most, the Petersburg branch of the Jewish Congress and the private foundation Avi Chai are willing to provide noteworthy subsidies to build up Jewish Studies, but their possibilities are limited. The financial crisis is rooted less in political causes than economic ones, for example, ineffective fundraising and confusing Russian legislation on non-profit status. As far as state academic structures are concerned, their budgets are not being cut, but those budgets have not been adjusted to meet the general increase in the cost of living in Russia. As a result, they are gradually experiencing a lack of funds.

Jewish History

History is one of the most fruitful areas of Jewish Studies in Russia. The rapid development of the past 20 years particularly in this field shows, for one, that there is a

³¹ V. Likhachev, A. Fedorchuk, "Vysshee obrazovanie v oblasti iudaiki na postsovet'skom prostranstve", <<http://www.kehila.ru/article/?32>>.

³² <www.charter97.org/rus/news/2004/02/04/inst>.

³³ Likhachev, Fedorchuk, "Vysshee obrazovanie".

great need for historical research and, for another, that the field was previously underdeveloped. The number of academic publications on Jewish history and culture in Russia is overwhelming. Alone the Russian-Israeli publishing house Gesharim – *Mosty kul'tury* has put out over 300 books, with a total number of 1 million copies.³⁴ Academic titles also appear at the same publishing house in the series *Biblioteca Judaica*, however, the works here involve mostly translations. The spectrum of publications stretches from periodicals to source editions, from collections to monographs. Regional topics are at present one of the most popular fields. The history of the shtetl, religion, and culture, migration, assimilation, and other aspects of Jewish lifeworlds in the past and present were not researched in the Soviet era. Even the most elementary information in these fields was off-limits to researchers. After the end of the Soviet Union, this deplorable situation prompted a large number of studies into local history based on sources from provincial archives.³⁵ This work has primarily served to collect data. Systematic analysis remains to be done.

The opening of the archives has given historians previously unimaginable opportunities. Academic or pseudo-academic publications containing source materials make up a considerable part of the publications in Jewish Studies. One of the largest archival science projects is the series *Documents on the History and Culture of Jews in the Archives of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, which was initiated by the Centre for Biblical and Judaic Studies at RGGU, guides to the sources in post-Soviet archives. Between 1997 and 2006, descriptions of the archives of Moscow, Kiev, and Belarus appeared.³⁶ Another six volumes are planned, with the next one covering the archives of St. Petersburg. *Vaad of Russia*, the Holocaust Centre, and the Centre for Research on the History and Culture of East European Jewry each have their own Archive projects. Collections with archival material on certain topics – for example, the pogroms on Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian territory during the Civil War era, the activity of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, agitation and propaganda material, etc. – have been appearing.³⁷

The huge interest within the Jewish community in everything that belongs to national history and tradition helps to fill in the gaps of knowledge. Among the publications on Jewish history, there are numerous reference works, textbooks, and non-specialist literature. Since 1994, the Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia has been published amid a controversy surrounding its content. There have been six volumes thus far. Similar publica-

³⁴ Praisman, ed., *Istoria Evreev Rossii*, p. 670.

³⁵ According to estimates by Aleksandr Frenkel', the editor in chief of the journal *Narod knigi v mire knig*, 215 books related to Jewish regional studies were published between 1991 and 2003 in the former Soviet Union (83 of them dealt with the history of Jewish communities in Russia, 94 with those in Ukraine), quoted in Charnyi, "Pozdnesovetskaia i postsovetskaia iudaika", p. 275.

³⁶ M.S. Kupovetskii, E.V. Starostin, M. Veb, eds., *Dokumenty po Istorii i Kul'ture Evreev v Arkhivakh Moskvy: Putevoditel'* (Moscow 1997); M.S. Kupovetskii, E.V. Starostin, M. Veb, eds., *Dokumenty po Istorii i Kul'ture Evreev v Arkhivakh Belarusi: Putevoditel'* (Moscow 2003); E.I. Melamed, M.S. Kupovetskii, eds., *Dokumenty po Istorii i Kul'ture Evreev v Arkhivakh Kiev: Putevoditel'* (Kiev 2006).

³⁷ See, for example, L.B. Miliakova, ed., *Kniga pogromov: Pogromy na Ukraine, v Belorussii i evropeiskoi chasti Rossii v period Grazhdanskoi Voiny 1918–1922, sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow 2007); D.G. Nazhdafov, ed., *Stalin i Kosmopolitizm, 1945–1953: Dokumenty agitpropa TsK KPSS* (Moscow 2005); Sh. Redlikh, G. Kostyrchenko *Evreiskii antifashistskii komitet v SSSR 1941–1948. Dokumentirovannaia istoriia* (Moscow 1996); A.N. Iakovlev, ed., *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v SSSR. Ot nachala do kul'minatsii. 1938–1953, sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow 2005).

tions have been planned for Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, which appeared in Israel, and the re-print of the standard 16-volume *Evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, which appeared at the publishing house Brokgaus-Efron, have circulated widely. A comprehensive university textbook for schools of higher learning, *Istoriia Evreev Rossii* [History of the Russian Jews], has been in existence since 2006.³⁸

With Russia's active Middle East policy, Israeli Studies have grown rapidly in Russia. Holocaust research, which simply did not exist in the Soviet Union, has undergone considerable development. As early as 1989-1990, there were groups collecting and examining oral testimony on the history of the Holocaust. In 1992, the Holocaust Information Centre was founded in Moscow under the direction of the historian and philosopher Mikhail Gefter (1918-1995). In 1997, the Holocaust Foundation was added. The information centre has the most Holocaust researchers in the post-Soviet realm. Their goals are to keep the memory of the victims of the Holocaust alive, to build museums and exhibitions, to embed the topic in the curricula of schools and institutions of higher learning, to hold commemoration ceremonies, to set up monuments for the victims, as well as to collect documents, testimony, and memoirs. The centre has published several dozen books on the subject and is working on an encyclopaedia of the Holocaust on the territory of the Soviet Union.³⁹ The Holocaust Foundation runs summer schools and continuing education seminars for teachers at secondary schools and institutions of higher learning.

In Ukraine and Belarus as well, a number of institutions have been created to address the history of the Holocaust: Educational centres exist in Kiev, Dnipropetrovs'k, Kharkiv, L'viv, Minsk, and Brest. All of these organisations organise conferences on the topic of the Holocaust and publish periodicals and books.⁴⁰ Until the mid-1990s, research in Ukraine was dominated by the collection of materials and local studies.⁴¹ In the last few years, the spectrum has grown broader. Dissertations and monographs have appeared, and a substantial assessment of the tragedy is gradually getting underway.⁴² Although scholarly research of Jewish history has made remarkable progress in the past 20 years, general educational and popular publications are predominant. There is also a lack of translations of standard Western works. Most Russian works focus on the recent past and do not go beyond the 20th century. This not surprising, for due to the taboos that existed in the Soviet Union, a large gap in the historiography had come into being. Works on other periods are therefore clearly underrepresented.

³⁸ Praisman, ed., *Istoriia Evreev Rossii*.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 273. In 2005 the publisher ROSPEN released a monumental 800-page Russian translation of a work prepared by U. Laker (English original published by Yale University Press): *Kholokost: Entsiklopediia* (Moscow 2005).

⁴⁰ The magazine *Kholokost i sovremennost'* appears in Kiev. *Problemy Kholokosta* and the series *Ukrainskaia biblioteka Kholokosta* appear in Dnipropetrovs'k.

⁴¹ See Ia. Khongisman, *Katastrofa evreistva Zapadnoi Ukrainy* (L'viv, 1998); S. Elisavetskii, *Polvaka zabvenii: Evrei v dvizhenii Soprotivleniia i partizanskoi bor'be v Ukraine (1941 — 1944)* (Kiev 1998); Iu. Marionvskii, E. Shofar, *Istoriichko-kraevedchskii al'manakh* (Dokumenty i materialy po istorii evreev na Cherkasshchine. Nach. XIX st. — 1960) (Cherkassy 2004); *Evreiskoe naselenie na Nikolaevshchine, sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 1 (Mykolaiv 2004).

⁴² I. Shchupak, "Opyt izuchenii i prepodavaniia istorii Kholokosta v postsovetsovs'koi Ukraine", in Epshtein, ed., *Evrei v postsovet'skikh stranakh*, pp. 232-241.

Ethnography and Anthropology

The flowering of ethnographic research in Jewish Studies in the past 20 years in the end has to do with the overall development of ethnology, which did not exist as a discipline in the Soviet Union. Ethnography as an ancillary discipline to history was very limited theoretically and practically. Only after 1991 was this gap slowly closed.

In 1981, the Moscow-based Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Commission developed a plan to research Jewish monuments in which particular emphasis was put on non-Ashkenazi communities and Judaizing communities. In 1991, researchers from St. Petersburg began systematically documenting Jewish cemeteries and traditional Jewish art in Ukraine. The Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies and the Centre of Jewish Art at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem conducted several dozen ethnographic expeditions between 1992-2001 in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and the Eastern Caucasus. During these expeditions, they measured more than 300 synagogues and described approximately 200 cemeteries.⁴³ Numerous works have appeared based on the results of these expeditions. The Centre Petersburg Judaica also conducts folklore, archaeological and ethnographic expeditions.

Since the start of the 21st century, there has been a growing interest in Khazar culture. The International Solomonov University has organised archaeological expeditions to the Don, the lower Volga, and the Northern Caucasus. Colloquia on the matter took place in Jerusalem in 1999 and Moscow in 2002.⁴⁴ At the same time, interest in the Mountain Jews is booming. In March, the first international academic symposium took place on this subject.⁴⁵ Research is concentrated on Makhachkala und Nal'chik, where Iurii Murzakhanov, one of the most important experts, works. Several collections with documents have appeared here as well.⁴⁶ Since the 1990s, the Karaim have been attracting greater attention from scholars.⁴⁷ A catalogue on the Mangup cemetery, where excavations took place in 2004, is due out shortly.

One of the biggest ethnographic projects is the field school in Jewish Studies in the Crimea, which was organised by the Sefer Centre. The project managed to describe in full one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in Eastern Europe: the Chufut Kale cemetery. In the course of 12 expeditions between 2004 and 2007, approximately 3,400 gravestones from the 14th-20th centuries were collected. An electronic catalogue is being created.⁴⁸

⁴³ V. Dymshits, A. Fedorchuk, B. Khaimovich, „Polevye shkoly po iudaïke na postsovet'skom prostranstve”, *Evroaziatskii evreiskii ezhegodnik*, 5764 (2003-2004) (Kiev 2004), p. 177.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Petruchin, Vol'f Moskovich, Artem Fedorchuk, eds., *Khazary* (Moscow and Jerusalem 2006).

⁴⁵ Charnyi, „Pozdnesovetskaiia i postsovetskaiia iudaïka”, p. 265.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Danilova S.A. *Istoriia i etnografiia gorskikh evreev Kavkaza* (Nal'chik 1998); *Istoriia gorskikh evreev Severnogo Kavkaza v dokumentakh 1829-1917* (Nal'chik 1999).

⁴⁷ M.B. Kizilov, *Karaimy: Ot kimmeriitsev do krymchakov (narody Kryma s drevneishikh vermen do kontsa v.)* (Simferopol' 2004); O. Belyi, „Dokumenty k istorii rossiiskoi karaimistiki v pervye gody posle smerti A.S. Firkovicha”, *Desiataia ezhegodnaia mezhdunarodnaia mezhdistsiplinarnaia konferentsiia po iudaïke 28-30 ianvaria 2003* (Moscow 2003); I. Iurchenko, O. Kefeli, N. Iurchenko, O. Beregovs'kii, *Karaims'ke kladovishche bilia Halycha. Kataloh nadmohil'nikh pam'iatnikov* (L'viv and Halych 2000).

⁴⁸ A. Fedorchuk, „Polevye shkoly po iudaïke v Krymu i ikh pervye rezul'taty”, in Epshtein, ed., *Evrei v postsovetskikh stranakh*, pp. 146-151.

These expeditions have collected an enormous amount of material, which must now be analysed. Unfortunately, the interdisciplinary discipline of ethnography does not fit in well with the traditional Russian system of higher education. Therefore field studies on Jewish topics are also torn apart and distributed over various related disciplines such as history, cultural anthropology, philology, or sociology. This in turn makes it difficult to teach a common method and leads to a certain isolation within academia.

Jewish Philology

Every philology presupposes mastery of the language to be investigated. However, despite extensive contact with Israel and the abundance of learning opportunities, most Russian scholars have yet to master Modern Hebrew well enough. The Philological Faculty of the Maimonides Academy, the chair of Jewish Studies within the Institute of Asian and Africa Studies at Moscow State University, and the Institute of Oriental Studies at RGGU put considerable emphasis on Modern Hebrew. The study of Biblical and Medieval Hebrew, which was permitted within Soviet academia, remains strong at a high standard. The Soviet tradition of Qumran and Hebraic Studies continues in St. Petersburg at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences.⁴⁹ By contrast, at the Centre of Hebraic Studies, which used to be the Oriental Studies Faculty at Petersburg University, this problem has almost been eliminated. The chair of Semitology specialises primarily in Arabic philology, and only two Hebraists work there.

In the field of Yiddish, there has been no noteworthy progress in the last 20 years. There are several reasons for this. There are only a few native-speakers of the language left. Many documents are available in two languages so that researchers are not inevitably forced to consult the Yiddish original; Yiddish has a lesser status compared to Hebrew. As a result, sponsors as well have less of an interest in supporting the study of Yiddish. Nonetheless, Yiddish philology in Russia is taken quite seriously. The leading centre for the study and teaching Yiddish is today – thanks to the close connections with academic centres in the United States – the TsBI of the RGGU. It was here that the only modern Russian textbook for Yiddish appeared.⁵⁰ In addition, the annual conferences at the Sefer Centre dedicate a section to Yiddish.

An interesting social phenomenon in Russia in recent years, especially in St. Petersburg, is “the return to Yiddish”. Private groups of enthusiasts organise lessons and courses to popularise Yiddish culture and translate texts from Yiddish into Russian. The leaders of the movement are Aleksandr Frenkel' and Valerii Dymshits, who have both been actively supported by émigré scholars in the West and Israel, such as Mikhail Krutinov and Velvl Chernin.

The study of Jewish literature is at a relatively high level in Russia and Belarus. It deals with classical Hebrew texts as well as Israeli contemporary literature and jour-

⁴⁹ I. P. Tantlevskii, *Istoriia i ideologiiia Kumranskoi obshchiny* (St. Petersburg 1994); *Teksty Kumrana*. II. ed., Intr., translations from ancient and Aramaic languages, A.M. Gazov-Ginzberg, M.M. Elizarskaia, K. B. Starkovaia, comm. (St. Petersburg 1996).

⁵⁰ S.A. Sandler, *Idish: Uchebnik dlia russkogovoriashchikh* (Moscow 2001). This was based on a book published by the same author in the last days of the Soviet Union, *Samouchitel' iazyka idish* (Moscow 1989).

nalism.⁵¹ Research on the specifically Jewish mentality and the study of Russian-Jewish literature is enjoying some popularity. An important factor for arousing interest in Jewish literature is the large amount of translations from Hebrew and Yiddish that have appeared in recent years.

Jewish School Education

There is a system of Jewish education in Russia at the moment that runs from nursery school to postgraduate level. But that does not mean that these institutions have solved their tasks satisfactorily, especially as their content is fiercely debated.

At the beginning of the 1990s, when Jewish Studies began its renaissance, school education was not forgotten. At first, there were Sunday schools and experimental Jewish classes at general education state schools. By 1991, there were 20 Jewish schools in Moscow alone, both Sunday and day schools, teaching around 650 pupils.⁵² The exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel was at this time in full gear; the main task of the Jewish schools was to prepare children for the new country and the transition to Israeli schools. In these transition schools, emphasis was on basic Hebrew and Jewish culture and history. The main problem facing the schools was the high turnover of students. Children arrived at Jewish schools only a year or two before their planned departure. New pupils were constantly showing up. This made it difficult to stick to a systematic plan. The second problem was the catastrophic lack of textbooks and teachers manuals and the lack of qualified teaching staff. Nonetheless, the system continued to develop and spread. By 2002, there were around 40 Jewish day schools in the country, with eight of them in Moscow and three in St. Petersburg.

Financing and organisational support for Jewish school education now lie in the hands of various institutions, including the Or Avner network and the international Jewish organisation ORT. In Moscow, the Jewish religious school Mesivta for boys has existed since 1999. In St. Petersburg, a religious Jewish gymnasium Migdal existed from 1991-2008; it has now closed due to financial problems.⁵³ In 2003, there were some 10,000 children attending Jewish schools.⁵⁴ A considerable part of the schools are supported by the Hephzibah Programme of the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Jewish Agency. Alongside the day schools, there are approximately 80 Sunday schools, of which the vast majority of which are financed by FEOR.⁵⁵

Over time, the situation has changed markedly. The decline in Jewish emigration confronted Jewish schools with a new task. The children no longer had to be prepared for departure, but for life in their homeland. This required systematic teaching, new textbooks, and methodological literature, and standardising learning goals. The last few years have seen the development of a number of textbooks on Jewish history for sec-

⁵¹ A. Kriukov, *Ocherki po istorii izrail'skoi literatury* (St. Petersburg 1998); G. Sinilo, *Drevnie literatury Blizhnego Vostoka i mir Tanakha* (Moscow 2008).

⁵² V. Sobkin, "Evreiskie shkoly v Moskve (po materialam ekspertnogo oprosa)", *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve*, 3 (1993), p. 7. Unfortunately, statistics at that time were not analysed for national schools, so we have had to use fragmentary evaluations.

⁵³ <www.nashisrael.ru/news/index.php?a=21&i=28856&Krasland_Session=ec585d82839409b84e5278f903288a47>.

⁵⁴ *Istoriia evreev Possii. Uchebnik*, p. 669.

⁵⁵ <www.jafi.dp.ua/JewishAgency/Russian/Delegations/Kiev/4>.

ondary schools.⁵⁶ Curricula and the introduction of teaching goals are being discussed. The question how a Jewish school should look also has to do with ideological positions that come with a religious, secular, Zionist, or some other kind of orientation.

A major problem facing Jewish schools is the lack of a unified curriculum. Many schools follow the example of Israeli schools, although their standards run completely counter to Russian traditions. The first attempt to design a curriculum on the history of the Jewish people was made by the New Jewish School in St. Petersburg in 2002. Since 2003, the development of a special education system for Russia has been supported by the Hephzibah Programme, but these theoretical concepts are far from what is practiced in the schools and are therefore not often implemented.

However, the spontaneity and unsystematic character of the development of Jewish education in Russia is not solely due to specifically Jewish issues. The entire Russian education system is undergoing reforms. Curricula are changing. There is a struggle over standardisation of textbooks. New examination systems are being introduced. Under these conditions, it is not so astonishing that to this day there are still no state standards for national history. Whether this is for better or for worse remains to be seen. On top of all these problems come financial difficulties. The Jewish school system is at present underfinanced.

Jewish History in Textbooks and Curricula

In Soviet history textbooks, there was practically no mention made about the Jews. During Perestroika, a decentralisation of the education system got underway. This led to a growing number of school books. This tendency has grown stronger over the years. The various textbooks are written from different political points of view, and Jewish history is accordingly depicted in different ways. The spectrum of topics in the context of which Jews are mentioned stretches from the Khazar Khaganate, to the census of 1897 and the Second World War, to the dissident movement and refusal to grant permission to emigrate during the Brezhnev era, to the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel. They are conspicuously missing in the texts on the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising (1648), the partitions of Poland, the non-Russian population of the Russian Empire and religious affiliation of its subjects, antisemitism during the era of Aleksander III, the last years of Stalin's rule, and the Suez War in 1956.⁵⁷ There are, however, a small number of textbooks that discuss subjects such as the pogroms in the Civil War, Jewish agricultural settlement in the Crimea, Stalin's domestic policy and the Soviet Union's pro-Arab policies during the conflict in the Middle East.

A recent analysis of textbooks on Russian history for the latter years of high school from 1996 to 2007 shows that Jewish themes are hardly any better represented than in the Soviet era. The frequency with which Jews are mentioned has somewhat increased but the difference is minimal. All of the textbooks on the history Russia fail to make any reference to the annihilation of the Jews during the war, or they make only insufficient reference to it. The term Holocaust does not crop up in any of the books ana-

⁵⁶ For example, M.O. Mel'tsin, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda: Ucheb. pos. dlia 4-5 klassov srednei evreiskoi obshcheobrazovatel'noi shkoly* (St. Petersburg 2004); D. Dan, *Evreiskii narod v ellinisticheskom mire. Ucheb. pos. dlia 5-6 klassov srednei evreiskoi obshcheobrazovatel'noi shkoly* (St. Petersburg 2002).

⁵⁷ V. Stolov, "Evreiskaia istoriia v rossiiskoi shkole", *Evreiskaia shkola*, 1 (1998).

lysed.⁵⁸ And the prevailing ideological direction of textbooks in the spirit of the Orthodox Church does not help the situation. Under these conditions, there is practically no place on the pages of textbooks for Russian citizens of Jewish, Moslem, or any other faith. But wherever Jewish history is studied only by Jews and the rest of the population in the country is left with only vague and negative notions, the consequences will inevitably be an “intellectual ghetto”.⁵⁹

The textbooks for universities are much more varied than those for schools, as almost every Russian university publishes its own textbooks. If we limit the overview to the literature in circulation at the largest universities, it can be said that Jews regularly come up in courses on the history of foreign countries, but far from always in Russian history.⁶⁰ Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that the texts on the history of other countries are only for students of history faculties and ancillary fields, while those on Russia’s history are for students of all faculties. For example, the textbook on Russian history for non-historians that is published almost annually by Moscow State University mentions Jews three times: Jewish heresy, the events of Second World War, and in the population list of the Russian Federation.⁶¹ Stalin’s “campaign against Cosmopolitanism” and the “Doctors’ Plot” are mentioned in the book, but without any indication of their specifically antisemitic thrust.⁶² Such important subjects as the Pale of Settlement, numerus clausus for Jews, and the pogroms are not touched upon. Judging by the textbook here, the nationality question did not exist in Russia at all; more precisely, it arose only during Perestroika.⁶³ This book omits the Polish uprisings of 1830-1831 and 1863 as well as Stalin’s resettlement policy of 1944. Thus, the impression is created that the Jews were not particularly “disadvantaged”. The history textbook for the humanities in general that St. Petersburg State University publishes is no better. In the history of Russia before 1917, Jews are mentioned only once: in the context of Sergei Zubatov’s “Independent Jewish Party”.⁶⁴ Jews received a little more attention in a textbook for future professional historians.⁶⁵

The situation in Ukraine is much more optimistic. The study of the Holocaust was included in the curriculum of a non-Jewish university there in the mid-1990s, the History Faculty of Zaporizhzhia State University. In 2000, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science sent out a letter of instruction about the need to teach the Hol-

⁵⁸ Comprehensive schools do not use books such as: I. Al’tman, A. Gerber, D. Poltorak, *Istoriia Kholokosta na territorii SSSR. Uchebnoe posobie dlia srednei shkoly* (Moscow 2002).

⁵⁹ N. Dem’ianov, *Obraz evreev v uchebnykh posobiakh po istorii Rossii dlia postupaiushchikh v VUZ. Diplomnaia rabota* (St. Petersburg 2007) (Manuscript).

⁶⁰ On textbooks, for example: S.P. Karpov, ed., *Istoriia srednikh vekov, 1–2* (Moscow 2000); *Novaia istoriia stran Evropy i Ameriki: Uchebnik dlia vuzov po spetsial’nosti istoriia* (Moscow 1997); *Novaia istoriia stran Evropy i Ameriki: Vtoroi period* (Moscow 1998). See also L. Gatagova, T. Filippova, *Strany Tsentral’noi i Vostochnoi Evropy v rossiiskikh uchebnikakh istorii*, <www.history.ru/2004/01/evropa.htm>.

⁶¹ A.S. Orlov, V.A. Georgiev, N.G. Georgieva et al., *Istoriia Rossii: Uchebnik* (Moscow 2001), pp. 73, 410, 497. There are virtually identical editions of this book for every year of this century.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 422, 479.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 461–462.

⁶⁴ I.Ia. Froianov, ed., A.Iu. Dvornichenko, S.G. Kashchenko, M.F. Florinskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia (do 1917): Uchebnik posobie* (Moscow 2002), p. 380.

⁶⁵ V.A. Fedorov, *Istoriia Rossii. 1861-1917: Uchebnik dlia vuzov*. 2nd edition., corr. (Moscow 2004), p. 142. This book was written a comparatively long time ago, but its publication as part of the “Classic University Book” series shows that university administrators consider its approaches and judgements current even today.

ocaust in Universities in Ukraine. The introduction of this into schools soon followed. Not long thereafter, the Holocaust became a part of the curriculum for schools. Standard textbooks containing material on the Holocaust began to appear in Ukraine in 1998. The different textbooks address the subject in varying levels of detail, with much being left up to the teacher.⁶⁶

Conclusions

The rapid development of Jewish Studies in the past 20 years and the present crisis, which is primarily a financial one, show that the field has yet to find a secure place in Russia's academic system. On the one hand, concrete works on Jewish topics easily connect with various academic disciplines; on the other hand, Jewish Studies is often not accepted in the consciousness of the academic community as an independent and new, but as merely another configuration of knowledge.⁶⁷ Jewish Studies is not recognised as an autonomous, complex academic discipline, and in the nomenclature of the recognised subjects of the highest attestation committees and the Ministry of Education, Jewish Studies do not exist.

Unlike in the traditional Soviet system, Jewish Studies – inspired by Western models but also forced due to the lack of personnel – frequently unites research and teaching in one institution. The organisational development of the discipline overall is taking shape unevenly. There is above all a lack of museums and suitable possibilities to store materials collected on field trips. Archives with properly trained staff and a central library that collects literature on Jewish topics are to be included among the desiderata.⁶⁸

Public consciousness in Russia associates Jewish Studies less with academic study than with Jewish national identity. The dedication of many scholars to their educational work, on the one hand, and the relatively low level of a large part of published works, on the other, is leading to a situation in which Jewish Studies is often perceived as a “special kind of community life”, as Viktoriia Mochalova tersely put it.⁶⁹ The engagement of non-Jewish scholars in the field is therefore met with a lack of understanding. Overall, Jewish Studies in Russia is bearing rather modest fruit, but its potential is without a doubt great.

Translated by Mark Belcher, Berlin

⁶⁶ Ia.M. Berdichevskii, T.V. Ladychenko, I.Ia. Shchupak, *Vsemirnaia istoriia: Noveishee vremia 1939–2001* (Zaporizhzhia 2001). See also I. Shchupak, *ibid.*, pp. 223–231.

⁶⁷ A. L'vov, “Chto takoe iudaika?” (From the foreword to the collection *Greki i evrei*) <<http://lvov.judaica.spb.ru/judaica.shtml>>.

⁶⁸ A. Epstein, “What Has Been Done and What Remains to Be Done: Reconsidering the Development of Academic Jewish and Israel Studies in Russia”, in V. Khanin, A. Epstein, V. Chernin, eds., *Constructing the National Identity. Jewish Education in Russia: Twenty Years after the End of the Cold War* (Jerusalem 2008), p. 132.

⁶⁹ V. Mochalova, “Rol' akademicheskikh program po iudaike v samoidentifikatsii postsovetskogo evreistva”, in Epshtein, ed., *Evrei v postsovetskikh stranakh*, p. 110.

Anatolii Podol's'kyi

A Reluctant Look Back

Jewry and the Holocaust in Ukraine

Ukraine was once a centre of East European Jewish life. Most Ukrainian Jews were killed during the Holocaust. Jewish culture in Ukraine perished with them. In the Soviet Union, that culture slipped into oblivion. While Ukraine's official politics of remembrance omits the country's Jewish heritage, private individuals and organisations are trying to embed Jewish culture and history as a part of Ukrainian identity in the public consciousness. This is a painful process: It demands that Ukrainians recognise their share of the responsibility in the annihilation of the Jews in their country.

At the end of the 19th century, there were at least 3 million Jews living in the territory of what is today Ukraine, which was at that time divided between Austria and Russia. Ukraine represented a major religious, literary, and political centre of East European Jewry. The co-existence of Jews and Ukrainians was deeply influenced by social, cultural, and economic exchange, but also by differences and conflicts. The worst example of anti-Jewish violence in the distant past took place during a 17th-century uprising of Ukrainian Christians and Cossacks against the Polish republic. After the partition of Ukraine between Russia and Austria in the late 18th century, the Jews of eastern Galicia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia enjoyed the same civil rights as other subjects of the Habsburg Empire. There, antisemitism was for the most part marginal. In the Russian Empire, however, antisemitism was official policy, and pogroms were carried out against Jews in 1871, 1881, 1903, and 1905. The recurring waves of pogroms prompted thousands of Jews to emigrate to the Austrian part of Ukraine, the United States, South America, and Palestine. State antisemitism in Russia reached its climax in 1913 with the infamous trial of Mendel Beilis in Kiev. Beilis was accused of ritual murder, but due to the decisive intervention of the Ukrainian and Russian intelligentsia as well as ordinary Ukrainians, he was acquitted.

Unlike Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic states, Ukraine did not gain independence after the First World War. From 1917 to 1921, a fierce struggle between the imperial Russian army, the Bolsheviks, and Ukrainian national forces took place in the Ukrainian lands. The Jews fell victim to pogroms committed by all of the warring parties during these years. The Bolsheviks accused the Jews of collaborating with the Ukrainian National Republic, while Ukrainian national forces accused them of collaborating with the Bolsheviks. The tsarist loyalists continued the anti-Jewish policies of the Romanov dynasty. In 1922, the greater part of the Ukrainian territory was absorbed by the newly founded Soviet Union. Eastern Galicia and west-

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ern Volhynia were allotted to Poland, Bukovina came under Romania rule, and Transcarpathia became a part of Czechoslovakia.

Whereas the Jews in the Ukrainian lands of Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were able to maintain their traditional way of life, Jewish life in Soviet Ukraine gradually came to an end. In the 1930s, synagogues and religious schools were closed, and Hebrew was forbidden. Jews and Ukrainians were victims of both the Great Famine (1932-1933) and the Great Terror (1936-1938). Jews and Ukrainians were also to be found among the perpetrators. The relatively high proportion of Bolshevik functionaries of Jewish origin fanned latent antisemitism in Ukrainian society.

The repression of Jewish and Ukrainian national life did not stop Jews and Ukrainians from working together. This was especially apparent in literature. During the 1930s, Yiddish literature was able to develop in Ukraine. Among the brightest talents in this period were David Gofsteyn, Perets Markish, and David Bergelson. A number of Ukrainian writers of Jewish origin – Natan Rybak, Leonid Pervomaiskii, and Abram Katsnel'son – saw themselves as the bearers of Jewish and Ukrainian culture. Moreover, there existed in Ukraine at this time Jewish agricultural settlements where only Yiddish was spoken.

By May 1941, around 2.5 million Jews lived within the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Under German occupation, the Jewish community in Ukraine, like all other Jewish communities in occupied Europe, was subjected to total destruction. The only Jews to survive were those who fled to the Soviet interior (Central Asia and Siberia) or joined the Red Army and helped to defend the Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and Belarusians from the Nazi regime. Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the Holocaust were extremely complex. Many non-Jews in Ukraine collaborated with the National Socialists. A large part succumbed to the Nazis' inflammatory propaganda against "Judeo-Bolshevism", which was allegedly responsible for the Stalinist terror of the 1930s. Historians assume that in Reich Commissariat Ukraine – which encompassed Volhynia, central Ukraine, and parts of eastern Ukraine – approximately 140,000 people served in local auxiliary police formations. Not all of them were Ukrainians, however. In addition, many inhabitants of Ukraine decided to work with the Nazis, and as a consequence of this decision, some ended up as guards at the killing centres Sobibór, Treblinka, and Bełżec. In many towns in western Ukraine, the local non-Jewish population killed Jews without waiting for instructions from the occupying authorities. On the other hand, Ukraine occupies fourth place on a list of rescuers compiled by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust remembrance authority in Jerusalem. This list includes more than 2,200 people from Ukraine who risked their lives to save Jews in the Ukrainian territories under Nazi occupation.

After the Second World War, Jewish life no longer existed in Ukraine. There were no more Jewish communities, no Jewish schools, no Jewish periodicals, no Jewish agricultural settlements. At the end of the 1940s, Stalin's antisemitism moved from latent to open, resulting in the open persecution of everything Jewish. This antisemitic campaign culminated in the shooting of Soviet Jewish writers in 1952. By the 1960s, Jews in Soviet Ukraine had largely assimilated to the Soviet way of life.

According to the 1989 census, there were 486,000 Jews on Ukrainian territory. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by a massive wave of emigration to Israel, the United States, and Germany, on the one hand, and the resurrection of Jewish social and community life in Ukraine, on the other. According to the 2001 census, there are now only 103,000 Jews in Ukraine, but synagogues and Jewish schools have re-

opened, Jewish newspapers are being published, Jewish social organisations have taken up their work, and there are institutes of Jewish studies.

Ukrainian Research on the Holocaust

Over the past decade and a half, the progress made in community life has been matched by great progress in Holocaust research in Ukraine. A new school of research on the Holocaust has emerged.¹ The development of Holocaust historiography in Ukraine began with regional research and published memoirs. In a second step, individual aspects were examined. This was followed by the publication of standard document collections² and dissertations, of which there are still too few.³

The works of Ukrainian historians who research the Holocaust are largely ignored by official scholarship in Ukraine. At the same time, they have been received with great interest in the West and are frequently cited.⁴ The persistent ignorance of Ukrainian academics has increased in the last few years. Recent academic publications on modern Ukrainian history and university-level historiography textbooks address the Holocaust by making brief mention of Babi Yar – the Kiev ravine where nearly 34,000

¹ See, for example, A. Podol's'kyi, "Tema Holokostu v suchasni ukrains'kii istoriohrafii: problemy naukovykh doslidzhen' ta interpretatsii", *Druha svitova viina i dolia narodiv Ukrainy: Materialy Vseukrains'koï naukovoï konferentsii* (Kiev 2005), pp. 32–34; idem, "Doslidzhennia z istorii Holokostu v suchasni ukrains'kii istoriohrafii: novi pidkhody", in Ster J. Elisavetskii, *Katastrofa i opir ukrains'koho ievreistva: Narysy z istorii Holokostu i Oporu v Ukraini* (Kiev 1999), pp. 26–38.

² See, for example, M. Popovich, *Evreiskii genotsid na Ukraine, Filosofskaia i sotsiologicheskaia mysl'*, 4 (1994); Iaroslav Hrytsak, "Ukraïntsi v anty-ievreis'kykh aktsiakh", *i*, 8 (1996); Ia. Khonigsman, *Katastrofa evreistva Zapadnoi Ukrainy* (L'viv 1998); Faina Vinokurova, "Osobennosti genotsida evreev na territorii Transnistrii", *Biulleten' Kholokost i sovremenost'*, 4–6 (2003–2004); Maksym Hon, *Z kryvdou na samoti. Ukrains'ko-evreiskii vziemyny na Volyni v 1926–1939 rokakh* (Rivne 2005); M. Tiaglyi, "Were Chingene Victims of the Holocaust? The Nazi policy in the Crimea towards Roma and Jews: Comparative analysis", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Fall 2008); Marco Tsarynnyk, "Zolochiv movchyt'", *Krytyka*, (October 2005); Zhanna Kovba, *Liudianist' u bezodni pekla* (Kiev 1998); F. Levitas, *Ievrei Ukrainy v roky Druhoi svitovoi viiny* (Kiev 1997); A. Kruglov, ed., *Sbornik dokumentov i materialov ob unichtozhenii natsistami evreev Ukrainy v 1941–1944 gg.* (Kiev 2002); M. Tiaglyi, *Mesta massovogo unichtozheniia evreev Kryma v period natsistskoi okkupatsii poluoostrova, 1941–1944: Spravochnik* (Simferopol 2005); *Katastrofa i opir ukrains'koho Ievreistva: Narysy z istorii Holokostu i Oporu v Ukraini* (Kiev 1999); B. Zabarko, ed., *Zhizn' i smert' v epokhu Kholokosta. Svidetel'stva i dokumenty*, 1–2 (Kiev 2006); Vitalii Nakhmanovich, "Obshchestvennyi komitet po uvekovecheniiu pamiati zhertv Bab'ego Iara i dr.", in Dmytro V. Tabachnyk, Tat'iana Evstaf'eva, eds., *Babii Iar: chelovek, vlast', istoriia: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kiev 2004).

³ Between 1991 and 2008, Anatolii Podol's'kyi, Feliks Levytas, Faina Vynokurova, A. Honcharenko, O. Surovtsev and N. Suhatskaia wrote dissertations about the Holocaust in Ukraine. Maksym Gon, V. Grinevich and D. Titarenko touch on the Holocaust in their dissertations. At present, L. Solovki is working on a dissertation on the history of the Holocaust in the oblast of Stanyslaviv (today Ivano-Frankiv's'k). Iu. Radchenko is researching the genocide of the Jews in the zone under German military administration (eastern Ukraine). M. Tiaglyi is working on a history of the Holocaust in Crimea.

⁴ Here, it is necessary to name Karel C. Berkhoff, Dieter Pohl, Wilfried Jilge, Peter Potychny, Howard Aster, Marco Tsarynnyk, John Himka, Omer Bartov, Alexander Prusyn, Martin Dean, Wendy Lower. In particular, researchers abroad make use of Alexander Kruglov, ed., *Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, and Tabachnyk, Evstaf'eva, eds., *Babii Iar*.

Jews were shot over two days at the end of September 1941 – or these works suggest that the victims were first and foremost Ukrainians and Russians. In introductory surveys to historiography, no reference is made to publications about the genocide of Ukrainian Jews.⁵ Especially shocking is a recent publication by the Institute of History and the Institute of Political and Ethno-National Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, a publication dedicated to the political history of Ukraine in the 20th century and the early 21st century.⁶ This enormous volume, with more than 1,000 pages compiled by a collective of well-known and respected authors, addresses the most important events of the country's history. One of the central chapters concerns the Second World War on the territory of Ukraine. There is not a single word about the fate of the Ukrainian Jews to be found there. In recent years, the road has apparently led from disconnected pieces of information to the total exclusion of the Holocaust from academic publications.

This volume and other publications like it are based on the idea of a mono-cultural or even mono-ethnic history of Ukraine, although there is widespread understanding in Ukrainian historiography that Ukraine's culture and history were also influenced by minorities, including the Jews.⁷ The published papers from the series of conferences entitled "The Second World War and the Fate of the National Minorities of Ukraine" are evidence of this approach.⁸ These volumes reconstruct the fate of numerous peoples under Nazi occupation in great detail. Such conferences and publications are as a rule initiated by non-state academic organisations, in this case by the Committee Babi Yar and the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies. The sponsors prepare the shape of events with regard to content and search for funding to pay for the conferences and resulting anthologies. Interestingly, representatives of academic institutes such as the publishers of the aforementioned work on Ukrainian political history also gladly take part in these conferences. They give informative presentations about the Crimean Tatars, Poles, Jews, Germans, or Czechs of Ukraine. But in the "official" tomes published by the Academy of Sciences and financed by the state, national minorities, such as the Jews, are not to be found.

Unlike Ukrainian historiography, European historiography follows a multicultural approach. This approach is also widespread in post-socialist countries. In Poland, for example, the most delicate subjects – such as the shooting of Polish officers by the Stalinist secret police in Katyń in 1940, the Polish-led expulsions of the Germans from western Poland in 1945, the destruction of Polish villages in Volhynia in 1943 at the hands of Ukrainians – can be discussed. Even the Jedwabne pogrom, which was carried out by

⁵ Iaroslav Kalakura, *Ukraïns'ka istoriohrafiia* (Kiev 2004); "Politychna istoriia Ukraïny 20 stolittia", in Kucher et al., eds., *Ukraïna v roki Druhoï svitovoi viiny (1939–1945)*, 4 (Kiev 2003).

⁶ Volodymyr M. Lytvyn et al., eds., *Ukraïna: politychna istoriia 20 – pochatok 21 stolittia* (Kiev 2007). The principal compilers of the texts were in fact the well-known Ukrainian historians Stanyslav Kul'chyt's'kyi and Iurii Shapoval.

⁷ For example the university textbooks on the history of Ukraine by Iaroslav Hrytsak and Nataliia Iakovenko.

⁸ *Druha svitova viina i dolia narodiv Ukraïny: Materialy Vseukraïns'koï naukovoï konferentsii* (Kiev 2005); *Druha svitova viina i dolia narodiv Ukraïny: Materialy Vseukraïns'koï naukovoï konferentsii* (Kiev 2007).

Poles in 1941, and the 1946 pogrom in Kielce are topics of public discussion.⁹ This shows that Poland is assuming responsibility for historical remembrance.

The omission of everything Jewish in official Ukrainian historiography cannot be explained solely by the continued existence of the mono-cultural Soviet approach to history. Ukrainian society seems incapable or unwilling to perceive its national history as a history of various cultures. The “other” tends to be excluded and viewed as something alien. Apparently, it is more comfortable to talk about “us” and “others”, for example about “our Great Famine” and about “the others’ Holocaust”.¹⁰ A certain narrative is taking shape, in which the Holocaust does not appear. This is leading to a situation in which Ukrainian society, especially the younger generation, does not know the background to the Holocaust in Ukraine. A notion has even taken hold that the Holocaust took place exclusively in Western Europe and is not of any importance to Ukraine.¹¹ The generally acknowledged, indisputable fact, as depicted in numerous Western and Ukrainian works of historiography, that the primary victims of the German occupation in Ukraine and other European countries were the Jews is being ignored or withheld.¹² What is more, in recent times, the Great Famine in Ukraine is increasingly being called “the Ukrainian Holocaust”. The fact that the Jews were the Nazis’ chief victims is being obscured.¹³

Liberal historians in Ukraine and abroad, independent publications, non-government organisations are working to counter this simplification.¹⁴ They clearly understand the Holocaust in Ukraine as an integral part of Ukrainian history. But they are not supported by the state, or only insufficiently so, and therefore have only little influence on public opinion. With the subordination of academia to political interests, Ukrainian historiography as an institution is continuing the Soviet tradition.

⁹ See the detailed article by Anna Vylyehala, “Karusel’ iz susidamy”, *Krytyka* (April 2008). On Jedwabne and Kielce, see Jan Gross, *Neighbors* (Princeton 2001) and idem, *Fear* (New York 2008).

¹⁰ On 19 June 2008, the Ukrainian translation of Alain Besançon’s *A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah* was presented. During his speech, the well-known historian Iurii Shapoval told the audience that it was important to make known in Europe “our” Ukrainian Holocaust, by which he meant the Great Famine.

¹¹ See, for example, Olena Ivanova, “Konstruiuvannia kolektyvnoi pam’iaty pro Holokost v Ukraïni”, *Ab Imperio*, 2 (2004); Wilfried Jilge, “Competing Victimhoods-Post-Soviet Ukrainian Narratives on World War II”, in E. Barkan, Elizabeth Cole, Kai Struve, eds., *Shared History-Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig 2007).

¹² Dieter Pohl, *Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich 1997); Ray Brandon, Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington 2008); Dieter Pohl, “Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Western Ukraine – A Research Agenda”, in Barkan et al., eds., *Shared History – Divided Memory*.

¹³ On the brutality and totality of the Holocaust in Ukraine, see, for example, Omer Bartov, *Erased. Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton 2007); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005); Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews 1941–1944* (Jerusalem 1990); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

¹⁴ Barkan et al., eds., *Shared History – Divided Memory*; Brandon, Lower, eds., *Shoah in Ukraine*. Those particularly worthy of mentioning are the periodicals *Krytyka* and *Ī*, the Committee Babii Jar, die Association of National Minorities, the Ukrainian Centre of Holocaust Studies, the teachers’ association Nova Doba, and the publishing house Dukh I Litera.

The Shoah in Classroom Instruction

No less important than research into the Holocaust is discussion of the topic in school so that the memory of the fate of Ukrainian Jewry is preserved and passed on to future generations. Starting in the first half of the 1990s, the Holocaust was included in the official school curriculum, to be precise: in the basic course "History of Ukraine and World History". In 2000, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine recommended universities introduce a special course on the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine and Europe. This decision was apparently motivated by the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000, at which Ukraine gave its approval to a declaration to preserve the memory of the Holocaust through research and education.¹⁵ Since 2006, questions on the history of the Holocaust have been included in the final examinations of general-education schools.

Although all of the preconditions have been formally met, the Holocaust can hardly be taught in Ukrainian schools. First, the curriculum does not provide enough time for the topic. The Holocaust is to be handled in just one class as part of the more general topic "National-Socialist Occupation Regime". Second, official textbooks lack compelling explanations of the Holocaust as part of Ukrainian history.¹⁶ Here, too, the Soviet tradition of maintaining silence on the Holocaust is being continued. In Soviet textbooks, the Holocaust was not even mentioned. Yurii Komarov, a teacher and training specialist from Kiev, has compared the treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks from Ukraine, Germany, and Great Britain. He has noted that, under such conditions, it can hardly be expected that Ukrainian pupils see the connection between Babi Yar and the Holocaust.¹⁷ In a study of how Ukrainian pupils receive the Holocaust, Professor Elena Ivanova of Kharkiv concluded that the Holocaust was for youth an abstract event without any kind of connection to Ukrainian national memory.¹⁸

Since the mid-1990s, the non-state education sector in Ukraine has been a source of invaluable impulses. Step by step, institutions such as the Committee Babi Yar, the Association of National Minorities of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies, the history teacher association Nova Doba, the centre Tkuma are working towards changing official education policy and embed within Ukrainian society an awareness of the responsibility to remember the Holocaust. With almost no state support, these organisations have developed a system for conveying the history of the Holocaust. They organise educational-methodology seminars for teachers and university instructors, work with schoolchildren and university students, hold competitions and summer schools, and facilitate internships in international Holocaust centres. In addition, they publish instruction materials that go far beyond official curricula and textbooks. Numerous teachers and instructors have since used them. The state does not place any obstacles in the way of teachers who want to learn more about the topic

¹⁵ *Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust* (29 January 2000): <www.dccam.org/Projects/Affinity/SIF/DATA/2000/page1192.html>.

¹⁶ Vil'frid Il'he [Wilfried Jilge], "Zmahannia zhertv", *Krytyka* (May 2006); Ivanova, "Konstruiuvannia kolektyvnoi pam'iaty"; Fedir Turchenko, *Novitnia istoriia Ukraïny. Chastyna persha 1917–1945* (Kiev 1994); Iu. Komarov, "Formal'ni mozhlyvosti: mistse temy Holokostu v navchal'nykh kursakh MON Ukraïny", *Informatsiino-pedahohichnyi Biuletën Ukraïns'koho tesntru vyvchennia istorii Holokostu Uroky Holokostu*, 2, 14 (2008).

¹⁷ Komarov, "Formal'ni mozhlyvosti".

¹⁸ Ivanova, "Konstruiuvannia kolektyvnoi pam'iaty".

of the Holocaust. Unlike in Soviet times, the Holocaust is not taboo. However, discussion of the topic in school is not given any special support.

In Western Europe, it is widespread practice to use the study of the Holocaust to instill ethnic and religious tolerance in younger generations. Ukrainian NGOs are therefore able to receive financial support from abroad. Important partners for Ukrainian NGOs are the Anne Frank Museum, the Dutch government, and the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.¹⁹ Such projects attract little attention in Ukraine. NGOs represent a significant segment of Ukrainian civil society, but, unlike those in other countries, they receive little state support. Whereas the partner institutions of the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies, such as the Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo and the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, receive state funding, in Ukraine, there is a complete lack of moral, institutional, or financial assistance from the state.

The Holocaust in Politics and Society

In Ukraine, there is no official remembrance of the Shoah. There is no state museum of the history of the Holocaust. The sites where the mass shootings took place are not always indicated. At Babi Yar, there is no memorial complex. January 27, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, is not officially observed in Ukraine. All of this, although Ukraine signed the Stockholm Declaration in 2000.

The numerous existing monuments and memorial plaques that indicate where there ghettos or mass shootings took place can all be traced back to Jewish communities, non-state entities, and individual persons and donors.²⁰ However, these memorials, according to Omer Bartov, are located on the periphery of public memory.²¹ To date, the state has shown no willingness at least to maintain these memorials. The overview of research and education policy has already demonstrated that the Ukrainian government has no interest in promoting a discussion of Jewish life and the Holocaust in Ukraine.

After 1991, monuments and museums were established for the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.²² It is as if national monuments were being built on top of the history of the Jews during the war, in order to make it easier to forget the “other victim–nation”. Like the Soviet government before it, the Ukrainian government is obscuring the fact that the Holocaust’s victims were Jews.

¹⁹ This working group, with government and NGO representatives from 25 European and non-European countries, was founded in 1998 as the result of an initiative by Sweden.

²⁰ To be highlighted here are Borys Hydaleyvych, with whose support 22 commemorative plaques were put up to honour the murdered Jews of Odessa and Transnistria, and Il’ia Kabanchyk, who independently installed dozens of commemorative plaques in Galicia, Volhynia, and Podolia. Andrij Portnov, “Pluralität der Erinnerung. Denkmäler und Geschichtspolitik in der Ukraine”, in *Geschichtspolitik und Gegenerinnerung. Krieg, Gewalt und Trauma im Osten Europas* [= Osteuropa 6/2008], pp. 191–204.

²¹ Bartov, *Erased*, pp. 208–209.

²² The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, a primarily Galician phenomenon before the war, and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which developed in Nazi-occupied Volhynia, were authoritarian and antisemitic right-wing movements. Their on-again, off-again collaboration with the Germans made them both highly controversial.

Most politicians do not see the Holocaust as a part of Ukrainian history, but as a tragedy of another people, which is also responsible for commemorating it.

In public, the topic of the Holocaust is hardly discussed. Instead of remembrance of the Holocaust, there is a looming “competition of victims”.²³ Some “researchers” weigh the number of dead from the Great Famine against the number of dead in the Holocaust and have coined the incorrect designation “Ukrainian Holocaust”.²⁴ It is thoroughly justifiable to analyse the mechanisms and basic features of the Great Famine and the Holocaust in comparative manner, but an equation of the two is fully inappropriate.

The omission of the Holocaust in Ukraine leads back to the fact that Ukraine does not accept any responsibility for the past, because neither the National-Socialist, nor the Stalinist crimes have been legally or historically assessed in full. Thus a usable model for remembering the history of the 20th century and the Second World War remains missing.²⁵

German historian Wilfried Jilge believes that the shortage of information on the Holocaust and on Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the German occupation prevents Ukrainians from seeing not only the “dark side” of national Ukrainian history but also the courage and selflessness of those Ukrainians who rescued Jews.²⁶ The way Ukrainian historiography concentrates on the nation-state and the mono-ethnic concept of history is preventing the rest of the world from overcoming stereotypes and prejudices concerning the “antisemitic Ukrainians”.²⁷

A Way Out of a Dead End

Remembrance culture in Ukraine has reached a dead end. The only way out is not through continued adherence to totalitarian models of remembrance that allow only black and white but no grey tones. What is needed is an open discussion led by the desire to accept the “other” as well. Perhaps Wilfried Jilge is right to assume that the sum of the different wartime experiences – those of the Ukrainians, Jews, the Crimean Tatars, Poles, and others – would serve national consolidation in Ukraine more than official declarations that allow for only one reading of history.²⁸ Unconnected, isolated histories lead to the expression of memories that are isolated from one another. Each is in and of itself biased. The risk that aggression and intolerance in Ukrainian society will increase is considerable. The only solution is to accept history responsibly and to promote the exchange and reconciliation of competing narratives. The German historian Guido Knopp has written that the Holocaust is a part of German history and a part of his personal history, and that every person bears responsibility for remembering the past.²⁹ Ukrainian historiography still faces the task of assuming this responsibility.

Translated by Stephan Lang, Toronto

²³ Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”; Johan Ditch [Johann Dietsch], “Poboriuiuchy Niurnbergz'ku istoriografiiu Holodomoru”, *Holokost i suchasnist'*: Naukovyi chasopys Ukraïns'koho centru vyvchennia istorii Holokostu, 1 (2008); Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor*.

²⁴ Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor*.

²⁵ Alain Besançon: *Lycho stolittja. Pro komunizm, nacyzm ta unikal'nist' Golokostu* (Kiev 2007); Vyljegala, *Karusel'*.

²⁶ Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”.

²⁷ Komarov, “Formal'ni mozhlyvosti”; Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”.

²⁸ Jilge, “Competing Victimhoods”; Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”.

²⁹ G. Knopp, *Kholokost* (Kharkiv 2006).

Vytautas Toleikis

Repress, Reassess, Remember

Jewish Heritage in Lithuania

Very important centres of East European Jewish life used to be located on the territory of modern Lithuania. Almost all of the Jews living there were murdered by the Nazis and their Lithuanian accomplices. In the Soviet Union, commemoration of the Jews and the preservation of their heritage were taboo. This changed with Lithuanian independence. However, the acceptance of co-responsibility in the murder of Lithuania's Jews has met with resistance within the political world. The refusal to prosecute alleged perpetrators of the Holocaust is one vexing example. However, the place of Lithuanian Jewish heritage is increasingly secure in the view of history now found in society at large and among young people in particular.

In the beginning was the void. When Lithuania gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, 50 years had passed since the murder of over 150,000 Lithuanian Jews under Nazi occupation.¹ Their physical destruction was followed by the eradication of their memory under Soviet rule. There was little left of Jewish Vilnius, which had been known as the “Jerusalem of the north”, or of Jewish Kaunas, which had been a centre of rationalist Talmud scholarship. In 1949, the Jewish museum in Vilnius, the only one in the Soviet Union, was closed, and several years later, the Yiddish primary schools in Kaunas and Vilnius were also shut down. The Soviet Union remained silent about the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy and propagated anti-Zionist and even partly anti-Semitic stereotypes.² Thus, the Yiddish inscription on the memorial at the mass murder site Ponariai (Ponary), located outside Vilnius, was changed in 1949: The new inscription, in Russian and Lithuanian, commemorated the massacre of “Soviet citizens”.

Vytautas Toleikis (b. 1962), Director of the Lithuanian Committee of United World Colleges, Head of the Art and Culture Department in the Vilnius City Administration, 1999–2005, Director of the New Education Foundation, Vilnius

¹ On the Holocaust in Lithuania, see Vincas Bartusevičius, Joachim Tauber, and Wolfram Wette, eds., *Holocaust in Litauen. Krieg, Judenmorde und Kollaboration im Jahre 1941* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna 2003).

² On Holocaust taboo in the Soviet Union, see Il'ja Al'tman, “Shoah: Gedenken verboten! Der weite Weg vom Sowjettabu zur Erinnerung“, in *Kluften der Erinnerung. Rußland und Deutschland 60 Jahre nach dem Krieg* [= Osteuropa 4–6/2005], pp. 149–164. On Lithuania specifically, see Anna Lipphardt, “Vilne, yidishlekh fartrakht ... Kulturelle Erinnerung, Trauma, Migration. Die Vilne-Diaspora in New York, Israel und Vilnius nach dem Holocaust”, dissertation, University of Potsdam, 2006.

The remaining traces of Jewish culture were forgotten or erased. The Soviet authorities allowed old Jewish graveyards to fall into disrepair; in the larger towns and cities, they destroyed Jewish cemeteries and used the tombstones for construction material. The Great Synagogue in Vilnius, whose roof had been destroyed by fire, was abandoned to the elements. Eventually, the authorities tore it down, in order to build a nursery school on the site – a symbol of the Soviet Union’s bright future. A palace of sports and culture was built on the site of the once famous Jewish cemetery in the Šnipiškės district of Vilnius. The cemetery had been closed in the tsarist era, but had survived the Second World War unscathed. Only the remains of the most famous dead, such as the Gaon of Vilna, *ger tsedek* (righteous convert) Count Walentyn Potocki, and some of the more famous leaders of the Bund (the General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia), were transferred to the Jewish cemetery on Sudervė Street. The grave of the Gaon of Vilna was then brought to the Jewish cemetery in Užupis in 1953, where it remained until this graveyard was also demolished in 1968. After the war, almost all of the surviving synagogues were turned into warehouses, school sport halls, and shops. Only in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Plungė were synagogues allowed to remain open for a while.

The Soviet authorities removed Yiddish inscriptions from houses and tore out the *mezuzahs*, the traditional parchment cases that usually hung on the doorposts of Jewish shops and workshops. At the sites where mass shootings of Jews had occurred, commemoration plaques with the following inscription were introduced: “At this place, the Hitler-occupiers and their volunteer helpers – the bourgeois nationalists – shot and killed Soviet citizens.” At the time, everybody knew that these Soviet citizens were primarily Jews, and that the “bourgeois nationalists” were primarily Lithuanians. By the end of the 1950s, little was left to remind the population of Lithuanian Jewish life.³

The Search for Traces

It first became possible to write about the crimes against the Jews in the 1960s. In 1960, journalist Stasys Bistrickas published a small volume titled *Ir sušaudytieji prabyla* [And those who were shot bear witness] about “the crimes of the Hitler-occupiers and the bourgeois nationalists in Ponary”.⁴ This was followed by the document collection “on the trials against Lithuanian war criminals held in Vilnius and Kaunas in 1962”.⁵ These trials were held at the same time as the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and were extensively covered in the Soviet press. The case in Israel was not ignored in Lithuania either. In 1963, the diary of Masha Rolnikaitė, a “former inhabit-

³ For more detail on the situation for Jews in Lithuania after the Second World War, Sholyme Atamuk, *Yidn in Lite* (Vilnius 1990) (published then in Russian and Lithuanian), extended and edited version: idem, *Lietuvos žydų kelias. Nuo XIV. amžiaus iki XX. a. pabaigos* (Vilnius 1998). Available in German as Solomon Atamus, *Juden in Litauen. Ein geschichtlicher Überblick vom 14. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Konstanz 2000).

⁴ Stasys Bistrickas, *Ir sušaudytieji prabyla* (Vilnius 1960).

⁵ A. Kadžiulis, ed., *Kaltina nužudytieji (Mertvyje obviniaut). Reportažu iš teismo salės autoriai* (Vilnius 1963).

ant of the Vilnius ghetto and Concentration Camp Stutthof”, was published,⁶ and in 1967, there appeared Sofia Binkienė’s book *Ir be ginklo kariai* [*War without weapons*], which dealt with those who rescued Jews.⁷ This was followed in 1969 by a work on resistance in the Kaunas ghetto that was written by Meiris Eglinis-Elinas and Dimitrius Gelpernas.⁸ The year 1965 saw the publication of the first part of a harrowing two-volume collection of documents that made extremely clear who the Nazis’ primary victims were.⁹ However, these books were hardly read in Lithuania, as they came with forewords and commentaries laden with Communist ideology. Soviet propaganda equated Nazi collaborators with supporters of an independent Lithuanian state and portrayed “bourgeois Lithuania” as a loyal accomplice of Fascism.¹⁰

The Soviet authorities soon allowed this rivulet of commemoration to run dry again. After the emigration of many Jews to Israel, which began in the early 1970s, secret orders were issued to remove a number of books from Lithuanian libraries and bookshops. These included autobiographical sketches by Mejeris Elinas-Eglinis, the works of Icchokas Meras, which were published throughout the Soviet Union, and the poetry collections of Hirsh Osherowicz. These were replaced by a deluge of propaganda pamphlets against Israel and Jews seeking to emigrate.¹¹ Prominent personalities of Jewish origin, such as sports journalist Saliamonas Vaintraubas or Volfas Vilenskis, who had been awarded the title “Hero of the Soviet Union” for his military service during the Second World War, had to sign the public declarations against alleged Zionist warmongering.

One genre that made Holocaust remembrance possible was the memoir literature written by some Jewish authors wrote. However, these memoirists came exclusively from the ranks of the Communist Party, the Communist youth organisation Komsomol, or other Soviet organisations, or they had served in the 16th Rifle Division, were former partisans or members of the Red Pioneers before the war. Masha Rolnikaitė, in her portrayal of the Vilnius Ghetto underground, writes exclusively about Communists and Komsomol’ members.¹² She does not say a word about Bundists, Zionists, or the representatives of other parties who had come to together to form a united underground organisation.

⁶ Marija Rolnikaitė, *Turiu papasakoti* (Vilnius 1963). Available in German as Mascha Rolnikaitė, *Ich muss erzählen. Mein Tagebuch 1941–1945* (Berlin 2002).

⁷ Sofija Binkienė, *Ir be ginklo kariai* (Vilnius 1967).

⁸ Mejeris Eglinis-Elinas, Dimitrius Gelpernas, *Kauno getas ir jo kovotojai* (Vilnius 1969).

⁹ *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje, 1941–1944. Dokumentų rinkinys*. 2 Bde (Vilnius 1965, 1973).

¹⁰ There was little information on Jewish life before the Holocaust either. There was a translation of Eliza Orzeszkowa’s *Meir Ezofowicz*, a story about two Hasidic Jews in the 19th century, and two volumes of selected stories by Sholom Aleichem, which were seen as “literature of the Soviet peoples”. That was it. A partial exception was the Lithuanian-Jewish music theatre ensemble Fayerlekh, founded in 1971. They were able to tour the Soviet republics and released two records: *Špil mer / Grok linksmiau*, Melodiia 1981, and *Vychod zvezd / Žvaigždžių pasirodymas*, Melodiia 1984. But although Lithuanians happily sang the Lithuanian version of the famous Jewish song *Tum balalaika* at parties, the memory of the Lithuanian Jews gradually faded away and was buried under Soviet stereotypes of Israel.

¹¹ They had titles such as “Zionism – a Weapon of Imperialism”. Another example is J. Vaitkus, *Sionizmas – imperializmo ginklas* (Vilnius 1971).

¹² Rolnikaitė, *Turiu papasakoti*.

It was a similar story in film: Two films with clear references to the Holocaust – *Žingsniai naktį* [*Footsteps in the night*] by Raimundas Vabalas from 1962, about the escape of Jewish prisoners from the killing site Fort IX near Kaunas, and *Ave, vita!* by Almantas Grikevičius from 1969 – deal with opposition to the Nazis without mentioning the heroes of Jewish background. The fact that Jews were only discussed if they were Communists only fuelled the antisemitic stereotype that all Jews were Communists. This perception was strengthened by an expansion of the definition of “participants in the revolutionary struggle” to include all left-wing youth. As a result, Soviet-era Lithuanian encyclopaedias swarmed with Jewish names.

Euphoria and Setbacks: Perestroika and Its Consequences

When the Lithuanian independence movement Sajūdis was founded in 1988, the Soviet authorities tried to discredit its followers as radical nationalists. However, Jewish artists and men of letters – such as Emanuelis Zingeris, leader of the Jewish Cultural Association of Lithuania, and Grigorijus Alpernas, leader of the Tkuma association for the rebirth of national consciousness – published open letters in support of Sajūdis in 1988 and were consequently well received among the Lithuanian population. An exhibition on Lithuanian Jewish art organised by Zingeris, later a member of parliament, opened in Kaunas in June 1988, just one week after the founding of Sajūdis, before moving on to Vilnius. This also helped bring Jews and non-Jews in Lithuania closer together. Zingeris understood the need to make Lithuanian society aware of the rich heritage that had been lost to the destruction and repression of Jewish life in Lithuania.¹³ Lithuanians at the time saw the Jews as allies in the struggle for independence. When Lithuanian Jews founded a cultural association on 5 May 1989, the leading members of Sajūdis congratulated them in person and apologised for the collaboration of their compatriots with the Nazis.

Commemoration of Lithuania’s Jewish heritage and remembrance of Holocaust victims were increasingly permitted and officially promoted as Lithuania came closer to leaving the Soviet Union. At the end of 1989, the republic’s government agreed to reopen the Jewish museum that had been closed in 1949. On 13 February 1991 – four days after its referendum on independence – the Lithuanian government decided that the scattered collections of individual Jewish museums should be turned over to the new Jewish museum.¹⁴ In October 1989, the Sholem Aleichem Jewish Middle School in Vilnius opened its doors. Many Jewish organisations were also founded at that time. Prime Minister Adolfas Šleževičius and President Algirdas Brazauskas made state visits to Israel in the mid-1990s. There, before the Knesset, they acknowledged the crimes committed by Lithuanians during the Second World War and asked the surviving Jews and descendants of the victims for forgiveness.¹⁵ However, in Lithua-

¹³ On the exhibition and Emanuelis Zingeris’s activities during Perestroika, see Markas Zingeris, “Juden in Litauen. Die Gemeinde im Leben danach“, in Jörg Hackmann, ed., *Litauen. Nachbar in Europa* (Cologne 1996), pp. 147–157. An extended version of this essay is in Bartusevičius, *Holocaust in Litauen*, pp. 290–299.

¹⁴ Since 1997, the museum has been dedicated to the famous Torah scholar the Gaon of Vilna and is called the State Jewish Gaon of Vilna Museum (Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus).

¹⁵ Zingeris, *Juden*, p. 296.

nia itself, these apologies in the name of the Lithuanian people aroused indignation among parts of the population and some politicians.

Lithuanian independence also had its dark side. For example, all those who had been sentenced by the Soviet secret service were rehabilitated no matter the reason behind the sentence. This resulted in the rehabilitation of a number of war criminals who had not been sentenced for participation in anti-Soviet fighting, but for participation in the mass murder of Jews under Nazi occupation. This decision was revised two years later, but the pardon brought a wave of international condemnation, to which Lithuania failed to respond adequately. Instead of apologising to the Jewish community, many Lithuanians saw the episode as a Kremlin intrigue. Around the same time, the United States began deporting to Lithuania U.S. citizens of Lithuanian origin who were suspected of participating in Nazi crimes. Many of them had gained a good reputation in emigration; the discovery of their past was a great shock for Lithuanian society, especially within the diaspora. The case against Aleksandras Lilieikis at the end of the 1990s attracted particular attention. Under Nazi rule, he had been in charge of the Vilnius district's branch of the Saugumas – the Lithuanian security police, i.e. the Gestapo's local auxiliaries; later in the United States, he had helped publish a standard reference work on Lithuanian history. The resultant international pressure – for example, from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Jerusalem – increased the country's defensiveness.

At the same time, the “two genocides theory” spread from the émigré community in the United States to Lithuania.¹⁶ According to this theory, the Jews had collaborated with the Soviet occupiers in carrying out a genocide of Lithuanians in 1940; when Germany liberated Lithuania, Lithuanians spontaneously carried out revenge against the Jewish traitors.¹⁷ A prominent representative of this apologist view of history is writer Jonas Mikelinskas, who wrote an essay for the renowned Lithuanian literary journal *Metai* in which he claimed that responsibility for the Holocaust ultimately lay with the Jews themselves.¹⁸ This theory found a shockingly large number of supporters in Lithuania. The hope that Jews and Lithuanians would live amicably side by side – a hope that had seemed so promising in the early 1990s – had vanished within a decade.

Civil Society Awakens

The dispute over Lithuanian participation in and responsibility for the murder of Lithuania's Jews revealed considerable potential for antisemitism, but at the end of the 1990s, Lithuanian society began to give a great deal of attention to its Jewish heritage and the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry.¹⁹ The impulses coming from society – pressure from the West did not play an important role here – were much stronger than elsewhere in East Central Europe at the time. This was largely due to the engagement of non-state

¹⁶ For a detailed account of the development of the two genocides theory and Lithuanian-Jewish relations in the diaspora, see *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius 2003).

¹⁷ On this see Liudas Truska, *Litauische Historiographie über den Holocaust in Litauen*, in Bartusevičius, *Holocaust in Litauen*, pp. 262–276.

¹⁸ Jonas Mikelinskas, „Teisė likti nesuprastam, arba Mes ir jie, jie ir mes“, *Metai*, 8–9 (1996).

¹⁹ On the historical publications of critical Lithuanian historiography, see Truska, *Litauische Historiographie*, pp. 269–271.

initiatives. They recruited many volunteers, aroused the interest of politicians and authorities, built relationships with partners abroad, and worked constructively with state and non-state institutions.

Up until the end of the 1990s, Jewish organisations, such as the Jewish Museum, the Vilnius Pedagogical University, and foreign organisations had been primarily responsible for the protection of Lithuania's Jewish heritage. In 1999, the international Jewish organisation B'nai B'rith and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, with the support of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, published a two-volume schoolbook on the Holocaust, which was distributed to schools throughout the country.²⁰ However, it was hardly used, because it differed significantly from the textbooks in circulation, and because teachers were not instructed in how to apply it.

It was possible to learn from these mistakes, however. The Lithuanian teacher training centre, together with the British Holocaust education centre Beth Shalom, organised seminars for teachers. In 2001, Beth Shalom produced the two-hour film *Saulėlydis Lietuvoje* [*Sunset in Lithuania*] for classroom instruction. It covered Lithuanian-Jewish culture, the Holocaust, and relations between Lithuanians and Jews.²¹ There was an accompanying teachers' guide for the film. All over Lithuania, teachers were given seminars to show them how they might integrate the film into lessons. Since the end of the 1990s, the more Lithuanian organisations have shown an interest in rediscovering the Jewish heritage and confronting the Holocaust, the more resonance these topics have found in society.

In 2000, the association *House of Remembrance* was founded. It launched five history competitions on the theme "The Jews – My Grandparents and Great Grandparents' Neighbours". Schoolchildren from across Lithuania participated in the competitions.²² They recorded stories from their grandparents about former Jewish neighbours, collected historical photographs, and took pictures of houses where Jews had lived. The best pieces of work were published, and the authors invited to an awards ceremony in Vilnius.²³ With support from the Ministry of Science and Education, the association also founded history clubs in schools, information centres, and museums, organised excursions to former concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, Stutthof, and Klooga (Estonia), and published books on Lithuania's Jewish heritage and the Holocaust.

Working together with the Ministry of Culture, the New Education Foundation (Švietimo kaitos fondas), which was founded by the Ministry of Science and Education in 1999, organised a national competition for museums in 2001–2004. In 2001, the theme was "The History of the Holocaust in Our Region", in 2002–2004, "The History of the Jewish Communities in Our Region". In 2005, the foundation set up an Internet database to register Holocaust-related projects at schools, universities, museums, and other

²⁰ *Knyga mokyklai apie Holokaustą. Pirma dalis. Kaip mokyti holokausto istorijos* (Vilnius 1999); *Knyga mokyklai apie Holokaustą. Antra dalis. Žydų istorijos apžvalga. Lietuvos žydai. Holokausto dokumentai* (Vilnius 1999).

²¹ Jonas Morkus, *Saulėlydis Lietuvoje* (Vilnius 2001).

²² A map of the schools that took part can be found on the association's homepage: <www.atmnamai.lt/Pub/default_lt.aspx>.

²³ *Mano senelių ir prosenelių kaimynai žydai: moksleivių darbų konkursas. Holokaustu ir Žydų Kultūros Lietuvoje Studijų Centras "Atminties Namai"*. Sudarė Linas Vildžiūnas (Vilnius 2002, 2003).

state and non-state institutions.²⁴ The foundation also created an interactive map that documents approximately 200 known locations of mass murder in Lithuania.

Political education about the Holocaust is also offered by the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazis and the Regime of the Soviet Occupation in Lithuania (*Tarptautinė komisija nacių ir sovietinio okupacinių režimų nusikaltimams Lietuvoje įvertinti*), which President Valdas Adamkus established in September 1998. International Jewish organisations initially expressed criticism, saying that the commission's simultaneous evaluation of both Nazi and Soviet crimes played down the significance of the Holocaust. After noteworthy historians from the United States and Israel accepted invitations to join the commission, criticism receded.²⁵

The education programme unveiled in 2002, however, created a controversy that revealed the two basic tendencies in assessing the Holocaust in Lithuania: For one group of people, working through the past is a politically motivated issue and serves above all to enhance Lithuania's image abroad. For the others, confronting the crimes committed by Lithuanians is a moral issue.

Thus historians and multipliers who had worked for many years to get Lithuanian society to recognise the Holocaust were critical of the fact that the commission was financed by the state to conduct historical research, but not to promote political education. The head of the education programme, Snieguolė Matonienė, also sparked controversy when she claimed that teachers took up Jewish topics "to improve their career prospects". There was also criticism of the fact that the commission was too keen to see Lithuanian teachers and multipliers travel abroad for training courses.

People were irritated as well by the way the commission conveyed the impression abroad that work on the Holocaust was in its initial stages in Lithuania, and that current initiatives were unprofessional. The authors of a textbook on the history of Lithuania that comprehensively addressed Lithuanian collaboration with the Nazis were particularly aggrieved. A co-operation treaty between the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and the Israeli Holocaust memorial authority Yad Vashem was met with incomprehension, as was the rush to found tolerance centres in Lithuanian schools and universities due to fears that there were not enough motivated teachers available to introduce such a sensitive issue into classroom instruction. With time, however, the positions of the parties involved converged. The New Education Foundation, together with the commission, organised a history competition in Lithuanian schools: "From Civil Initiatives to Civil Society". Working together, the New Education Foundation, the Jewish Museum, and the Ministry of Science and Education developed a state education programme to promote learning about the Holocaust.

Despite these initiatives, Jewish heritage is still recognised as a part of Lithuanian history and culture primarily in the larger cities, especially in Vilnius and Šiauliai and to a lesser extent in Kaunas. In the provinces, it is left to a handful of idealists, such as

²⁴ <www.shoah.smm.lt>.

²⁵ This included Yitzhak Arad, long-term head of Yad Vashem, who wrote the fundamental study of the Holocaust in Vilnius, *Ghetto in Flames. The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem 1980). The Lithuanian prosecutor's office for a time pursued charges against Arad for war crimes against the Lithuanian civil population, which he allegedly committed during his time as a Soviet partisan. On this, see Robert B. Fishman: "Hauptstadt des Rassismus", in: *Die Jüdische*, 29.8.2008, <www.juedische.at/TCgi/_v2/TCgi.cgi?target=home&Param_Kat=3&Param_RB=31&Param_Red=10356>.

those teachers who encouraged their pupils to enter the aforementioned competitions and thus broke through the general indifference.

The Kėdainiai Museum offers a ray of hope. Museum workers there have succeeded in restoring two synagogues in the old quarter of this central Lithuanian town. One of the synagogues has been turned into a cultural centre. It hosts events on Jewish history and culture, organises projects that promote tolerance, and creates teaching materials on the history of the Jews in the area around Kėdainiai.

The small town of Kaišiadorys, also in central Lithuania, has been very active as well. The town museum published a book on the Jews of the Kaišiadorys region by historian Rolandas Gustaitis²⁶ and helped to preserve the wooden synagogue in the nearby village of Žiezmariai. The latter was particularly important, as the Nazis burned down most of these unique wooden houses of worship. Pupils at the children's music school in the village of Rumšiškės in Kaišiadorys district put together a programme on the Jewish community of Rumšiškės and recorded a CD *Forgotten Melodies of Rumšiškės*. This is the first CD of Yiddish songs performed in Lithuanian translation. With the consent of the Jewish community, the open-air ethnographic museum at Rumšiškės, which features farmhouses from all regions of Lithuania and a typical Prussian Lithuanian town, has re-built a preserved wooden synagogue in the town.²⁷

In the small towns Kalvarija and Joniškis, in southwestern and northern Lithuania respectively, synagogues are to be restored. However, many of these former prayer houses, especially those built of wood, are in poor condition. The Vilnius Art Academy and the Centre for Research into the Culture and History of East European Jews are trying to find, document, and photograph all of the surviving synagogues. The Jewish Museum and the Office for the Preservation of Cultural Artefacts, a part of the Ministry of Culture, are pursuing similar projects.

Against this backdrop, another source of optimism is the unveiling in recent years of several monuments and commemoration plaques to honour Jewish-Lithuanian writers, artists, and musicians. Kaunas's Liberty Avenue (Laisvės alėja), Europe's longest pedestrian street, now has a monument to the legendary, prewar popular singer Danielius Dolskis. In Vilnius, a sculpture was erected in honour of the distinguished doctor, medical theorist, and politician Zemach Szabad, who is well-known all over the former Soviet Union as the model for the main character in the children's book *Doktor Aibolit* by Kornei Chukovskii. There is also a monument to the French writer Romain Gary, who was born in Vilnius.²⁸ All three sculptures were made by Romualdas Kvintas.²⁹

Alongside the sculptures, there are countless commemoration plaques, for example, for Theodor Herzl, Joseph Brodsky, violinist Jascha Heifetz, philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, painter Rafael Khvoles, poet Moshe Kulbak, and the founder of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research Max Weinreich.³⁰ Many of these commemoration plaques were created at the initiative of Pranas Morkus, chairman of the Lithuanian-Israeli Society.

²⁶ Rolandas Gustaitis, *Kaišiadorių regiono žydai* (Kaišiadorys 2006).

²⁷ <www.muziejai.lt/Kaisiadorys/Open-Air_muziejus.en.htm>.

²⁸ On this, see Fabrice Larat, „Litauens verkannter Beitrag. Vilnius als Kulisse einer éducation européenne“ (OSTEUROPA 9–10/2002), pp. 1,190–1,194.

²⁹ “Skulptūra turi žmogų jaudinti”, *The Vilnius Review*, 1 (2008), pp. 100–103.

³⁰ On the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, see the contribution by Gershon Hundert in this volume, pp. 83–95.

Summary

Over the last decade, Lithuanian society has begun to reflect more intensively on its Jewish heritage and the Holocaust, but most government officials still have very vague notions of Lithuania's Jewish history and are unwilling to confront this history. This includes not only authorities at the local level, but the ministries of justice and culture and even the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The minds of many politicians are still awash with stereotypes from the interwar and postwar periods. They still tend to see the conservation of the cultural heritage of Lithuanian Jewry as a foreign, non-Lithuanian event, something the West has forced Lithuania to acknowledge. They do not see it as the responsibility of the Lithuanian state to restore cemeteries or synagogues or to produce commemoration plaques.

The kind of attitudes that ensured a delay in the legal proceedings against Lithuanians accused of participating in the Holocaust still exist. There should be no mistake about that. On the other hand, it is clear today that young people see the history of Lithuania's Jews as part of Lithuanian history.

This new attitude flickers from time to time in politics as well: In June 2008, the Lithuanian government approved the construction of a new museum, which will be conceptualised in co-operation with the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. It is to bring not only avantgarde art to Vilnius – above all works by the Lithuanian-born American director Jonas Mekas and the musician and video artist George Maciunas (Jurgis Mačiūnas) – it is to include as well a section dedicated to art by Lithuanian Jews.

Translated by Mark Belcher, Berlin

Marlis Sewering-Wollanek

The Rediscovery of the Jews

Czech History Books since 1989

The history of the Jews in the Bohemian lands was hardly mentioned in Czechoslovakia under Communist rule. Since 1989, this has gradually begun to change. However, most of the schoolbooks that appeared after the political upheaval continued to ignore Jewish issues. Only in 1995 were Jewish topics given more space. The negative image of the State of Israel was also revised. The emphasis of history books from the late 1990s was on the representation of Jews as victims, in particular victims of the Nazis. However, some of the textbooks that have appeared in the last decade take a European perspective and mention the cultural and intellectual impulses that emanated from Bohemian Jews.

In the foreword of a handout on the Holocaust for Czech schools, the authors behind this guide wrote that the “final solution of the Jewish Question” was one of the subjects that had disappeared from the curriculum in Czech schools.¹ The reason, they said, was apparently the “struggle against Zionism”, which had been an ideological reaction to domestic developments within the State of Israel and its support for the West in the Cold War. Official Zionism, they added, was accompanied by latent anti-semitic tendencies. The result was a mistrust of everything having to do with the history of Judaism, including the history of the Holocaust.

Such phrases in the foreword of a teachers’ handout – one that also discussed the way Czechs deal with Jews and Jewish history – was unusual even a decade after the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe.² Although history textbooks published after 1989 differ fundamentally from their predecessors, the depiction of Jews

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This text is a shortened and slightly amended version of the article: “Die Darstellung der Juden in den tschechischen Lehrbüchern für das Fach Geschichte nach 1989”, in Heidrun Dolezel, Andreas Helmedach, eds., *Die Tschechen und ihre Nachbarn. Studien zu Schulbuch und Schülerbewusstsein* (Hannover 2006), pp. 169–192.

¹ *Téma: Holocaust. Informační materiál pro učitelé k výuce na základních školách a středních školách*, Aut. col. Vojtěch Blodig (Prague 2000), p. 5.

² Petr Brod, “Die Juden in der Nachkriegs-tschechoslowakei”, in Jörg K. Hoensch, Stanislav Biman, Lubomir Lipták, eds., *Judenemanzipation – Antisemitismus – Verfolgung in Deutschland, Österreich-Ungarn, den Böhmisches Ländern und in der Slowakei* (Essen 1999), pp. 211–228; Jana Svobodá, “Erscheinungsformen des Antisemitismus in den Böhmisches Ländern 1948–1992”, in *ibid.*, pp. 229–248; Helena Krejčová, “Jüdische Erwartungen und Enttäuschungen nach dem Jahre 1945”, in *Češi a němci – ztracené dějiny* (Prague 1995), pp. 245–253.

remains tainted by Communist anti-Zionism, which was often accompanied by antisemitism. One need only recall the interpretation of the term “Zionism” as a particularly reactionary, nationalist concept, the anti-Zionism campaigns of the 1950s and 1970s, and especially the silence regarding the Nazi genocide against the Jews. All of this has left traces on Czech attitudes towards Jewish topics right up to the present.³

When it comes to depictions of the Jews – and to depictions of the Roma – the Czech history books published after 1989 can be divided into the following groups regardless of the type of school and grade level: those books that omit the Jews completely; those that make an extremely brief reference to Jews, perhaps a single sentence; those that broach the subject in greater detail (several sentences); and those that dedicate specific sections to describing the history of the Jews in different periods. The books are divided in content between those that portray the Jews solely as victimised and oppressed, and those that show them as a segment of the greater population with their own religious and cultural traditions and as a force that shaped society. A further aspect considered is the depiction of the State of Israel.

Jewish History as a Blank Space

Until 1995, the history of the Jews – like that of the Roma – was either left out of Czech schoolbooks,⁴ or mentioned only very briefly.⁵ As late as 1997, Miroslav Kárný rightly criticised the lack of schoolbooks and teachers’ guides on the Jewish history.⁶ There were few depictions of Jews that could have at least generated inquiries from pupils.⁷

³ Svobodová, “Erscheinungsformen”, p. 246–248; Brod, “Die Juden”, p. 211ff.

⁴ *Dějiny Čech a Moravy slovem a dokumenty. 1. část: Od počátku do roku 1471. Učební text pro základní a střední školy*, naps. Julius Janovský (Prague 1993); *Dějiny Čech a Moravy slovem a dokumenty. 2. část: Od roku 1471 do roku 1914*, naps. Julius Janovský (Prague 1993); *Za Československou republiku 1914–1918. Historický Ústav ČSAV na pomoc škole*, naps. Ivan Šedivý (Prague 1993); *Vybrané prameny k dějinám státu a práva v Českých zemích a na Slovensku II. Prozatímní učební pomůcka*, Karolina Adamová (Plzeň 1994); *Dějiny středověku a raného novověku. I. dílo. Učebnice pro základní školy*, Dana Picková, Naděžda Kubů (Prague 1995); *Dějepis. Nová doba. Československo a svět 1945–1989. 4. dílo. Učebnice pro základní školy*, Jiří Jozák (Prague 1995); *Dějepis. Nová doba. Československo a svět 1918–1938, Učebnice pro základní školy*, Pavla Vošahlíková (Prague 1996).

⁵ *Dějepis. Experimentální učebnice pro šestý ročník základní školy, III. Díl*, Aut. col. Miroslav Hroch (Prague 1990); *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Na cestě k národní svěbytnosti a státní samostatnosti. České země v letech 1867–1918. Pro žáky 7.–9. ročníků základních škol*, Vladislav Šťastný (Prague 1991); *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Druhá světová válka 1939–1945*, Miroslav Teichmann (Prague 1991); *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Čas normalizace. Československo v letech 1968–1989*, Vlastimil Ježek, Klement Lukeš, Petr Prokůš (Prague 1992); *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Pad komunismu. Rok 1989 ve východní Evropě*, Vlastimil Ježek, Klement Lukeš (Prague 1992).

⁶ Miroslav Kárný, “Der Holocaust und die Juden in Böhmen und Mähren”, in Robert Maier, ed., *Tschechen, Deutsche und der Zweite Weltkrieg. Von der Schwere geschichtlicher Erfahrung und der Schwierigkeit ihrer Aufarbeitung* (Hannover 1997), pp. 39–56.

⁷ Besides the schoolbooks covered here, special educational publications on Jewish history did appear early on, and were used to fill the gap and introduce viewpoints which did not appear in textbooks till the end of the 1990s; Vladimír Sadek, Anita Franková, Jiřina Šedinová, *Židovské dějiny, kultura a náboženství* (Prague 1992); Maria Bezchlebová, Anita Franklová, Eva Štichlová, eds., *Cesta – cíl neznámý* (Prague 1995); *Holocaust – svědomí lidstva*.

For example, the fourth edition of *Dějepis. Středověk pro základní školy* [History. The Middle Ages for middle schools⁸], which appeared in 1994, divides the population of various countries by place of residence, way of life, and religious denomination, etc. The book includes Catholic Christians, non-Catholic Christians, Muslims, avowed Buddhists, but not Jews. Thus, the Jewish faith appears not to belong to the religions of Europe and Asia.⁹

Several textbooks from this period made at least some mention Jews, albeit exclusively as victims and objects of persecution. The racially motivated persecution of the Jews by the Nazis was given scant attention, and sometimes, the coverage given the persecution of the Jews was significantly less than that given to other persecuted groups.¹⁰

If Jews were discussed in other contexts, then in short sentences or half sentences, for example, the presence of Jews at the time of the Crusades and Soběslav I, the existence of a Synagogue,¹¹ or Judaism as one of three civilizations that came into contact with each other during the Crusades.¹²

Miroslav Hoch's *Dějiny novověku. 1850–1993* [History of the modern age], which was published in 1994, discussed Czech political history in an international context, unlike numerous other works, and presented antisemitic prejudices via the Dreyfus Affair. Together with a collection of sources on “the project for an autonomous Jewish state” – no additional details are provided – this information is hardly enough for the pupil to form even a basic picture of Jewish history.¹³ Reasons for behaviour are not provided, and the term “racial prejudice” is not explained.

České a Československé dějiny [Czech and Czechoslovak history], a two-volume work from 1991 by a group of authors headed by Jaroslav Marek, mentions Jews four times.¹⁴ The first reference comes at the end of the 14th century. The “attacks on Jews” – the burning down of the Jewish quarter and the murder of several thousand Jews in Prague in 1389 – are mentioned in the context of the social and economic

Sborníček z literární soutěže žáků základních a středních škol, Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky (Prague 2000); *Téma: Holocaust. Informační materiál pro učitele k vyuce na základních školách a středních školách*, Aut. Kol., Vojtěch Blodi (Prague 2000).

⁸ “Middle School” here means the second stage of the Czech “základní škola” (literally: primary school), which includes years five to nine and like preparatory school (grades five to twelve) makes up the second school type in the two-track Czech school system.

⁹ *Dějepis. Středověk pro základní školy. 3. díl*, naps. Miroslav Hroch, Helena Mandelová, Josef Petrůň (Prague 1994).

¹⁰ *Dějiny Československé republiky slovem a dokumenty. Od roku 1918 do roku 1992. Učební text pro základní školy a pro střední školy*, Julius Janovský (Prague 1994), pp. 35, 40; *Dějepis. Nová doba. Druhá světová válka a československý odboj. 3. díl* (Prague 1993), pp. 15, 30–31; *Dějepis. Rukověť českých a slovenských dějin od pravěku do roku 1989*, Jaroslav Jung (n.p. 1995), p. 56; *Dějepis. Univerzální příručka pro maturanty a ucházce o studium na vysokých školách*, sest. Jaroslav Jung (Prague 1992), p. 92.

¹¹ *Toulky českou minulostí. I. Díl. Kniha je doporučena ministerstvem Školství ČR jako četba k vyuce dějepisu na ZS a SŠ*, Petr Hora-Hořejš (Prague 1995), p. 236.

¹² *Historie. I. Středověk. Učebnice dějepisu pro základní školy a víceletá Gymnázia*, naps. Vratislav Vaníček, Věra Hrochová, Zdeněk Smetánka (Prague 1995), p. 95.

¹³ *Dějiny novověku. 1850–1993. Učebnice pro střední školy*, Miroslav Hroch (Prague 1994), pp. 127, 150.

¹⁴ *České a Československé dějiny. I. Od počátku do roku 1790*, Aut. col. Jaroslav Marek (Prague 1991); *České a Československé dějiny. II. Od roku 1790 do současnosti*, Aut. col. Jaroslav Marek (Prague 1991).

crises at that time. In a few sentences, it is said that non-Christian inhabitants had lived in the country for a long time as “a tolerated group”, and that they had been pushed to the periphery of society. For these reasons, the Jews had preserved a high level of learning and an independent culture. Prague was one of the most significant centres of Judaism in Europe. One of the few professions the Jews were allowed to practise was money lending “at high interest (usury)”: “For this reason, they were unpopular among the people.”

This depiction is an ambivalent one. On one hand, the existence of Jews in Bohemia in the Middle Ages is mentioned – which is not the case in most textbooks published before 1995 – as is their marginalisation and their limited career options. On the other hand, the choice of words (usury) fulfils the cliché and offers a putative explanation for their rejection by the non-Jewish population.

The series *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle* [History in an unbiased mirror] appeared shortly after the collapse of Communism and was also written by an authors’ collective. The series, for grades 7–9, consisted of individual smaller volumes of 27–43 pages. The presentation of Jewish history is accordingly succinct. Above all, the contexts in which Jews are ignored are striking. For example, the chapter “The Consequences of the Second World War” lists the victims of each country.¹⁵ There is no reference to the Jewish victims. The authors could of course argue that the Jews counted as part of the population of each country.

By contrast, the two instalments of this series written by Zdeněk Sládek stand out in the positive sense of the word. The volume dedicated to the First Republic of Czechoslovakia is one of the first schoolbooks to include the Jewish population among the various national and ethnic groups.¹⁶ The treatment of postwar history includes the new settlement of previously German-populated areas, settlers from Slovakia, repatriation from abroad, but also the return of Jews from concentration camps. However, pupils are only given the figures for the Jewish population before and after the war without any additional information.¹⁷ Even more remarkable are the explanations of the political trials in the early 1950s, whose antisemitic and anti-Zionist background is by no means always described in schoolbooks. For example, pupils learn the following about the Slánský Trial:

Moreover, the trial also had an anti-Semitic background – 11 of the 14 defendants were Jews. At the hearings, anti-Jewish insults were heard with all their might – directly from the mouths of court officials. The eleven death penalties are adequate expression of this court’s character.¹⁸

Because there is no further information on Jewish history or the history of antisemitism in the rest of this series, pupils will not be able to make sense of this text without additional guidance and information.

¹⁵ *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Druhá světová válka 1939–1945*, p. 12.

¹⁶ *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Demokratická republika. Československo v letech 1918–1939*, Zdeněk Sládek (Prague 1991), p. 9.

¹⁷ *Historie v nepokřiveném zrcadle. Od demokracie do totalitě. Československo v letech 1945–1968*, Zdeněk Sládek (Prague 1991), p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The Discovery of the Jews as Victims

Several schoolbooks published in 1995 address Jewish aspects of history in greater detail. This trend increased in 1997. The first volume of the *Dějiny Českých zemí* [History of the Bohemian lands] describes Jews in various contexts and devotes a relatively large amount of space to the “Golden Age of the Culture of the Prague Jews”.¹⁹ However, the focus of course remains on Nazi persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the foundation and development of the State of Israel is also covered here. The middle school textbook *Dějiny nové doby 1850–1993* [History of the modern age 1850–1993] gives a rather detailed account of the exclusion of the Czech Jews from economic, cultural, and social life right up to their deportation and subsequent murder in concentration camps.²⁰ In addition to a short description of the creation of the ghetto Terezín (Theresienstadt) and its functions, pupils are provided with references to the camps in Poland, Auschwitz, and the number of victims. Another section on the “extermination of the Jewish population” highlights the differences specific to the persecution of the Jews in Slovakia.²¹

The three-volume *Dějiny moderní doby* [History of the modern period] (1997) was written for preparatory schools and the corresponding middle school grades. It covers the period 1870–1991. The history of the Jews is featured several times in each volume. The first volume, edited by Milan Hlavačka,²² introduces the terms “emancipation”, “antisemitic”, “Zionism”, and “pogrom”. The passage may be short, but compared with the textbooks examined so far, it is quite detailed.²³

Pupils learn that the Jewish population, like women, gradually sought to acquire equal rights (emancipation). The content and timing of the women’s emancipation movement is compared with that of Jewish emancipation, with the differences in discrimination faced by the two groups being swept aside. The text goes on to say that the success of the Jews in economic and social spheres was accompanied by anti-Jewish (antisemitic) sentiments and episodes across Europe. The Dreyfus Affair is then given as an example. In particular, Jewish disappointment in the state of affairs in Eastern Europe, where there were repeated outbursts of violence by Christians against Jews (pogroms), led to the creation of Zionism, in other words, the Jewish “nationalist” movement. The term “nationalist” (nacionalistické) is not explained in this context and awakens associations with 1970s Communist ideology that used the term to denounce the policies of the State of Israel. In the two sentences that follow present Theodor Herzl as the founder of Zionism as well as the realisation of the Jewish state with the consent of the British. This condensed history of the Jews is augmented elsewhere by a reference to Sigmund Freud’s Jewish ancestry.²⁴

¹⁹ *Dějiny Českých zemí. I. Od pravěku do poloviny 18. Století. Učebnice pro střední školy*, Josef Harna, Rudolf Fišer (Prague 1995), pp. 72, 96, 235–236.

²⁰ *Dějiny nové doby. 1850–1993. Učebnice dějepisu pro základní školy*, Věra Olivová (Prague 1995), pp. 125, 139, 147.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 147.

²² *Dějiny moderní doby. 1. díl 1870–1918. Dějepis pro druhý stupeň základní školy a pro odpovídající ročníky víceletých gymnázií. Učebnice zpracovaná podle osnov vzdělávacího programu základní škola*, zprac. Milan Hlavačka (Prague 1997).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

The second volume in the series, written by Drahomír Jančík and also published in 1997, brings up Jewish history several times during the period 1918–1945. The focus, as can be expected, is on Nazi persecution and the foundation of the State of Israel. A few minor cultural achievements are also mentioned. The book is a little more detailed than others in its coverage of Nazi racial ideology as it affected Jews and Slavs as well as the persecution of the Jews, the anti-Jewish boycotts, the Nuremberg Laws, Aryanisation, and the Night of Broken Glass.²⁵ The “Tragedy of the Holocaust” is given a half page.²⁶ This discussion is introduced by picking up again on the theme of Nazi racial ideology, which also denied the Roma a right to life and led to the deaths of a quarter of a million Roma in concentration camps during the war.

The terms “holocaust” and “ghetto” are then introduced as are the population figures for Europe. There then follows a relatively detailed depiction of the policy of annihilation, including the role of the SS in the occupied territories, the Wannsee Conference, and a list of the extermination camps in Poland. There is also an allusion to antisemitic attitudes in other countries that contributed to the destruction of the Jews. Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, and Vichy France are named explicitly. As positive examples of solidarity between peoples, Italy, Bulgaria, and Denmark are mentioned.

Nazi persecution is also raised in connection with the establishment of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, where information is limited to the extension of the Nuremberg Laws to the 118,300 Jews living there, the founding of the Terezín ghetto (Theresienstadt), and the extermination camps in Poland.²⁷ The pupil learns nothing about the attitude of non-Jewish Bohemians and Moravians towards the persecution of the Jews.

Alongside these descriptions, the textbook also devotes three-quarters of a page to the start of the “Arab-Jewish Conflict in Palestine”.²⁸ Beginning with the awakening of the Zionist movement, Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe and the British administration of the region after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, this book traces the causes of the conflict back to the Jewish purchase of Arab land for the construction of settlements after First World War. Arab leaseholders (fellahs) had to leave their land, it is said, and so lost their means of subsistence. This was one of the reasons for the tensions between Arabs and Jews.

The Discovery of the Jewish Cultural Heritage

Since 2000, more textbooks have appeared, especially more volumes in the series *Dějepis* [History] for middle school and the corresponding grades in preparatory schools. The 2002 volume edited by Jan Kuklík and Jiří Kocian, which is for grade 9 in the middle schools and grade 4 of the eight-year preparatory schools, covers developments from the end of the First World War in 1918 to the Velvet Revolution in 1989.²⁹ The political and economic history of the First Czechoslovak Republic is presented in an international setting and runs for 36 pages. It ends with a section

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁹ *Dějepis. Nejnovější dějiny. Pro 9. ročník základní školy a 4. ročník osmiletého gymnázia*, Jan Kuklík, Jiří Kocian (Prague 2002).

called “Culture and Economics in the First Republic”. There the reader encounters the Jewish contribution in a presentation dedicated to Franz Kafka as “a representative of German-language literature written by Prague Jews, which arose through the mutual influences of the Czech environment and Czech literature”.³⁰ Kafka is listed alongside Karel Čapek and Jaroslav Hašek as one of three world-famous Czech authors. The novels and short stories by Kafka are among “the most significant works in modern literature. We should be proud that they were written in Prague.” Other German-language Jewish authors, such as Max Brod, Egon Erwin Kisch, and Leo Perutz, are referred to by name, as are Czech-language authors of Jewish origin, such as Vojtěch Rakous, Karel Poláček, and Jiří Orten as well as Jiří and František Langer.

This textbook is the first to take a new approach to Jewish culture in Czech society and is a milestone in Czech schoolbook production. This achievement is also illustrated in its descriptions of Jewish economic losses due to Aryanisation, the difficulties encountered in trying to leave the country, the social situation and the persecution of Jews,³¹ resistance efforts by Jewish inmates,³² the Nazi genocide against the Jews,³³ and developments specific to Slovakia.³⁴

The chapter “Europe and the World after 1945” also offers a significantly broader perspective.³⁵ In the sub-section “The Fate of the National Minorities in Czechoslovakia”, not only are separate figures given for the genocide directed at the Jews and Roma in connection with the expulsion of the Germans, the situation and social conditions for Jews in post-war Czechoslovakia are described.

The book also addresses the difficulties surviving Jews encountered in reintegrating into Czech and Slovak society after the Holocaust.³⁶ Pupils learn that many of the Jews who had been imprisoned in concentration camps and had German nationality were treated as Germans upon their return. Several Jews subsequently left Czechoslovakia in the “normal” expulsion transports (quotation marks in the original Czech!) during the first phase of the expulsion of the Germans.

This textbook is clearly determined to give a differentiated picture and offers information on several public “anti-Jewish – antisemitic” attitudes during restitution efforts involving property that had been owned by people of “Jewish ancestry” and seized by the Germans during the occupation. This included a range of small businesses, shops, houses, and apartments that had been turned over to Czechs and Slovaks. When returning Jews asked that this property be given back, there were complications. This section ends somewhat abruptly with figures on the size of the Jewish population in Czechoslovakia in 1947.

Using clear words in bold type, the authors explain the connection between the situation of the Jews in postwar Czechoslovakia and the “influence of the relations of the USSR and other people’s democracies with Israel”. The original position of Czechoslovakia is then explained: In May 1948, Czechoslovakia was one of the first countries to recognise Israel and establish diplomatic relations. Immediately after the war, the book continues, the Czech government facilitated the emigration of Jews to Israel.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 80–105.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97.

This policy was pursued until spring 1949. Czech military assistance for Israel (sales of weapons, training by military specialists) was particularly significant at the time. Unfortunately, the hopes for long-term, friendly relations did not last.

Czech foreign policy then turned its back on Israel. The reasons given in this textbook are Czechoslovakia's integration into the bloc system and Soviet interests in the Middle East. As a part of the Soviet Bloc, "the Czechs slavishly followed the course set by Soviet foreign policy in this respect". Stating that "this swing towards enmity in Czech-Israeli relations reached its zenith in 1952–1953 in a campaign against Zionism and an antisemitic (anti-Jewish) wave of behaviour linked with it", the text establishes the context of the political trials of the early 1950s.³⁷ Accordingly, the Jews are shown in a later chapter as the first victims of the political purges. The Slánský Trial and the "clearly antisemitic background to the trial" are also discussed.³⁸

This textbook stands out significantly from previous publications. For the first time, Jewish history is covered systematically, and the cultural legacy is given consideration. The history of the Jews does not end with the Holocaust, and Czech history is subjected to critical scrutiny.

Likewise, Zdeněk Beneš and Josef Petraň offer new approaches in *České dějiny* [Czech history], which was first published in 1997, with a second edition following in 2001. The authors stress in their introduction that this textbook picks up on the conceptions of a four-part edition of general history published in 1994–1995, but that its methodology is different.³⁹ Within the chronological narration, the authors follow a structural interpretation of history, in order to better explain historical processes.⁴⁰ The history of the country, they write, should not be tied to the country's borders. One needs a Central European or, when necessary, a European perspective to understand the historical changes in social consciousness, Czech identity, and cultural relations.

The authors weave the history of the Jews into several sub-sections of each of the textbook's ten main chapters. The Jews are mentioned as tradesmen in the period 999–1198⁴¹ and in a later chapter on the Bohemian monarchy as part of the urban population alongside the Czechs and Germans.⁴² The same chapter includes a detailed description of Jews in the 13th century, the closed Jewish communities, the restrictions on Jews, the ghettos, and religious ties. The perspective is widened from a Bohemian to a European one. To explain the hatred of the Jews, this textbook, like older ones, invokes their economic success and their importance to whoever was in power at that time. The privileges that Přemysl II Otakar bestowed on the Jews in 1254 are mentioned – including the ambivalent consequences – and supplemented with an excerpt from source material. Students learn that this statute was the prototype for similar privileges and was "not coincidentally" called the Magna Carta of Jewish liberty, even though his son Wenzel II repealed it without the slightest scruple. The reader also encounters the history of the Jews in subsequent chapters: the riots against this population group, the scapegoat role ascribed to them during the plague of

³⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁹ *České dějiny I. Učebnice pro střední školy*, Zdeněk Beneš, Josef Petraň. Prague 1997 (1st edition), 2001 (2nd edition).

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴² Ibid., p. 99.

1389,⁴³ the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, persecution in Germany, migration to Central Europe, and especially the economic and cultural significance of the Jewish community in Prague.⁴⁴ All this impresses upon the reader that the history of the Jews is an integral part of Bohemian and European history.

A special section is devoted to Jewish culture and its “high level in the second half of the 16th century”.⁴⁵ Here, too, the Prague Jewish community, its scholars, and personalities are given greater scope than in the aforementioned textbooks. This textbook offers readers the opportunity to follow the history of the Jews in the Bohemian lands and Europe and trace the development of their social and cultural role over the centuries. Additional extracts from historical sources invite readers to reinforce and contemplate what they learn. Students get to know Jews as part of European history and not just as victims of Nazi racial ideology.

The second volume of *České dějiny*, edited by Robert Kvaček and released in 2002, retains the construction and methods of the first volume but differs markedly in style.⁴⁶ The persecution of the Jews is presented in detail in the chapter on the Second World War. What is new here is the detailed description of Czech attitudes towards the Jews at this time. According to the book, parts of the population welcomed the disappearance of the Jews as competitors, but many Czechs showed genuine compassion, and some helped Jews. The book alludes to the list of the victims in Prague’s Pinkas Synagogue and recommends that readers at least occasionally spend some time in front of it. The text ends with the words: “They belonged to us, to this country.”⁴⁷

Summary

Since 1989, the depiction of Jews in textbooks and teacher handouts on Czech history has reflected the political and social changes within the Czech Republic. Whereas the history of Bohemian Jews was hardly raised as a subject before 1989, Jewish topics gradually made their way into the country’s history books, especially after 1995. The negative image of the State of Israel propagated under Communism was also revised.

The revision of history requires time. In the first few years after the Velvet Revolution, the majority of textbooks continued to ignore Jewish history. Exceptions proved the rule. Only from 1995 onwards were Jewish topics given more space in history books. The focus at this time was on Jews as victims, especially of the Nazis. Some of the textbooks from this period lack a concept and are content to provide information without context. They fail to show that the Jews contributed to Czech history in all periods.

However, some of the textbooks that have appeared in the last decade mention the cultural and intellectual impulses that emanated from Bohemian Jews. The depiction of the State of Israel has also changed. Zionism is no longer denounced as “nationalist”, but classified as one of many national movements. Finally, even the way textbooks handle Jewish history has become a topic, and pupils have been given the chance to reflect on different versions of history.

Translated by Mark Belcher, Berlin

⁴³ Ibid., p. 142.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 168ff.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 177.

⁴⁶ *České dějiny II. Učebnice pro střední školy*, Robert Kvaček (Prague 2002).

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

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Diana Dumitru

Moldova: The Holocaust as Political Pawn

The Awkward Treatment of Jewish Heritage

Moldova is having a hard time in finding an appropriate way to acknowledge the Jewish heritage of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria. It is even more difficult to enshrine the remembrance of the victims of the Shoah in the country's collective memory, as an analysis of school books shows. Commemoration of the Holocaust has become a political pawn in a dispute over history and the politics of identity. Politicians and historians are arguing over "Moldovanism" and "Romanianism". Behind this is a struggle over Moldova's political orientation. Reviving Jewish community life seems easier than working through the past and remembrance.

The Jewish community in Moldova goes back centuries. It has gone through phases of remarkable growth and phases of horrific destruction. This tiny patch of land, which is known today as the Republic of Moldova, has repeatedly changed hands during its history. Its inhabitants have been forced to meet the demands of various regimes, languages, and ideologies. Throughout the vicissitudes of history, several periods and events have left a deep mark on the collective memory of the Jews living in this territory: the tsarist period (remembered in particular for the infamous pogrom of 1903); the ambiguous and fragile position of the Jews in interwar Romania; the horror of the Holocaust; discrimination and emigration in the Soviet period after the Second World War; and, finally, the struggle to revive Jewish society in independent Moldova.

The post-Soviet period brought newly acquired freedoms and numerous challenges. In the early 1990s, a rebirth of Jewish public life took place. But at the same time, Jews saw a revival of an antisemitism rooted in the nationalism of the interwar period. Moldovan Jews also soon found themselves caught up in the ethno-political struggle between the Russian-speaking and the Romanian-speaking population. The country's first post-Soviet governments pledged to integrate the country's ethnic minorities, including Jews, into Moldovan society. However, during this period, leading members of the Jewish community complained that local authorities played down antisemitic incidents as "petty hooliganism" or "common vandalism". In addition, the government's repeated promises to support the revival of Jewish culture and to set aside buildings for synagogues were not kept – supposedly due to financial constraints.

The ethnic tensions of the 1990s – which escalated into a war in the break-away region of Transnistria – subsided over the course of the decade (albeit without bringing

a solution to the Transnistria conflict).¹ The social situation improved as well. Despite all of the problems that Moldova has faced, the Jewish community has developed into a vibrant society with close ties to Moldovan Jews living in Israel and the United States. At the same time, antisemitic incidents still take place, although there are at present no Moldovan political parties or periodicals that espouse antisemitic views.

History in the Struggle between Government and Intellectuals

Since the Communist Party came to power in 2001, greater emphasis has been put on legislation to protect minorities. The authorities have also paid much more attention to building monuments at sites where the Holocaust took place and to looking after the victims. With financial contributions from Jewish organizations and associations of Holocaust survivors as well as support from local administrations, monuments have been erected in Chişinău, Tighina, Orhei, Bălţi, Soroca, Tiraspol, and Rîbniţa. Nonetheless, the Holocaust, as an event that occurred on Moldovan soil, remains a controversial topic in Moldovan society. This is in essence the only issue where tensions between Jews and non-Jews surface.

Many historians debate whether the use of the term “Holocaust” is appropriate to describe the events that took place in Moldova under Romanian occupation (1941–1944). It is important to note that these historians do not deny the persecution of the Jews. However, they oppose the use of the term “Holocaust”, first, because the Holocaust, in their view, stands for the racial policies of the German National Socialists and their destruction of the Jews in gas chambers and crematoriums, and second, because they consider the repression of the Jews in Bessarabia not as the result of racial policy, but as a socially and politically motivated act of revenge caused by the collaboration of the Jews with the Bolsheviks.² Many experts reject these arguments as downplaying the Holocaust in Moldova, whereas others see them as outright denial of the Holocaust.

Under Soviet rule, the destruction of the Jews was one of the topics deliberately ignored by official historiography. The Soviet Union had the second largest prewar Jewish population in the world, and more than one quarter of the Jews killed in the Holocaust perished on Soviet territory.³ Nonetheless, the Soviet leadership decided not to consider the Holocaust a unique phenomenon, but to treat it as part of a broader campaign of murder against the “Soviet civilian population” (*sovetskoe grazhdanskoe naselenie*) or the “peaceful population” (*mirnoe naselenie*), which consisted of various nationalities.⁴ As a result, few Soviet authors wrote about the Nazis’ anti-Jewish

¹ On Transnistria, see Klemens Büscher, “Seperatismus in Transnistrien. Die PMR zwischen Rußland und Moldova”, *OSTEUROPA* 9/1996, pp. 860–875; Wim van Meurs, “Eingefrorene Konflikte. Wie weiter mit den Quasistaaten?” *Minderheiten in Osteuropa. Ansprüche, Rechte, Konflikte* [= *OSTEUROPA* 11/2007], pp. 111–120.

² Gheorge Marinescu, “Afacerea ‘Holocaustul evreiesc în Moldova.’ Toate episoadele”, 16 June 2005, <www.mdn.md/historical.php?rubr=1243>.

³ Mordechai Altshuler, ed., *Distribution of the Jewish Population of the USSR, 1939* (Jerusalem 1993), p. 5; Zvi Gitelman, ed., *Bitter Legacy. Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington 1997), p. 14.

⁴ The term was almost never used by Soviet historiography. The terms used were “annihilation”, “destruction”, or “mass murder”. All were used in reference to “Soviet civilian population” or “peaceful population”.

policy and the murder of large parts of the Jewish population.⁵ And, as consequence of this silence, a generation of Soviet citizens grew up knowing almost nothing about the Jewish catastrophe during the Second World War.⁶

Moldova is one of those territories Dîl along with Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states – where the Jewish population suffered most during the Axis occupation.⁷ Before the war, Jews accounted for 7.2 per cent of the population of Bessarabia, or 204,858 people.⁸ In Chişinău, the capital of Moldova, the percentage of Jews in 1930 reached 36.05 per cent of a total of 117,016 inhabitants.⁹ About half of Moldova's Jewish population perished during the war as a result of the Romanian authorities' policy to systematically destroy Jewish life in the territories under their control.¹⁰ Given these figures, one would think that the Holocaust would have left a deep mark on Moldovan society. One would also expect that once censorship ended this topic would have generated a great deal of interest among scholars and encouraged considerable academic research. However, very little has been done in the field of Holocaust Studies in Moldova.

During the 1990s, publications about the Holocaust were sponsored mainly by Jewish organizations.¹¹ None of these publications, however, attracted the attention of Moldovan historians, nor did they provoke general interest within society. The sole exception was an article by Izeaslav Levit on the Chişinău ghetto.¹² The only comprehensive work on the Shoah in Bessarabia to be published in Moldova is Sergiu Nazaria's 2005 monograph.¹³ This book was a success on several levels. It was encouraging that for the first

⁵ In 1946, Il'ia Erenburg and Vasilii Grossman published *Chernaia kniga o zlodeiskom povse-mestnom ubiistve evreev nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvachikami vo vremenno-okkupirovannykh raionakh Sovetskogo Soiuzia i v lageriakh unichtozheniia Pol'shi vo vremia voiny 1941–1945gg.*, but it was withdrawn from circulation in 1948, with most copies being subsequently destroyed. The most recent English edition is *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry*, Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, eds. (Brunswick, NJ 2002). Evgenii Ievtushenko's poem "Babi Yar", Anatolii Rybakov's novel *Heavy Sand* and Anatolii Kuznetsov's "documentary novel" *Babii Iar* were dedicated to the fate of the Jews under German occupation.

⁶ Il'ia Al'tman, "Shoa: Gedenken verboten! Der weite Weg vom Sowjettabu zur Erinnerung", in *Kluften der Erinnerung. Rußland und Deutschland 60 Jahre nach dem Krieg* [= OSTEU-ROPA 4–6/2005], pp. 149–164.

⁷ Naomi Kramer, Ronald Headland, *The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah* (Ottawa 1998).

⁸ Bessarabia is the historical name of the region between the rivers Dnestr and Prut as an integral part of Tsarist Russia (1812–1918) or Romania (1918–1940 and 1941–1944). The population figures are from Ezra Mendelson, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington 1983), p. 179, and the Romanian census from 29 December 1930, see Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930, Directorul recesământului general al populaţiei, 5*, Editura Institutului Central de Statistică (Bucharest 1940), p. 18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178; *Enciclopedia României*, 2, p. 599.

¹⁰ In summer 1941, Romania took control of Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, and Transnistria. The term Transnistria refers to the Romanian administration's designation for the territory between rivers Dnester and Southern Bug from 1941 to 1944. Today, most of this territory belongs to Ukraine. It is not to be confused with the breakaway region in the Republic of Moldova.

¹¹ Dov Doron, *Kishinevskoe getto – poslednii pogrom* (Chisinau 1993); Izeaslav Levit, *Pepel' proshlogo stuchit v nashi serdtsa* (Chisinau 1997); *idem*, "Poslednii Pogrom. Istoriia Kishinevskogo getto", in *idem*, *Kishinevskii pogrom 1903 goda* (Chisinau 1993).

¹² Levit, "Poslednii Pogrom".

¹³ Sergiu Nazaria, *Holocaust. File de istorie (pe teritoriul Moldovei şi în regiunile limitrofe ale Ucrainei, 1941–1944)* (Chisinau 2005) and, in Russian, *Kholokost v Moldove* (Chisinau

time a Moldovan author, one who is not Jewish, wrote a comprehensive book about the Holocaust in Moldova and in doing so put into circulation archival materials and survivor testimonies that show the fate of the Jews in Bessarabia and Transnistria.

In addition to the debate over the historiography of the Holocaust, there is in Moldova a debate over the politics of history. The Communist government has given more attention to the Holocaust than any other previous government in Chişinău. This is in line with key elements of the Moldovan Communists' ideological platform, which contains, for one, a nationality policy that promotes minority rights and, for another, a commemoration policy that gives particular consideration to certain aspects of Soviet history such as the heroes and victims of the Second World War.

The Government Changes Course for Europe

In 2003, Moldova's Communist government undertook a spectacular turn to the West. Unsuccessful negotiations over the status of Transnistria led to a rapid deterioration of relations between Moldova and Russia. With that, the Moldovan Communist leadership made public its decision to break with its orientation towards Russia. Since then, it has been official Moldovan policy to seek integration in Western structures such as the European Union. The Moldovan government has shown more interest in co-operating with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States, and it has signed an "Action Plan for Moldova" with the EU within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. For all these reasons, the Moldovan Communist leadership became more sensitive to Western values and to the treatment of the Holocaust.

Some officials even believed that the Holocaust could be instrumentalised in the debate with historians over Moldovan identity. Communist politicians were alarmed that history – and by extension historians – could have such a strong influence on how Moldova's citizens shape their national identity. The government therefore sought to stop any initiative or action that in its eyes promoted solidarity with a Romanian sense of identity. The government is most sensitive to the undercurrent of sympathy for the Romanians that many Moldovans feel (and that many historians cultivate) and to the Romanian government's view that there exist "two Romanian states".¹⁴ Instead, the government requires of its citizens a clear and unmistakable commitment to the Moldovan state. The government's decision to withdraw the course on *History of the Romanians* from school curricula and to introduce mandatory Russian language is revealing. Among the topoi used in this debate between the government and historians over history policy, the topic of the Holocaust proved quite useful, especially with regard to Europe.

2005). The unleashed a fierce debate in Moldova, see, for example, "Un istoric neagă că a scris 'Holocaustul în Basarabia'", *Timpul*, 29 April 2005; "Aparută recent cartea 'Holocaustul în Basarabia' este un eşec", *Flux*, 27 April 2005; Marinescu, *Afacerea 'Holocaustul evreiesc în Moldova'*.

¹⁴ On relations between Moldova and Romania, see Robert Weiner, "The Foreign Policy of the Voronin Administration", *Demokratizatsiia*, 12, 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 541–556.

After the Communist government came to power in 2001, it guaranteed instruction for Jews in Yiddish and Hebrew.¹⁵ In 2002, a resolution was passed making discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or language a punishable offence. In addition, President Vladimir Voronin occasionally condemned antisemitism in public. The law enforcement authorities also started to pay more attention to expressions of antisemitism. In 2003, a certain G. Drot'ev of Dubasari declared at a public meeting that non-Jewish pensioners had not received their pensions – they had in fact not been paid for several months – because “Jews and the Jewish authorities have pocketed everything and robbed the old people”.¹⁶ After protests from the Jewish community, the local prosecutor launched an investigation into the incident. It was decided that Drot'ev's actions were an attempt to incite ethnic hatred. Drot'ev was forced to apologize to the Jewish community.

In April 2003, the government organized an official commemoration of the 1903 pogrom. The Moldovan president took part in the ceremony and inaugurated a monument to the pogrom's victims.¹⁷ An international conference on the pogrom was held by the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Moldova and the Institute of Interethnic Research of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Moldova. It was in this setting that the subject of the Holocaust was also broached.¹⁸ One of the speakers, Anatoly Podolsky of Ukraine, analysed the development of Holocaust research and how the Holocaust is taught in post-Soviet countries.¹⁹ He highlighted important successes in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. With regard to the situation in Moldova, however, Podolsky noted that classroom instructors “have just begun to touch on teaching this topic”.²⁰

One of the most remarkable acts of the government was the decision to turn over copies of all files related to the Holocaust held by the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. In December 2003, the museum received copies of 61 files of investigations and court proceedings.²¹ No less important was President Voronin's November 2004 visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. The Yad Vashem Archive also received copies of the Information and Security Service files.

The Jewish community of Moldova has publicly endorsed the government's policy. During a meeting with President Voronin in 2004, leaders of the Association of Jewish Communities and Organizations told Voronin:

¹⁵ “Legea Republicii Moldova cu privire la drepturile persoanelor aparținând minorităților naționale și la statutul juridic al organizațiilor lor”, Nr. 382-XV, 19 July 2001.

¹⁶ The Steven Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, <www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2003-4/cis.html>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Kishinevskii pogrom 1903 goda: vzgliad cherez stoletie. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (Chisinau 2004).

¹⁹ Anatoly Podolsky, “The Teaching of the Holocaust in the Post-Soviet Area: Problems and Perspectives”, in *Kishinevskii pogrom 1903 goda* (Chisinau 1993).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138. See also the contributions from Dmitrii El'iashevich and Anatolii Podol's'kyi in this volume, pp. 255–270 and pp. 271–278.

²¹ “Moldovan Security Service Passes Holocaust Documents to U.S. Ambassador”, in *moldova azi*, 26 December 2003; <www.azi.md/news?ID=27262>.

the Jews from Moldova understand and fully support your energetic actions aimed at re-establishing the integrity of the Moldovan state... in which there is no place for the manifestation of such condemnable tendencies such as separatism, aggressive nationalism, antisemitism, and xenophobia.²²

In a multi-national state, the Jewish leaders added, this was “the only just policy”. Given the government’s friendlier attitude, several Jewish organizations intensified their efforts to spread knowledge about the Holocaust in Moldova. The Association of Jewish Communities and Organizations in the Republic of Moldova and the Jewish Congress of Moldova launched an initiative to make the topic of the Holocaust a part of school curricula. In 2003, they held a series of seminars for middle school history teachers on the genocide against the Jews and Gypsies. The Ministry of Education of Moldova supported these actions and recommended that schools use the brochure “The Holocaust: Informational Materials for Teachers of History”, which was donated by the Jewish Congress of Moldova.²³

Difficult Terrain: History Class

The introduction of the Holocaust into history lessons at the secondary school level, however, has proven rather difficult. The teaching of history has become an explosive issue over the last two decades, creating more controversy and causing more tempers to flare than any other discipline. Moldova’s unresolved issue of identity has remained a Gordian knot. At the start of the 1990s, the pro-Romanian community of historians gained control of the discipline and implemented a curriculum that corresponded to their views. The Holocaust was not a part of that curriculum.

The majority of textbooks on contemporary Romanian history published in Chişinău since independence say nothing about the Holocaust in Romania.²⁴ Nicolae Enciu’s textbook *History of the Romanians*, published in 2005, is the only one that devotes any space to the topic.²⁵ However, it uses the words of another author. In a case study entitled “The administrative organization of Bessarabia and Transnistria during the Second World War”, the author inserts an excerpt from a book by Neagu Djuvara.²⁶ From this, pupils learn that – “in response to accusations that the Jews of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina had in general responded favourably to Soviet occupation,

²² Preşedintele Republicii Moldova: “În ajunul sărbătorii evreieşti ‘Rosh a-Shana’, Preşedintele Republicii Moldova Vladimir Voronin i-a primit pe reprezentanţii Asociaţiei organizaţiilor şi comunităţilor evreieşti din Republica Moldova şi ai Congresului evreiesc din Moldova, pe care i-a felicitat cu prilejul Anului nou 5765, conform calendarului evreiesc.” Press release, 15 September 2004; <www.prm.md/press.php>.

²³ Council of Europe, Second Report Submitted by Moldova Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 14 May 2004.

²⁴ Nicolae Enciu, *Istoria românilor. Epoca contemporană. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* (Chisinau 2001); Ioan Scurtu, Ion Şişcanu, Marian Curculescu, Constantin Dincă, Aurel Constantin Soare, *Istoria românilor. Epoca contemporană. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* (Chisinau 2001); Boris Vizer, Tatiana Nagnibeda-Tverdohleb, *Istoria românilor. Epoca contemporană. Manual pentru clasa a IX-a* (Chisinau 2003).

²⁵ Enciu, *Istoria românilor*.

²⁶ Neagu Djuvara, *O scurtă istorie a românilor povestită celor tineri* (Bucharest 2002).

and that criminal acts had been committed against the Romanian Army” – Marshal Ion Antonescu decided to deport the entire Jewish population of those regions to Transnistria. The deportees are said to have been sent to a deserted area that was “a war zone”: “[T]he brutal actions of the German Army being known, a definitive analysis of the number of missing and dead is to a certain extent impossible.”²⁷ On the basis of this information, pupils would have to end up believing that the death of the Jews occurred as a result of military operations or the “brutal actions of the German Army”. Nothing is said about the massacres of Jews organised by the Romanian Army in Bessarabia, Transnistria, or Bucovina, nor is a number of victims provided. Enciu’s own commentary goes on to say:

[T]he alliance with Hitler’s Germany in 1941 forced the Romanian military authorities to participate in the deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina to Transnistria. Many of them were killed, an act later called the holocaust [sic].²⁸

Another textbook – also called *History of the Romanians*, but published by an author’s collective under Ioan Scurtu – touches the subject in only two sentences:

The Antonescu regime implemented an antisemitic policy aimed in particular at the Bessarabian Jews, who were accused of being Communists. Pogroms took place in Iași and Odessa. The number of dead and missing Jews reached approximately 124,000.²⁹

The text makes no reference to the fact that the Antonescu regime pursued the same “antisemitic policy” in Bucovina and Transnistria. It is also unclear who exactly organized the pogroms.³⁰ Furthermore, the figure of 124,000 is far lower than the estimates given in the literature, namely, 250,000–410,000.³¹ After this book appeared, the Romanian Holocaust Commission published its own findings. According to these figures, 280,000–380,000 Jews died in the Romanian Holocaust.³²

Boris Vizer and Tatiana Nagnibeda-Tverdohleb’s textbook on the contemporary history of the Romanians also completely ignores the Holocaust. In the chapter “Romanian Civil Administration in Bessarabia and Transnistria”, they write:

The administration attempted to change the ethnic make-up of those villages where other languages were spoken (Russian, Ukrainian) by deporting their inhabitants to the Caucasus and resettling in those villages Romanians who had been forced by the Tsarist regime to leave Bessarabia in search of better living conditions.³³

²⁷ Enciu, *Istoria romanilor*, p. 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Scurtu, et al., *Istoria românilor*, p. 83.

³⁰ The murder of 19,000 of Odessa’s Jews by the Romanian Army was not a pogrom but a systematically organized killing operation. For a detailed discussion, see Alexander Dallin, *Odessa, 1941–1944. A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule* (Iași, Oxford, Portland 1998).

³¹ Radu Ioanid, “The Antonescu Era”, in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry* (New York 1994), p. 164; Jean Ancel, *Transnistria, 1941–1942. The Romanian Mass Murder Campaigns*, 1 (Tel Aviv 2003), p. 531.

³² Comisia internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului în România, Raport final, p. 178.

³³ Vizer and Nagnibeda-Tverdohleb, *Istoria românilor*, p. 51.

The authors do not say a single word about the fact that the Jews were deported by the very same Romanian administration. And these measures certainly had no less of an impact in changing the ethnic make-up of the population in the regions indicated.

World history textbooks also fail to mention the Holocaust implemented by the Romanian government during the Second World War. However, some efforts are made to address the destruction of the Jews. For example, Anatol Petrencu and Maia Dobzeu mention German racial policy and the fact that “the Nazis created an entire chain of death camps”. The authors point out the “death camps in Treblinka, Bełżec, Sobibór, Vilnius, Kaunas, Minsk, etc.”³⁴ But Moldovan children do not learn that there were death camps in Transnistria, in the villages Bohdanivka (Bogdanovka), Akmechetka, and Obodivka (Obodovka), where tens of thousands of Jews were killed by the Romanian administration.³⁵

Igor Cașu and Sergiu Nazaria’s textbook on contemporary world history offers the most detailed information on Nazi Germany’s crimes.³⁶ This is one of only two textbooks published in Moldova that actually uses the term “Holocaust”. Meanwhile, a more recent history textbook of 20th-century world history by Anatol Petrencu and Ioan Chiper says nothing about the Holocaust or the fate of the Jews during the Second World War.³⁷ Nicolae Enciu and Tatiana Mistreanu, in their recent textbook of contemporary world history, mention the legal and economic restrictions imposed on Jews in Germany in late 1930s. Additional information on the Nazi regime’s persecution of the Jews is summed up under the rubric “Chronology,” which contains an outline of the evolution of the Holocaust from racial laws to the “Final Solution”.³⁸

How is this clear disregard for the Romanian Holocaust on the part of Moldovan historians to be explained? The answer is that history became an arena in the dispute between intellectuals (especially historians and linguists) and the Communist government over the definition of Moldovan national identity. The historians pulled together all the evidence they could to support their view of national identity based on a Romanian heritage. Meanwhile, the Communist administration did everything it could to advance the idea of a distinct Moldovan identity separate from that of the Romanians.³⁹

The Ministry of Education has made several attempts to control and revise history education, but it has encountered fierce resistance from the historians and their partisans. This animosity has led to an extreme politicisation of historiography and history education. Schools became the epicentre of this conflict.⁴⁰ The Communist government has

³⁴ Anatol Petrencu, *Istorie universală contemporană (1914–2000). Manual pentru clasa a IX-a* (Chisinau 2000); Anatol Petrencu, Maia Dobzeu, *Istoria universală. Epoca contemporană. Material didactic. Clasa a IX-a* (Chisinau 2004), p. 41.

³⁵ On these camps, see Dennis Deletant, “Ghetto Experience in Golta, Transnistria, 1942–1944”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 18, 1 (2004), pp. 1–24.

³⁶ Igor Cașu and Sergiu Nazaria, *Istoria universală contemporană (1918–2002). Manual pentru clasa IX* (Chisinau 2002), p. 59.

³⁷ Anatol Petrencu, Ioan Chiper, *Istoria universală. Epoca contemporană* (Chisinau 2006).

³⁸ Nicolae Enciu, Tatiana Mistreanu, *Istorie universală. Epoca contemporană. Clasa a XII-a* (Chisinau 2006); *ibid.*, p. 116; *ibid.*, p. 120, 126.

³⁹ A systematic analyses of the textbooks is available in Stefan Ihrig, *Wer sind die Moldawier? Rumänismus versus Moldowanismus in Historiographie und Schulbüchern der Republik Moldova 1991–2006* (Stuttgart 2008).

⁴⁰ Elizabeth A. Anderson, “Don’t Falsify Our History! Moldovan Teacher and Student Reaction to State Proposed History Courses”, *Nationalisms Across the Globe: An Overview of*

sought to emphasize the Holocaust, because it casts the Romanian regime in a negative light, while historians have tried to minimize it for precisely the same reason.

Suppression of the Past – and a Silver Lining

In March 2006, a five-day workshop for future Moldovan teachers took place on “The Education of Tolerance and Democratic Citizenship through History”.⁴¹ The group was made up of well-trained high school history teachers from Moldova. The author of this article participated as an instructor and had the task of discussing the subject of the Holocaust in the context of teaching tolerance and democratic citizenship. The intense reaction of the participants corresponded largely with the debate among Moldovan academics.

The majority of participants refused to treat the topic of the Holocaust in school. In an anonymous survey, they repeated the clichés disseminated by Moldova’s mass media, while others revealed thoughts they did not feel comfortable expressing openly. Many offered ethnocentric arguments. A typical response was:

[The Holocaust] is not a tragic page for the Romanian people. We had our own moments, such as the deportations or organized famine, which is related to our history. The Holocaust should be studied by the people that experienced it.⁴²

Another comment blamed the Jews for the Holocaust: “How is it possible to explain the aggression [of the Jews] toward the Romanian Army during its withdrawal in 1940? One harvests what one sows.”⁴³ Others expressed concern that the future generation of Romanians, or Moldovans, could be blamed for the Holocaust: “It could provoke hatred against the Romanians [Moldovans].” Some worried that open anti-semitism could erupt in Moldovan society if the Holocaust were studied in the classroom: “In many cases, it [Holocaust instruction] will cultivate not sympathy and compassion towards the Jews, but the opposite.” In one instance, a person rejected the topic of the Holocaust as “a problem that came from abroad”.⁴⁴

Only few members of the group accepted the idea of the Holocaust as a useful topic in history lessons, although they had reservations. They referred to the age and emotion-

Nationalisms in State-Endowed and Stateless Nations, I: Europe (Poznań 2005); Elizabeth A. Anderson, “Backwards, Forwards, or Both? Moldovan Teachers’ Relationship to the State and the Nation”, *European Education*, 37, 3 (2005), pp. 53–67; Vladimir Solonari, “Narrative, Identity, State: History Teaching in Moldova”, *East European Politics and Society*, 16, 2 (2002), pp. 414–445.

⁴¹ S. Musteata, ed., *Educația toleranței și cetățeniei democratice prin intermediul istoriei. Pachet educațional* (Chisinau 2006).

⁴² The survey was taken in the form of written submissions. The materials are in the author’s possession.

⁴³ Archive of the author.

⁴⁴ This is also what Moldovan historians argue when explaining why they do not support their Romanian colleagues’ position regarding the Holocaust. They usually argue that Romanian historians – under pressure from international and European organizations – have taken a certain position that runs contrary to their true convictions. This idea is also propagated by former Romanian dissident Paul Goma, see Paul Goma, *Săptămîna roșie 28 iunie-3 iulie 1940 sau Basarabia și evreii* (Chisinau 2003). He praises the attitude of Bessarabian historians as exemplary, idem, “A fi basarabean”, *România liberă*, 17 November 2005.

al stability of their pupils, the ethnic make-up of classes, the level of preparedness of teachers, equal treatment of various victim groups (i.e. not only the Jews).

Although most of the workshop participants agreed that the topic of the Holocaust in Moldova is extremely politicized, a majority remained firmly convinced that studying and discussing the Holocaust in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria in the classroom would inevitably do a favour to the ruling Communist government and would prejudice the “national cause” for the worse. Instead of thinking of ways to depoliticize the issue, they preferred to avoid it altogether.

In recent years, the situation has improved. In October 2006, Chişinău hosted an international conference called “The Fate of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria in 1940–1944”. The conference was organized under the auspices of the Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania. Because Sergiu Nazaria’s book and the debate over it were still on people’s minds, and because this was the first academic conference on Holocaust to be held in Moldova, there was considerable public interest. There was controversy and criticism, but nobody tried to deny the Holocaust in the Romanian-administered territories. The copious amounts of photographs and documents presented by conference speakers made that simply impossible.

No less important was the June 2008 visit to Israel by Olga Goncearova, general director of the Department of Interethnic Relations within the government of Moldova. She concluded an agreement with Israeli officials by which Moldovan history teachers, starting in the summer of 2009, would visit Yad Vashem for training on how to teach the history of the Holocaust.⁴⁵

Moldova’s once vibrant Jewish community was decimated during the Holocaust and then further reduced by emigration in the years that followed. Today, the Jews of Moldova have had more success in reviving their community than in bringing Jewish history into their country’s school curricula. Moldovan society is prepared to give equal freedom and rights to its Jews, but it is not prepared to provide any space for assessing the Shoah in history textbooks and public discourse.

The politicization of history and the existence of competing victim groups in Moldovan society make it difficult to find a proper place for the Holocaust within the history of Moldova and the collective memory of Moldovan society. This situation is likely to persist for some time. It is difficult to foresee an alternative development.

⁴⁵ “Profesorii de istorie din Moldova vor efectua stagii la Ierusalim privind predarea Holocaustului”, Agenţia Informaţională de Stat Moldpres, 8 July 2008.

Felicia Waldman

From Taboo to Acceptance

Romania, the Jews, and the Holocaust

The existence of Jews on Romanian territory was suppressed under Communism. Romania's complicity in the Holocaust was a taboo. In the post-Communist era, attitudes were slow in changing. President Ion Iliescu's remark that there had been no Holocaust on Romanian territory represented a particularly low point. Only with the integration of Romania into international organisations and the convening of the Elie Wiesel commission of inquiry did the climate change. Now Romania is increasingly willing to accept responsibility, to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, and to integrate the country's Jewish heritage into its national remembrance culture.

Jewish life in modern-day Romania can be traced back to the 2nd century C.E., when Jewish soldiers reached the region through the Roman army's conquest of Dacia.¹ Under Romania's Communist regime, the words "Jew" and "Jewish" were taboo. Their history, culture and religious identity were barely acknowledged despite the fact that they were recognised as a religious community and enjoyed the same limited rights as members of other minority confessions. Even the Holocaust was taboo. The Romanian view on the history of the Second World War was simple: All had suffered under Fascist rule, and the Communists had defeated Fascism.

After the fall of Communism in 1989, this attitude changed only slowly. On the one hand, Romania made little effort to track down perpetrators of the Holocaust.² On the other hand, the integration into international organisations meant that the country became more susceptible to external pressure. On 21 March 2002, shortly before a NATO summit, the government passed a resolution making "organisations and symbols of a fascist, racist or xenophobic nature and the glorification of persons guilty of crimes against peace and humanity" punishable under law.³

Initially, however, an external impetus was required. And President Ion Iliescu provided the occasion. In an interview with the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on 24 July 2003, he had the audacity to claim that there had been no Holocaust on Romanian soil. This caused a storm of outrage. A 2002 study estimated the number of Holocaust victims

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¹ For a chronology of Jewish life in Romania, see:

www.romanianjewish.org/en/mosteniri_ale_culturii_judaice_03_13.html.

² Marco Maximilian Katz, *Anti-Semitism in Romania* (Bucharest 2003); Report of the Centre for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism in Romania (Bucharest 2004).

³ Andrei Oișteanu, "Holocaust: Definition Attempt", in *The Holocaust and Romania. History and Contemporary Significance* (Bucharest 2003), p. 147.

in Romania and in its occupied territories to be 420,000 people.⁴ In a second conversation with *Ha'aretz* one month later, Iliescu stated that Jews had the same claim to compensation for confiscated property as all other Romanians. But with the land being poor, one should not convey to Romanians the sense that the Jews were trying to “squeeze it dry”.⁵ This second lapse again caused considerable irritation. The Romanian government made efforts to contain the damage. One result was the deployment of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, which came into existence on 22 October 2003. This commission was comprised of historians from Romania, Israel, and the United States and was led by Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. It was tasked with the investigation and evaluation of the facts of the Holocaust in Romania and was to make recommendations as to how this historical knowledge should be treated. On 11 November 2004, the commission presented its final report. According to this report, between 280,000 and 380,000 fell victim to the Holocaust on former Romanian soil, including its occupied territories. Furthermore, the commission suggested how the topic should be anchored in education and the culture of memory.⁶ Since then, the official treatment of Romanian history has changed. The government followed the recommendations of the Wiesel Commission. For a long time, both the public and political spheres had been reluctant to recognise the history of Romanian Jews as part of Romanian history. Until recently the curriculum spoke of the “history of Romanians” rather than the “history of Romania”. Minorities were scarcely mentioned. In the meantime, sensitivity to the treatment of its minorities and the Jewish heritage has increased. Where there once had been Jewish life, cultural and architectural heritage as part of local history were brought to public consciousness by various initiatives. Integrating the local population into the protection of these locations is possible, not least because the preservation of cultural heritage is bound to have a positive effect on tourism and the local economy.⁷

Even on the national level, awareness has grown that Romania's Jewish heritage is an integral part of Romanian culture. In 2003, the Foreign Ministry, along with the U.S. government and the University of Bucharest, organised the international symposium “Minorities, Cultural Heritage, and Contemporary Romanian Civilisation”. The aim was to encourage interethnic cultural dialogue, especially under consideration of Romania's Jewish heritage. The Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs created a consultation centre for European cultural programmes. Along with the *European Institute for Cultural Routes*, the centre is examining the possibility of including Romanian-Jewish sites in the *European Jewish Heritage Routes*.⁸ When Romania was chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the committee was negotiating the creation of a “Path of Hasidic Culture”.⁹

⁴ Jean Ancel, *Romanyah* (Jerusalem 2002). On the issue of methodological difficulties and source problems in calculating the exact number of victims, see Wolfgang Benz, “Die Dimension des Völkermords. Einleitung”, in idem, ed., *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich 1991), pp. 1–20; Christa Zach, “Rumänien“, in *ibid.*, pp. 381–409.

⁵ Michael Shafir, “Deconstructing Holocaust Denial: Romania's Cucumber Season Revisited”, *RFE/RL East European Perspectives*, 22–25 (2003).

⁶ Report of the “Elie Wiesel” International Commission on Holocaust in Romania; <www.inshr-ew.ro/en-index.htm>, pp. 386–388. Regarding the number of victims, see, p. 179.

⁷ <www.idee.ro/jewish_heritage/>.

⁸ <www.culture-routes.lu/>.

⁹ <www.eurocult.ro/agenda/index.htm>.

Jewish History in Politics

Since the Romanian president's scandalous claims, the climate has changed. Jewish history is increasingly making inroads into national memory. The memory is inextricably connected to Romania's responsibility for the Holocaust, the postwar compensations for confiscated Jewish property, as well as the post-Communist compensation and reparation payments to the victims of the Holocaust.

The government has followed the Wiesel Commission's advice and introduced an official Holocaust commemoration day. It is 9 October, the day on which, in 1941, the first Jews were deported from Romania's northeast to the Romanian-occupied part of Ukraine known as Transnistria. On the first Holocaust Commemoration Day in 2004, President Iliescu mentioned for the first time in public the death trains, the mass deportations, and the pogroms in Romania. Now he acknowledged that antisemitism had been a part of state ideology before the war broke out. These words were received very positively abroad, where Iliescu's statements had caused great uproar just one year earlier. In Romania, however, the speech went virtually unnoticed.

Since then, Holocaust Commemoration Day has been observed every year: The parliament calls a special session during which the president and a minister give speeches. Schools have essay and drawing competitions and organise exhibitions and meetings with survivors. In 2005, Romanian Foreign Minister Mihai Razvan Ungureanu inaugurated a study centre for Hebrew at the *Alexandru Ioan Cuza University* and laid a wreath at the Holocaust Memory Obelisk in Iași in memory of the victims of the Iași pogrom on 29 June 1941.¹⁰ On 9 October 2005, the *Elie Wiesel National Institute for Holocaust Studies in Romania* was opened. And on 9 October 2006, the cornerstone was finally laid for the National Holocaust Memorial in Bucharest, whose construction represents another one of the Wiesel Commission's recommendation. However, this has yet to be realised.

Sites of Memory

Before the Second World War, nearly 800,000 Jews lived in Romania. Today, there are about 8,000. They are organised in 40 congregations, 22 communities, and 90 groups.¹¹ Many former Jewish buildings, such as synagogues, schools, and cemeteries are in poor condition or have been abandoned, especially in regions where no more Jews live. The only possibility of preserving several of these buildings is to use them as museums, cultural centres, or public institutions.

¹⁰ The Iași Pogrom marks the beginning of the destruction of the Romanian Jews. According to the Wiesel Commission's final report, 14,850 Jews fell victim to the pogrom, see, p. 126.

¹¹ Congregations are considered to be associations of more than 30 members, communities have 8–30 members while groups consist of one to eight members. On the Romanian-Jewish congregations, see Jean Ancel, Victor Eskenasy, *Bibliography of the Jews in Romania* (Tel Aviv 1991); Paul Cernovodeanu et al., eds., *The History of Romanian Jews*, 1–5 (Tel Aviv 2002–2004); Carol Iancu, *The Jews of Romania (1866–1938)*, 1–3 (Bucharest 1998–2006); Radu Ioanid, *The Ransom of the Jews* (Chicago 2005); Victor Neumann, *The End of a History: The Jews of Banat* (Bucharest 2006).

The *Federation of Jewish Communities* turned the former synagogue of the Tailors Guild (*Shnaydershil*) in Bucharest into a Jewish museum and the Great Synagogue into a Holocaust museum. Two additional Jewish museums have been created in the synagogues of Iași and Bačau. In Cluj, the *Babeș-Bolyai University* bought a synagogue and made it the *Moshe Carmilly Weinberger Institute for Jewish Studies*. The *Tranzit House* foundation, created in 1997, rented the former *Poalei Tzedek* synagogue from the *Federation of Jewish Communities* and opened a centre for modern art.¹² The synagogue in Șimleu Silvaniei now hosts the *Northern Transylvanian Holocaust Memorial Museum and Education Centre*.¹³ It provides a permanent exhibition and preserves the memory of Jewish life in this region through many activities. Private donations have enabled the Sighișoara synagogue to be turned into a cultural centre committed to the preservation of Jewish heritage and sometimes also used for religious services. The synagogue in Gheorgheni, where over 1,000 Jewish inhabitants had lived, was made into a memorial by 92 Auschwitz survivors as long ago as 1946. Many memorial sites of this kind are currently coming into existence, which is chiefly the result of the initiative of Holocaust survivors.

Of the 99 still existing synagogues, 48 can still be used.¹⁴ The Ministry of Culture has recognised the most important of these synagogues as part of the Romania's national cultural heritage. This made it possible to apply for funding for restoration and maintenance.¹⁵

There are 802 Jewish cemeteries in 714 towns or villages in Romania.¹⁶ 108 of them can be used. Unlike in Prague, Jewish cemeteries in Romania are not classified as cultural memorial sites. Nonetheless, some of them function as places of commemoration. In the cemeteries in Iași, Târgu Frumos, and Podu Iloaiei, there are mass graves containing the victims of the death trains used to murder the survivors of the Iași pogrom. Next to the mass grave stands the memorial obelisk in front of Iași's Great Synagogue, which dates from the 17th century. A memorial plate at the former police station states: "Between 29 June and 2 July 1941, 13,000 Jews were murdered in Iași. Hundreds were killed in this courtyard." It is incomprehensible that the building should today contain a pizzeria.

Another kind of commemoration is practiced at the Ștefănești cemetery in the district of Suceava, where no more Jews live. Hasidic Rabbi Admor Friedman was buried here before his remains were exhumed in the 1980s and taken to Israel. Many Jews, as well as Christians from the area, still visit the gravesite. They pray or leave handwritten notes as is done at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem so that Rabbi Friedman, whom they honour as a saint, may console them in their misery or grant them wishes.

¹² <www.tranzithouse.ro/history.htm>.

¹³ <www.mmhtn.org>.

¹⁴ <www.jewish.ro>, <www.cimec.ro/Monumente/LacaseCult/EN/Documente/BazaDate.htm> counts 93 synagogues. Some can be seen at <www.romanianjewish.org/en/fedrom_03.html>.

¹⁵ This applies to the Great Synagogue in Bucharest, the neological synagogue in Arad, the synagogues in Pitești and Bačau, the neological and the orthodox synagogue in Oradea, the synagogue in Bistrița, the neological synagogue in Brașov, two orthodox synagogues in Caransebeș, the synagogues in Dej, Târgoviște, Deva, Hațeg and Orăștie, to two synagogues in Iași, the synagogues in Baia Mare, Seini and Sighețu Marmatiei, two synagogues in Drobeta Turnu-Severin, two synagogues in Târgu Mureș, the wooden synagogue from the 18th century in Piatra Neamț, the synagogues in Caracal and Șimleu Silvaniei, two synagogues in Satu Mare, the synagogues in Sibiu and three in Timișoara.

¹⁶ There are 148 cemeteries in places where Jews still live, and 654 in locations where no Jews live.

Additional places of commemoration for Jewish history include the former ghettos. During the Second World War, there were 11 ghettos and two labour camps in northern Transylvania.¹⁷ Memorials to the victims now stand at the sites of the ghettos in Oradea, Târgu Mureş, und Someş.

Research and Documentation of Jewish Life

In addition to the Universities in Bucharest, Cluj, Iaşi, Craiova, and Timișoara, which have research projects concerning Jewish memory, there is the *Elie Wiesel National Institute for Holocaust Studies in Romania*. It was founded by the government following the Wiesel Commission's recommendation and continues its work. It researches the history of the Holocaust, gathers and publishes documents and reports, and offers educational programmes.¹⁸

The *Association of Romanian-Jewish Holocaust Survivors* is an important initiative that commemorates victims and preserves Jewish heritage. The association organises events and has created didactic material that was accepted by the ministry of education and is now used in schools. The association co-produced the documentary film *The Forgotten Holocaust*. Members are featured in media presentations as contemporary witnesses and give talks as part of teacher training courses on how to handle the Holocaust in schools.

Museums also provide an important contribution to the research and documentation of Jewish life in Romania. The Jewish Museum in Bucharest, under the leadership of the *Federation of Jewish Communities*, documents Jewish life in today's Romania in a permanent exhibition. The Bucharest Holocaust Museum displays posters concerning anti-Jewish legislation as well as the persecution and murder of Jews during the war. The museums in Iaşi and Bačau are dedicated to local Jewish history. The *Elie Wiesel House – The Jewish Culture and Civilization Museum*, in the Maramureş region, commemorates Wiesel's childhood in his house of birth. Wiesel was deported from Sighet at the age of 15. The *Elie Wiesel House* communicates local Jewish traditions. It hosts a large collection of photographs and personal items that once belonged to the Jews who lived there. The memorial museum in Șimleu Silvaniei documents the Holocaust in Transnistria. Other museums have also proclaimed their interest in featuring the topic of Jewish history. Paradoxically, the smaller the number of local Jews, the greater the interest seems. A travelling exhibition on Romanian synagogues, curated by the *Federation of Jewish Communities*, has been presented in Romania and abroad. In 2005, the *National Historical Museum* displayed the remains of Jewish ritual objects that had been destroyed in the Second World War.

The *Museum of the Romanian Peasant* in Bucharest offered a cultural programme in the first six months of 2008 called “In Conversation with the ‘Others’ – the History of the Neighbours” that also focussed on Jewish heritage.¹⁹ There is hardly anything left

¹⁷ Oliver Lustig, *Procesul ghetourilor din Nordul Transilvaniei* (Bucharest 2007). The ghettos were in Oradea, Târgu Mureş, Someş, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Cluj, Reghin, Sfântu Gheorghe, Șimleu Silvaniei, Bistrița and Sighet, the work camps in Târgu Jiu and Caransebeș.

¹⁸ <www.inshr-ew.ro/en-index.htm>.

¹⁹ These conversations were part of the “PUZZLE” project for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the Romanian Cultural Ministry’s Council for European Culture Programmes, <www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/index.php?page=acasa&articol=34>.

of the former Jewish quarter. However, there are no plaques commemorating the facts of its existence. The organisation *e-cart.ro* has initiated the project “Marcel Iancu – Architect” that is funded by the Ministry of Culture and documents the Jewish contribution to the development of modern architecture in Bucharest.²⁰

The international organisation *Centropa* salvages memories of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe and makes its findings accessible in databases on its Web site.²¹ *Centropa* has undertaken numerous projects on Jewish memory in Romania. On the basis of family photographs and personal histories, the team has conducted over 100 interviews concerning Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust and has incorporated their results into a travelling exhibition. This was shown in 2007 on the occasion of an OSCE anti-discrimination conference in Bucharest.

Jewish History in Schoolbooks

In the late 1990s, there were increasing calls for the history of the Jews in Romania and the tragedy of the Holocaust to be given more attention in schools. An Israeli-Romanian commission of historians was to make appropriate suggestions, but it never convened. Schoolbooks did include material on the history of the Jews in Europe and on the Holocaust, however, information concerning Romania's role was scarce and often confusing.²² One notable exception was Stelian Brezeanu's 12th-grade history textbook.²³

In 1999, the Holocaust was first included in curricula as a mandatory subject in secondary school history classes. Its implementation, however, took a long time.

Since 2004, the history of the Holocaust has been taught to 7th- and 10th- to 12th-grade students. There is sometimes even the possibility of taking additional courses as electives.²⁴ The curricula and schoolbooks were revised according to Wiesel Commission recommendations. Nonetheless, even the most ambitious history instructors were reluctant to teach the topic. The cause is simple: It requires them to teach something about which they know nothing or about which they were previously misinformed. Either they learned nothing about the subject under Communism or – under the influence of hectic media campaigns that swayed between being antisemitic and sometimes philosemitic – something falsified or perfunctory. A thorough retraining of Romania's roughly 10,000 history teachers would be desperately needed.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education and Research instigated a national teacher training programme on the topic of the Holocaust and thus encouraged a number of activities. The programme financed special seminars at the universities in Cluj and Bucharest, didactic material, educational material, as well as trips to Yad Vashem (Jerusalem) and to Shoah memorials. There is also a fund to promote translation of Holocaust-related publications into Romanian. The *Association of Romanian-Jewish Holocaust Survivors* compiled teaching aids that included testimonies and anthologies of rele-

²⁰ <<http://cimec.wordpress.com/2008/07/11/marcel-iancu-inceputurile-arhitecturii-moderne-in-bucuresti>>.

²¹ <www.centropa.org>.

²² Felicia Waldman, “Coming to Terms with the Recent Past: Holocaust Education in Post-Communist Romania”, *RFE/RL East European Perspectives*, 14–15 (2004).

²³ Stelian Brezeanu, ed., *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a IX-a* (History of Romania. 12th grade textbook), Rao Educational (1999).

²⁴ Florin Petrescu, *Istoria evreilor. Holocaustul* (Bucharest 2005).

vant secondary literature. The Ministry of Education has made it accessible to schools. Similarly, publications on the Roma genocide were compiled and distributed. Michelle Kelsos's documentary film about the deportation of the Roma to Transnistria, *Hidden Sorrows*, is available with additional educational materials on DVD. The *Research Centre for Culture and Civilisation of Southeastern European Jewry* at the University of Craiova published, with the support of the Austrian national fund for the victims of National-Socialism, two volumes of documentation on oppression and Jewish forced labour following research conducted in French and Romanian archives. In 2007, as part of the PHARE programme of the European Union, the Ministry of Education organised teacher training courses on anti-discrimination as well as on the promotion of Roma culture. The new 2007 guidelines also mandate teaching the topic of minorities to 10th- and 12th-grade students.²⁵

Jewish Cultural Life Today

Despite its small number of members, the Romanian *Federation of Jewish Communities* possesses its own media. These include the newspaper *Realitatea Evreiască* (The Jewish Reality), the state-funded publisher *Hasefer*, and a documentation centre for Romanian-Jewish history, which publishes a bulletin and other printed matter. In addition, there are 21 communal libraries, 11 choirs, and five music groups that participate in national and international festivals.

One Romanian-Jewish institution that has defied time is the Jewish Theatre. Founded in Iași in 1876 by Avram Goldfaden, the “father of Yiddish theatre”, this first professional Jewish theatre in the world was in operation until the Second World War. Famous Jewish actors who were otherwise banned from performing in public theatres could appear on stage there. In 1948, the Jewish Theatre was founded anew in Bucharest and was able to continue under communist rule. In 1991, it organised an *International Yiddish Theatre Festival* in Bucharest, which was followed by a second event in 1996. The National Theatre of Iași has functioned annually since 2002 as the host of the week-long *International Jewish Drama Festival “Avram Goldfaden”*.

In Sibiu, the European Capital of Culture 2007, the *Federation of Jewish Communities* organised “Euro-Judaica” – the European festival of Jewish art and culture.²⁶ There were klezmer concerts, exhibitions, films, and theatre as well as speeches and discussions. Other festivals for the promotion of the cultural heritage of minorities have been organised in the past few years by the government agency for interethnic relations. The Romanian film director Radu Gabrea recently produced the documentary film *Romania, Romania: II Looking for Schwartz*. The film tells the history of klezmer music, which has many roots in Romania.

Translated by Luisa Zielinski & Jonathan Lutes, Berlin

²⁵ Order 1529 “On the inclusion of cultural diversity in the national curriculum”, Official paper of the Monitorul Oficial R.A. (18 July 2007).

²⁶ <www.sibiul.ro/program-evenimente-sibiu-2007/pannonia-klezmer-band-ungaria-festivalul-european-de-cultura-si-arta-evreiasca-euroiudaica-2007.html>.

Обзоры

Ашкеназское наследие и Европа Восточноевропейские евреи: традиции и современность

Энтони Полонски

Непрочный мир и принятие трагедии

История и политика восточноевропейских евреев

Большая еврейская община в Восточной Европе имеет собственную историю. В XVIII-XIX вв. репрессии и реформы вынуждали евреев приспосабливаться к чужим нациям. Однако попытки ассимиляции зачастую терпели неудачу, что привело к мировоззренческому расколу в среде еврейства. Сионисты, ассимиляторы и социалисты проповедовали разные пути к достижению для евреев правового и социального равенства с остальными народами. В годы Холокоста большинство восточноевропейских евреев были убиты. Некоторые из оставшихся в живых пытались после войны найти себе место в процессе построения коммунистических обществ – без успеха. Антисемитизм и погромы принуждали их к эмиграции.

Дитрих Байрау

Катастрофы и социальная мобильность

Евреи и неевреи в Восточной Европе

Историю европейских евреев со времён эмансипации писали двумя способами: как историю восходящей социальной мобильности, приведшей их с периферии общества на вершину, и как историю последовательных катастроф. Это в особенности относится к Восточной Европе. В начале XIX в. здесь жили более 80% евреев-ашкенази. Их эмансипация привела к разрыву с традицией, к эмиграции, аккультурации и появлению разнообразных проектов новой идентичности. Антисемитизм и погромы постоянно сопровождали их жизнь. Национальные силы в странах Востока Центральной Европы рассматривали еврейское население как помеху в деле образования национального государства. Динамизм советской Москвы и открывшиеся в ней возможности вертикальной социальной мобильности сделали столицу „новым Иерусалимом“ для городских евреев. Цивилизационный перелом Холокоста особенно жестоко ударил по евреям этого региона: сегодня здесь живут лишь 4% всех евреев.

Воспоминание между Сциллой и Харибдой

Наследие восточноевропейских евреев в общественном и академическом сознании

За прошедшие десятилетия стало больше известно о жизни восточноевропейских евреев и о Катастрофе. Однако адекватное представление их истории и культуры – нелёгкая задача, предъявляющая к историку высокие требования. Подчас воспоминание о жертвах Холокоста соскальзывает в область коммерции и кича, а реальное возрождение еврейской жизни оказывается скрытым за ее музейным изображением. Дельфина Бехтель, Михаэль Бреннер, Франк Голчевски, Рахель Хойбергер, Франсуа Гене, Цилли Кугельман и Анна Липпхардт рассказывают о том, какие выводы они делают из этого для своей работы в музеях и библиотеках, в преподавании и исследовательской практике.

Топосы восточноевропейских евреев

Стивен Э. Ашхайм

Отражение, проекция, искаженная картина

"Восточные евреи" в еврейской культуре в Германии

Со времён Просвещения образ "восточных евреев" играл важную роль для самоопределения немецких евреев: евреи из Восточной Европы считались отсталыми. Эта их отсталость, как казалось, угрожала интеграции немецких евреев в современное общество, поэтому они отрекались от "восточных евреев". Одновременно нарастало чувство коллективной ответственности за „слабейших братьев“. В начале XX в. возник контрмиф – положительный. Начался культ исконности "восточных евреев". Эти клише больше рассказывают о самопонимании немецких евреев, чем о реальных их восточноевропейских соплеменниках.

Гершон Давид Хундерт

Обновленная история

Энциклопедия восточноевропейских евреев YIVO

После окончания конфликта между Западом и Востоком невероятно вырос интерес к истории и культуре восточноевропейских евреев. Открывшийся доступ в архивы обеспечил новые возможности для исследований. Еврейский научный институт (YIVO) воспользовался этими возможностями: совместными усилиями более 400 экспертов создана первая энциклопедия восточноевропейского еврейства. Этот фундаментальный труд демонстрирует все слои и всё разнообразие еврейской жизни в Восточной Европе. В ходе работы над энциклопедией стали отчётливо видны пробелы в знаниях о восточноевропейском еврействе. Более того: имплицитно это издание представляет собой свод информации по социологии знания применительно к мировым Jewish Studies.

Миха Брумлик

От мракобесия к святости

"Восточно-еврейское" мышление у Бубера, Хешеля и Левинаса

Мышление восточноевропейских евреев в общественном восприятии окружено мистическим ореолом. Общим для трёх мыслителей – Мартина Бубера, Джошуа Хешеля и Эммануэля Левинаса – является "восточно-еврейский" опыт, обучение философии в Германии и то, что все они стали свидетелями массового убийства европейских евреев. Их связывает друг с другом их этика – универсалистская, но нацеленная на прямую человеческую ответственность. Левинас более отчётливо, чем Бубер и Хешель, воздал должное тому, что можно было бы обозначать как "восточное еврейство".

Наследие восточноевропейских евреев

Анке Хильбреннер

Гражданские права и мультикультурализм

Концепция „диаспорического национализма“ Симона Дубнова

Российский еврейский историк Симон Дубнов стал первым мыслителем, который признал определяющую роль рассеяния в создании еврейской идентичности. Изучив опыт жизни евреев в Восточной Европе, он выработал концепцию „национализма без национального государства“, национализма диаспорического. Представители меньшинств, считал он, должны обладать в наднациональных государствах теми же самыми гражданскими правами, что и представители большинства. Их культурные права должны гарантироваться автономными общинами. Исследователи национализма в основном проигнорировали труды Дубнова. Однако в многокультурных и гетерогенных обществах современной Европы его концепция актуальна.

Яша Немцов

„Это был явный скандал“

Еврейская музыка в произведениях европейских композиторов

Вплоть до XIX в. еврейскую музыку в европейской культуре почти не замечали или относились к ней пренебрежительно. Первую главу музыкальной иудаики создали российские композиторы. В начале XX в. в России возникла особая еврейская национальная школа в музыке, которая впоследствии оказала влияние на творчество многих композиторов Западной Европы. После Холокоста еврейская музыка воспринимается не только как элемент фольклора, но скорее как политический и моральный символ.

Марина Дмитриева

Лаборатория современного искусства

Еврейские художники из Восточной Европы в Берлине

В 1920-е гг. Берлин был узловым пунктом культурного обмена между Восточной Европой, Парижем и Нью-Йорком. В Берлин прибывали еврейские художники из Польши, России и Украины, где в 1918 г. была основана «Культурная лига», которая, однако, в 1924 г. была превращена властями в советскую организацию. Среди приехавших были Натан Альтман, Генрик Берлеви, Эль Лисицкий, Марк Шагал и Иссахар Бер Рыбак. Здесь они стали представителями современного европейского искусства. Одновременно они внесли каждый свой оригинальный вклад в еврейский Ренессанс 20-х гг. Их творчество оставило неизгладимые следы в европейском художественном ландшафте.

Омри Каплан-Фойерайзен

На службе еврейской нации

Якоб Робинсон и международное право

Якоб Робинсон (1889-1977) прожил большую часть своей жизни в Восточной Европе. Как политик, защитник меньшинств и специалист по международному праву он уже во время жизни в Литве приобрёл мировую славу. Начиная с 1941 г. он жил в Нью-Йорке и работал в поле напряжения между специфически еврейскими и обще-человеческими интересами. Его целью было внушить евреям национальные самосознание и гордость. Деятельность Робинсона в международно-правовой и историографической областях оставила следы в истории Европы и всего мира.

Эгле Бендикайте

Посредник между мирами

Шимшон Розенбаум: Юрист, сионист, политик

Шимшон Розенбаум (1859-1934) вырос среди евреев-литваков на территории сегодняшней Беларуси. как адвокат и политик, он всю жизнь выступал за права евреев. Он работал в Минске, Вильне (Вильнюсе) и Ковно (Каунасе). в независимой Литве он был сперва заместителем министра иностранных дел, затем министром по делам евреев. Будучи умеренным сионистом, он поддерживал контакты с евреями по всему миру и пытался модернизировать восточноевропейское еврейство. Разочарованный нарастающим антисемитизмом в Европе, он в 1924 г. эмигрировал в Палестину и служил там генеральным консулом Литвы.

Манфред Заппер

Победить войну

Ян Блох: предприниматель, публицист, пацифист

Ян Блох (Иван Блюх) – типичный представитель сделавших карьеру евреев XIX в.: родившись в бедной еврейской семье в Восточной Польше, он со временем стал одним из виднейших предпринимателей Российской империи. В 50е-70е годы XIX в. он кредитовал государственное строительство железнодорожных линий. Самая большая заслуга Блоха - это его инициативы, направленные на то, чтобы победить войну. Он инициировал Гаагскую мирную конференцию. В своём фундаментальном труде «Будущая война и ее экономические последствия» он предсказал и тотальное уничтожение, которое несёт с собой индустриализованная война, и русскую революцию. Он призывал расстаться с учением Клаузевица, выступал за контроль вооружений, а также за создание международного суда. Это произведение должно считаться классическим трудом по истории борьбы за мир.

Еврейская история и транснациональная память

Анна Липпхардт

Забытая память

Виленские евреи в диаспоре

Сейчас всё больше пишут о том, как вспоминают о восточноевропейских евреях, а вот о том, как вспоминают сами восточноевропейские евреи, почти ничего не известно. Большинство оставшихся в живых после Холокоста не вернулись на родину, а рассеялись по всему миру. Еврейские землячества в странах эмиграции поддерживали воспоминание о родине и о Холокосте. Примером может служить община евреев из Вильнюса (евр. Вильне). Их взгляд на прошлое существенно отличается от взгляда тех евреев, которые и по сей день живут в Восточной Европе. Как показал спор о материалах YIVO (Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut) в Литве, это чревато конфликтами по поводу исторических интерпретаций и культурного наследия.

Катрин Штеффен

Способы воспоминания

Евреи в коллективной памяти Польши

До второй мировой войны в Польше жили свыше 3 млн. евреев. Во время Катастрофы почти все они были убиты. Коммунистический режим препятствовал тому, чтобы о евреях вспоминали как об особой группе жертв Холокоста. Положение изменилось после 1990 г., однако воспоминание о евреях всё ещё поляризует польское общество, о чем свидетельствуют споры о событиях в Едвабне и антисемитских погромах послевоенного времени. Имеет место конкуренция между евреями и поляками: кто больше пострадал. В польской памяти продолжает жить мифически-символический овраз "еврея". Параллельно в бывших местах еврейской жизни возникает виртуальное еврейство.

Ансгар Гильстер

Само место ничего не говорит

Как фотографировать в Освенциме

Освенцим можно фотографировать очень по-разному. Но возникающий при этом образ Освенцима остаётся нечетким, потому что не содержит объяснения происшедшему. Очень разные снимки, представленные на фото-семинаре в Освенциме, рассказывают историю тщетных попыток приближения к теме.

Магдалена Валигурска

Фольклор как фиговый листок

Политизация клезмер в Польше

Музыка в стиле клезмер стала в Польше очень популярна. «Еврейский фестиваль» в Кракове стал событием национального и международного значения. Однако дело тут отнюдь не в одной только музыке. Фестиваль стал лакмусовой бумажкой, показывающей перемену в политическом настроении и в отношении к еврейскому наследию в Польше.

Зофия Вуйцицка

Тысяча лет в музее

История польских евреев

В 2011 г. в Варшаве открывается Музей истории польских евреев. Экспозиция площадью 4000 кв.м. будет рассказывать о почти тысячелетней истории еврейской жизни в Польше. Музей будет служить также национальным культурным и образовательным центром. Над его созданием работает международная группа историков, архитекторов и дизайнеров, и по замыслу он войдет в число современных музеев Европы.

Семен Чарный

Интеграция и самоутверждение

Еврейское сообщество в России

После нескольких десятилетий дискриминации начиная с Перестройки в России наблюдается ренессанс еврейской жизни. Несмотря на большую эмиграцию, существует активная общинная жизнь со школами, средствами массовой информации, культурными учреждениями и общественными организациями, которые представляют еврейские интересы. Государственный антисемитизм ушёл в прошлое.

Дмитрий Эльяшевич, Максим Мельцин

Бурный расцвет

Иудаика в России

После долгого перерыва в советские времена, начиная с Перестройки иудаика переживает в России бурный расцвет. Возникли школы и учебные учреждения для взрослых. Еврейским сюжетам посвящены многочисленные публикации, научные институты и информационные центры. Основное внимание уделяется этнографическим полевым исследованиям и историческим проектам, связанным с XX в. Однако иудаика всё ещё не признана в российской науке как самостоятельная специальность. Поэтому сокращение финансирования, идущего из частных источников, особенно болезненно сказывается на исследованиях по еврейской истории и культуре. А официальные учебники по сей день молчат о еврейском наследии в России.

Анатолий Подольский

Неохотный взгляд назад

Еврейство и Холокост в украинской памяти

Украина была когда-то центром еврейской жизни в Восточной Европе. Во время Холокоста большинство украинских евреев были убиты. Вместе с ними погибла и еврейская культура. В Советском Союзе она была предана забвению. В то время как официальная украинская политика памяти не уделяет внимания еврейскому наследию, частные лица и организации стараются укоренить в общественном сознании мысль о еврейской культуре и истории как части украинской идентичности. Это – болезненный процесс: в частности, он требует от украинцев, чтобы они признали собственную ответственность за уничтожение евреев в их стране.

Витаутас Толейкис

Вытеснение, проработка, воспоминание

Еврейское наследие в Литве

Важные центры еврейской жизни в Восточной Европе располагались на территории нынешней Литвы. Национал-социалисты и их литовские помощники убили почти всех евреев. В Советском Союзе воспоминание о них и забота о еврейском наследии были под запретом. Положение изменилось с обретением Литвой независимости. Однако в некоторых политических и общественных кругах наблюдалось сопротивление против того, чтобы Литва признала часть ответственности за убийство евреев на своей территории. Вместе с тем, в обществе в целом и особенно в историческом сознании молодого поколения еврейское наследие занимает всё более прочное место.

Марлис Зеверинг-Волланек

Евреев возвращают в историю

Чешские учебники по истории после 1989 г.

История евреев Чехии, Словакии и Моравии практически не освещалась в чехословацкой литературе в период коммунистического режима. Начиная с 1989 г. положение постепенно стало меняться. Однако, большинство опубликованных после «бархатной революции» учебников по-прежнему игнорировали еврейскую историю. Лишь с 1995 г. еврейским темам стало уделяться больше места. Пересмотрен был также и отрицательный образ государства Израиль. Но в учебниках истории, изданных в те годы, евреи изображались главным образом как жертвы – в частности, жертвы нацистов. Только несколько учебников, которые появились в прошлом десятилетии, освещают материал с европейской точки зрения и упоминают культурные и интеллектуальные импульсы, которые исходили из среды богемских евреев.

Диана Думитру

Молдова: Холокост как пешка в игре

Трудное освоение еврейского наследия

Молдове трудно дается освоение значительного еврейского наследия Бессарабии, Буковины и Приднестровья. Ещё труднее, как показывает анализ школьных учебников, закрепить воспоминание о жертвах Катастрофы в коллективной памяти. Память о Холокосте стала пешкой в политических играх, которые ведутся вокруг молдавской истории и идентичности. Политики и историки спорят по поводу „молдованизма“ или „румынизма“. За этим скрывается борьба за политическую ориентацию Молдовы. Возродить еврейскую жизнь, кажется, легче, чем проработывать и вспоминать прошлое.

Фелиция Вальдман

От запрета к признанию

Румыния, евреи и Холокост

В годы коммунистического режима факт существования в Румынии евреев вытеснялся из общественного сознания. На разговоры о доле ответственности Румынии за Холокост было наложено табу. Наиболее ярким проявлением этого вытеснения стало заявление президента Иона Илиеску, что на румынской территории Холокоста не было. Только после включения Румынии в международные организации, а также работы следственной комиссии Эли Визеля климат изменился. Теперь Румыния проявляет всё больше готовности принять на себя ответственность, помянуть жертв Холокоста и интегрировать еврейское наследие в национальную культуру памяти.