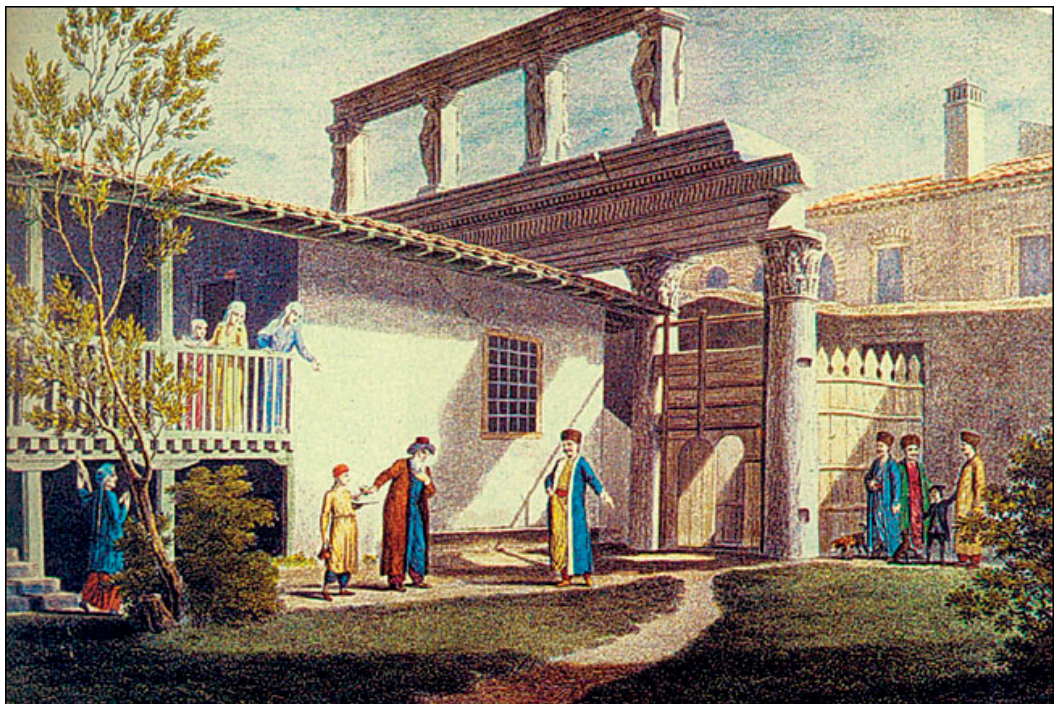


QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

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Contents

FOCUS

Editors

Introduction

V-VI

Cristina Pallini and Annalisa Riccarda Scaccabarozzi

*In Search of Salonika's Lost Synagogues. An Open Question
Concerning Intangible Heritage*

p. 1

Dimitrios Varvaritis

*“The Jews have got into trouble again...”:
Responses to the Publication of “Cronaca Israelitica”
and the Question of Jewish Emancipation
in the Ionian Islands (1861-1863)*

p. 30

Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen

*The Jewish Conspiracy Revealed (1897).
Adolf Stöcker and the 19th-Century Antisemitism in Finland*

p. 52

Bojan Mitrović

*From “Court Jew” Origins to Civil-Servant Nationalism:
Hajim S. Davičo (1854-1916)*

p. 66

Ehud Manor

Early Identity-Politics: The Case of Cahan and Schiff (1915-1917)

p. 90

Rolf Steininger

*“He’ll become an antisemite here anyway”
Israel as Seen by Karl Hartl, the First Austrian
Diplomat in Tel Aviv (1950–55)*

p. 107

Michele Sarfatti

Did the Germans Do It All?

The Italian Shoah in International Historiography

(1946-1986)

p. 144

Anna Baldini

Primo Levi and the Italian Memory of the Shoah

p. 156

DISCUSSION

Berel Lang, *Primo Levi: The Matter of a Life*

by **Robert C. Gordon**

p. 178

REVIEWS

Adolphe Franck, Philosophe juif, spiritualiste et libérale dans

la France du XIX siècle. Actes du colloque tenu

à l'Institut de France le 31 mai 2010

by **Chiara Adoriso**

p. 187

Luca Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati e la "Questione Ebraica"*

nella Francia Occupata dall'Esercito Italiano

by **Davide Rodogno**

p. 190

David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, *After the Holocaust.*

Challenging the Myth of Silence

by **Regula Ludi**

p. 193

Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews:*

The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk

by **Jörg Baberowski**

p. 196

Introduction

The Editors of this journal have chosen, with this issue, to operate a momentary shift from the monographic approach that characterized all previous publications. This time 'Quest' publishes a collection of eight articles on different topics, not tied together by one unifying theme.

While still believing in the value and purpose of monographic issues - developed under the careful coordination of one or more editors (either internal or external to the journal's Editorial board) - this time the Editors have decided to experiment with a different mode of publication; we reserve ourselves the possibility to publish other such miscellaneous issues from time to time.

'Quest' will promptly return to publishing thematically coherent issues from n. 8, which will appear in December 2014. It will be edited by Tullia Catalan and Cristiana Facchini and will be devoted to biographies of key figures of the Italian Jewish communities in the age of emancipation.

The 'Focus' section of this edition of 'Quest' is composed of very diverse contributions, authored by both junior and senior scholars. The articles cover a wide range of topics, time periods and geographical areas. We open with the Greek Islands, considered from very different points of view: Cristina Pallini and Annalisa Scaccabarozzi offer us a study of urban history, analyzing Salonika's lost synagogues, while Varvaritis presents the 'Cronaca Israelitica' – the first Jewish newspaper in the Ionian Islands – and the discussions of Jewish emancipation in the late XIXth century. Then we move on to Finland, with a contribution by Tarja Liisa Luukkanen that presents the 1897 discussion concerning the legal condition of the Jews that took place within the Finnish Diet, and in particular within the clergy, illustrating the role of antisemitism and the reception of Adolf Stoecker's ideology. From the Baltic Sea we move back to Southern Europe, with an essay by Bojan Mitrović dedicated to the forms of social integration and of nationalization of Serbian Jewry as seen through a peculiar case study. Udi Manor's article makes us leap to the North American continent, and to Jewish New York in particular, discussing Jewish 'identity politics' through the prism of the "Jewish Daily Forward" in the early XXth century. The last three articles concentrate on the second half of the XXth century. Rolf Steininger presents the figure of Karl Hartl, the first Austrian diplomat in Israel, and his perception of the country. Michele Sarfatti carefully reconstructs how foreign (non-Italian) historiography interpreted Fascist antisemitism between 1946 and 1986. Finally, the 'Focus' section is closed by Anna Baldini's attentive depiction of Primo Levi's role in shaping Italy's memory of the Shoah.

Overall these very different contributions shed light, each with its own peculiar style and methodology, on relevant aspects of the modern Jewish experience. They fit well within the approach chosen by 'Quest:' to devote every issue to original historical research and historiographical debate on Jewish life and history in the modern era, inclusive of all Jewish realities – from the Sephardic to the Ashkenazi world -, to consider Jewish identities in their context, to analyze the shifting forms and functions of anti-Judaic sentiment and the ever changing reactions of Jewish groups to the challenges of modernity.

* * *

As we approached the closure of this volume a somber event hit us: Michele Luzzati – who as a member of the Scientific Board of the Fondazione Cdec had strongly supported the creation of this journal, and who had been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of 'Quest' - died in Pisa on June the 12th. Born in Turin in 1939, Michele had studied at the Scuola Normale Superiore and later went on to make a brilliant academic career, teaching first at the Scuola Normale, then at the University of Sassari and finally – since the late 1980's – as Full Professor at the University of Pisa. A renowned medievalist, he had dedicated his energies and his curiosity to Jewish history in the last thirty years, playing a key role in the development of Jewish studies in Italy both through his scholarship as well as through his qualities as a mentor of young scholars and a capable cultural organizer. He has been, among other things, the President of the Associazione Italiana per lo Studio del Giudaismo (Italian Association for the Study of Judaism) and the founder, first Director and the true soul of the Interdepartmental Center for Jewish Studies of the University of Pisa. His curiosity, his intellectual acumen and his openness to discussion will be sorely missed. This issue is dedicated to his memory, may it be a blessing.

The Editors

**In Search of Salonika's Lost Synagogues.
An Open Question Concerning Intangible Heritage**

by *Cristina Pallini, Annalisa Scaccabarozzi*

Abstract

Until 1944 Salonika was also known as the Jerusalem of the Balkans for its predominantly Jewish population. In August 1917 however, late Ottoman Salonika was ravaged by a great fire which destroyed most of its oldest synagogues. This article is an attempt to survey the “state of the art” on the sources available concerning the architecture and urban role of Salonika’s lost synagogues. The authors’ thesis, requiring further research, is that these synagogues played a poleogenetic role, in fostering both a settlement structure and cohesion of the social edifice.

- **Introduction**
- **Snapshots**
- **Waves of Refugees, Generations of Synagogues**
- **Synagogue Architecture: Three Case-Studies**
- **In Conclusion**

Introduction

In 2003 UNESCO ratified the “Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” defined as a set of practices, representations, and expressions that communities recognise as vital for their culture. In the matter of Intangible Cultural Heritage, a specific area of investigation concerns some lost urban landmarks that keep arousing a broad public and scholarly interest.

This is precisely the case of Salonika’s lost synagogues.

In January 2013 the local Jewish Museum inaugurated the exhibition entitled *A city in search of its kehilot; invisible cultural monuments of Salonika*. Based on new research material, the curator Dr. Evangelos Hekimoglou encouraged visitors to recognize the exact location of a number of historical synagogues, thus gaining knowledge of the “layers of the past” underlying the central business district and the present image of the city.

Today, on reaching Salonika, planes will often fly over the historic center, still partly surrounded by its Byzantine walls. The roads parallel to the coast are clearly visible, as is Aristotelous Street, the main feature of the reconstruction which gave the Greek government an opportunity to reshape the city. A Civic Axis originally meant to concentrating institutional buildings, Aristotelous Street was built over an area which had been home to the Jewish quarter for four hundred years.

Snapshots

The lost late-Ottoman city

In the final decades of the 19th century Salonika was the second most important Ottoman city. After the *Tanzimat* (1839-76), a period of institutional and social reforms aimed at modernizing the Empire while furthering its multicultural nature, non-Muslims and non-Turks became more thoroughly integrated into Ottoman society and were granted new civil rights.¹ Described as a “bazaar-city,”² Salonika was also known as the “Jerusalem of the Balkans” for its predominantly Jewish population,³ often the subject of comment by travelers:

“I notify to the lovers of ethnography this interesting experience: a sort of Jewish nation left on its own under the most tolerant of despotisms, and forming the majority of a great cosmopolitan city.”⁴

“Salonika is neither Greek nor Ottoman; it is rather a Jewish city, a sort of Jerusalem.”⁵

“All the boatman of the port are Jews, and on Saturdays no steamer can load or discharge cargo. Porters and shoeblacks, bricklayers and silk-hands, are all Jews.”⁶

Ottoman reforms had encouraged the Salonika Jews to reorganize the community along secular lines and under secular leaders, many of whom were playing a leading part in the city’s economic revival, fostered by port and railway works (1886-1904). In 1886, half of

NOTE: based of research jointly carried out by the authors, this text has been mainly written by C. Pallini. A. Scaccabarozzi has written paragraphs *Salonika Jews before the Ottoman conquest*, *The Beth Saul synagogue* and *The Monastirioton synagogue* and is the author of many interpretative drawings that form a fundamental part of this research (see captions).

¹ The vast program of reforms was an attempt to revive the Empire, and included administrative centralization, modernization of the state apparatus, westernization of society, secularization of justice and education. See Paul Dumont, “La période des Tanzimat (1839-1878),” in *Histoire de l’Empire ottoman*, ed. Robert Mantran (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

² Kostis Moskof, *Thessaloniki 1700-1912: a Cross-Section of the Bazaar-City* (Athens, 1974, in Greek).

³ *Salonique 1850-1918. La ‘ville des Juifs’ et le réveil des Balkans*, ed. Gilles Veinstein, (Paris: Autrement, 1993).

⁴ “De Salonique à Belgrade,” *Revue des deux mondes*, XXXV (1888) : 114.

⁵ Marius Bernard, *Autour de la Méditerranée* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1899), 8-10.

⁶ Elkan Nathan Adler, *Jews in Many Lands* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1905), 142.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

its 90,000-100,000 inhabitants were Jews, a quarter were Muslims and the rest Orthodox and Europeans;⁷ most of Salonika's banks and trading houses were in Jewish hands. In 1912, after being fought over by Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians, Salonika was incorporated into the Greek State. Despite the unease created over the new situation, the Jewish presence remained an essential component of the city.⁸ According to the first Greek census of 1913, the Jews numbered 61,439 (38.9%), the Muslims 45,867 (29.1%), the Greeks 39,936 (25.3%), and people of other origins 10,600 (6.7%), making a total of 157,889 inhabitants.⁹

Any traveler wishing to understand the contradictions of a city, fraught between tradition and innovation, could look to the port and business district in the old Frank quarter. Banks and entertainment venues, commercial agencies and insurance companies, hotels and *passages à la Français*, stood next to the old *hans*¹⁰ and the "sacred precincts" belonging to the main religious legations: the Protestant Chapel, the Catholic Church with the French Consulate, and the St. Menas Greek-Orthodox church. Farther on, Frank Street led through the Jewish neighborhoods with their array of historic synagogues.

In August 1917 Ottoman Salonika - with its mosaic of ethno-religious neighborhoods - was destroyed by fire.

"The market was little else than an enormous brazier, the Jewish quarter a memory. The Bank of Athens, the National Bank, and the Ottoman Bank were in ashes. The whole ruthless district of commerce, trusts, hoarding and plunder sank into the burning ash like biblical cities."¹¹

The fire destroyed more than 30 synagogues whose names had borne witness to the provenance of their communities: *Ashkenaz, Provence, Italy, Sicily, Spain, Castile, Catalonia, Aragon, Majorca, Lisbon, Portugal, Evora, Calabria, and Puglia*. [Fig.1]

⁷ N. Schinas, *Notes of a Journey in Macedonia, Epirus, along the New Frontier and Thessaly* (Athens, 1886, in Greek), 184. Reference taken from Domna Iordanidou, "1900-1922: Salonicco in transizione tra il dominio Ottomano e l'annessione allo stato ellenico, aspetto demografico, amministrativo, giuridico, urbanistico" (paper presented at the V V AISU Conference *Out of the Ordinary: the City Facing Disasters and Exceptional Occurrences*, Rome, September, 8-10, 2011).

⁸ Charles Diehl, *Salonique* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1920), 8. See also N. M. Gelber, "An Attempt to Internationalize Salonika," *Jewish Social Studies*, 17 (1955): 105-120.

⁹ Iordanidou, "1900-1922: Salonicco in transizione."

¹⁰ A *han* is a large courtyard building serving as a warehouse for goods in transit, in many cases also functioning as a hostelry for dealers.

¹¹ "La mort di Salonique," *L'Illustration*, September 8, 1917, 252-254.

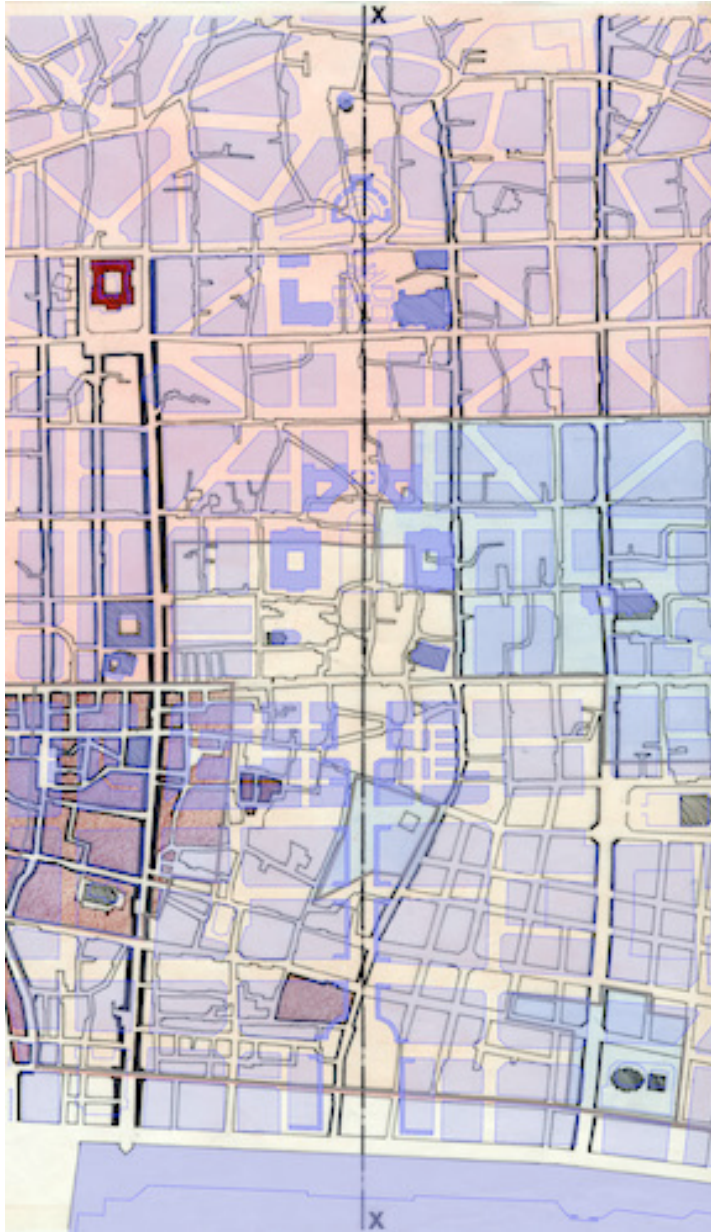


Fig.1
*Ernest Hebrard's "Civic Axis" superimposed onto previous urban pattern
(reconstruction by C. Pallini)*

The lost synagogues

All scholars remark on the gravity of this loss¹² and agree on one point: the Jews of Salonika formed a federation of small, independent communities, each with its own language, traditions, and liturgy, each synagogue expressing a tangible sign of autonomy and playing a *poleogenetic* role in fostering settlement and cohesion of the social edifice. The term *poleogenetic*¹³ refers to settlement processes at the origin urban life. These may range from migratory movements to new behavioral patterns, particularly in “fringe areas” where the boundary between a consolidated built environment and new forms of settlement is constantly and contradictorily being redefined. In this perspective, architecture may be interpreted as a basic expression of civilization, catering for primary needs of the populations concerned.

How then, the fact that the Jews of Salonika formed “a federation of communities” was reflected in architecture? Considering their different origins, might it be that, seen as a whole, their historic synagogues represented varying expressions of Jewish art? Or might this have been the case originally, seeing that the synagogues had several times been rebuilt on account of frequent fires in the city?

The Jews recreated 15th-century Spain in Salonika¹⁴ but, due to restrictions imposed by the Ottoman authorities as to site and size, in the 19th century their synagogues were limited to simple rectangular halls, often in side roads concealed from public view, in no way comparable to the *Mudéjar*-style structures of Toledo, Cordoba, and Segovia.¹⁵

Travelers’ descriptions agree on this point. The French missionary Jean-Baptiste Souciet, who visited Salonika in 1734, wrote that the Jews had at least thirty synagogues, some

¹² Albertos Nar, *The Synagogues of Thessaloniki – Our Songs* (Salonika: Jewish Community of Salonika, 1985) 74-76 [in Greek]. Nicholas Stavroulakis and Timothy DeVinney, *Jewish Sites and Synagogues of Greece* (Athens: Thalos Press, 1992), 12-17. Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe. Architecture, History, Meaning* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 3. Elias Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia* (Athens: Gavrielides, 1997). Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, “The Architecture of Thessaloniki’s Synagogues during the Turkish Period,” in *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe*, ed. Ioannis K. Hassiotis (Salonika: Institute of Balkan Studies, 1997), 303-326. Elias Messinas, *The Synagogues of Greece* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 2011).

¹³ Composed by the Greek words πόλις (city) and γένεσις (genesis). The term *poleogenetic* is currently used by archaeologists and experts of urban development in late antiquity, as well as by historians of early-Medieval cities. Some critics have commented on Henri Pirenne’s *poleogenetic* argument expressed in his book *Medieval Cities. Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956).

¹⁴ Albertos Nar, “Social Organisation and Activity of the Jewish Community in Thessaloniki,” in *Queen of the Worthy. Thessaloniki History and Culture*, ed. Ioannis K. Hassiotis (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1997), 198.

¹⁵ See Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 18-43.

quite big and all the others badly built and “located along the streets.”¹⁶ The German Paul Lindau (1888) noted that, though very powerful, the Jewish community had no synagogue striking for its grandeur or its architectural value. The historian and archaeologist Oreste Tafrali (1910-11) considered the monuments of Salonika’s Jewish community as insignificant. The French traveler Marius Bernard (1913) observed that no traces of the old Arab-style synagogues were left in Salonika, and that none of them had preserved its original form; he described them as low, rectangular, severely simple buildings, except for recently-built examples which embodied features of oriental architecture.¹⁷

The lost synagogues in their urban contexts are of particular significance for an understanding of whether or not any forms of settlement and architectural expression can be attributed to the Sephardi Jews.¹⁸ These synagogues may have held important clues to explain the evolution of three different types: the prayer hall on the first floor with the *heikhal*¹⁹ and *tevah*²⁰ facing each other at the east-west ends of a wide aisle;²¹ the prayer hall on the ground floor and the interior divided into a number of bays by columns supporting arches; and the interior divided by four columns grouped roughly in the center of the room to include the *tevah*.²² With every building destroyed, any surviving photographic material is of fundamental importance, such as travel descriptions, maps of the city before the fire or hypothetical maps locating the synagogues.²³ Following this line of thought, an attempt has here been made to cross-check available sources (including experiments with representation techniques) primarily focusing on the late-15th century synagogues built by refugees from Spain and

¹⁶ See Aimé Martin, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses concernant l’Asie, l’Afrique et l’Amérique avec quelques relations nouvelles des missions et des notes géographiques et historiques* (Paris, 1838), 74-79.

¹⁷ The quotations of travelers’ words are from Nar, *The synagogues of Thessaloniki*, 76. In his work *Kesef Mishah*, the Jewish philosopher Joseph Caro (1488-1575) wrote that in the past synagogues were built with the *bimah* in the center so that everyone could hear. at his times instead they were built with the *bimah* at one end, as they were so small that everyone could hear. It may therefore be argued that the shape and configuration of the buildings changed not only because of Ottoman restrictions, but also because the smaller size of Jewish communities. It may be added that early synagogues were often housed inside abandoned buildings in the re-populated city centers. Also, fires played a preventive role in any architectural ambition.

¹⁸ Maurice Cerasi, “Vicini e vicinato. La psicologia degli insediamenti sefarditi,” in *Sefarad*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli (Como: Dell’Oca, 1996), 157-186.

¹⁹ Cabinet or other container for the scrolls of the Pentateuch (Torah), in the wall facing toward Jerusalem, also defined as *ark* or *aron*.

²⁰ Desk used during the reading of the Torah and raised platform from which the Torah is read and the service is conducted (railing, canopy or decoration associated with it is also defined as *tevah*, or *bimah*).

²¹ To be found in areas of strong Venetian influence.

²² Common in areas of predominantly Sephardi influence.

²³ Such as those prepared by A. Nar and by E. Messinas.

Portugal and, secondly, on early-20th century synagogues, where the question of “style” assumed particular importance. The three case-studies focus on the central synagogue: the *Talmud Torah* (1520-1917), the *Beth Saul* (1917-1943), the *Monastirioton* (1943-present day).

Waves of Refugees, Generations of Synagogues

Salonika Jews before the Ottoman conquest

It is believed that the first Jews reached Macedonia in the days of Darius I (513 B.C.E.), followed by others during the Persian Wars (480 B.C.E.).²⁴ Salonika was founded around 315 B.C.E. by Cassander who had assumed control of Macedonia after Alexander’s death.²⁵ To form the city, inhabitants of twenty-six small towns and villages at the head of the Thermaic gulf were relocated where the foothills of Mt. Chortiatis reach the sea and the wide coastal plain, and where the southernmost route from the Adriatic Sea across the Balkan peninsula meets the north-south corridor along the Morava-Vardar valleys.

From 145 to 135 B.C.E new waves of Jewish refugees arrived from Alexandria and Palestine;²⁶ in the first century the autochthonous inhabitants lived alongside the Alexandrians and others of the same religion from nearby Amphipolis and Apollonia: Greek was their common language and their main religious building was the *Etz Haim* (Tree of Life) synagogue, whose location and foundation date is still debated.²⁷ When, between 1168 and 1173, Benjamin of Tudela stopped at Salonika on his way to Jerusalem, he found many Greek Jews (Romaniotes) there, as well as small communities of Italian and Sicilian Jews.²⁸

The synagogues of Salonika can be grouped by generations, each reflecting a fresh wave of refugees. [Fig.2]

²⁴ Rena Molho and Vilma Hastaoglou Martinidis, *Jewish Sites in Thessaloniki. Brief History and Guide* (Athens: Lycabettus Press, 2009), 1.

²⁵ After Alexander’s death in 323 B.C.E., his generals - Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy and Antigonus - fought to divide the conquered territories. Cassander took control over Macedonia, while Ptolemy reigned over Egypt in Alexandria. Antigonus took Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Lysimachus took Thrace and its surroundings, extending his power over Asia Minor after defeating Antigonus at Ipsos (301 B.C.E.).

²⁶ Joseph Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, vol. I, *La communauté Romaniote* (Salonika: Librairie Molho, 1935).

²⁷ Some scholars believe that *Etz Haim* stood close to the shores of the Thermaic gulf. Others believe that it must have been within the city walls. Until the great fire of 1917 the synagogue was situated near the seafront in the Etz Haim quarter. Whether or not the site of Etz Haim in the Ottoman period coincided with that of the original Jewish settlement is still disputed.

²⁸ Molho and Hastaoglou Martinidis, *Jewish Sites*, 3.

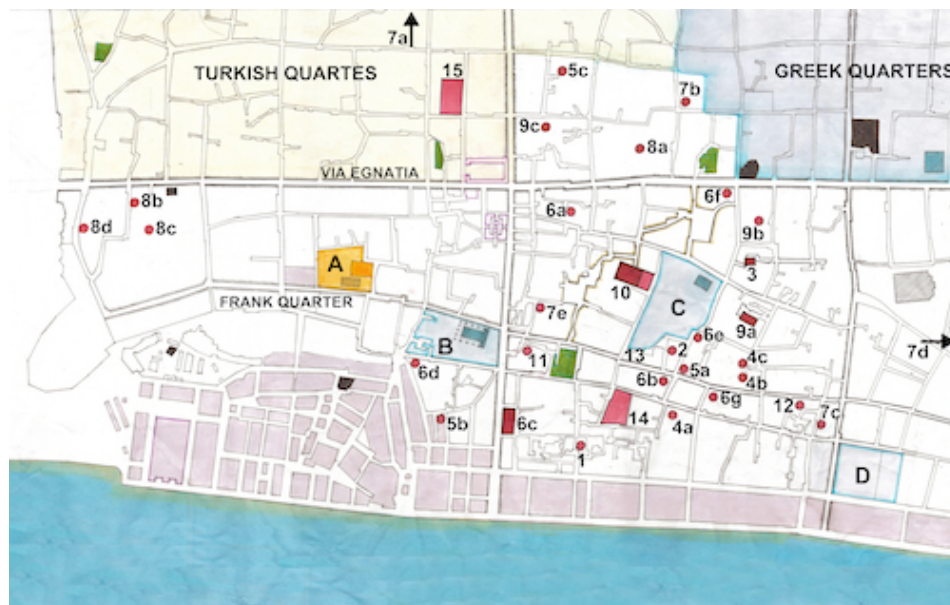


Fig.2

Map of the lower city with the area occupied by the Jewish quarters (reconstruction by C. Pallini): Plan de Salonique, dressé et dessinée par l'Ingenieur en Chef de la Municipalité de Salonique A. Wernieski, 1880, and Albertos Nar's Map of the Jewish quarters of Thessaloniki before the fire of 1917, ca. 1980.²⁹

It is still doubtful whether the *Ashkenaz* synagogue (also named *Varnak* or *Synagogue of Nuremberg*) dates back to 1376 or to 1470-75. During this 100-year period Jews had continued to arrive: from Freiburg, Speyer, Strasbourg, Worms, Frankfurt, Mainz (1348-59, the years of the Black Death); from Hungary (expelled in 1376); Austria (expelled in 1420-21); Cologne (1424); Swabia, Rhein, Steiermark, Moravia and Hungary (1430);³⁰ Strasbourg (1438); Ausburg (1440); Erfurt (1458); Bavaria (1470).³¹ The synagogue named

²⁹ *Synagogues*: 1. Etz Haim (II century B.C.E.); 2. Askenaz (1376); 3. Provenca (1394); 4a. Italia Yashan (1423, rebuilt in 1896); 4b. Italia Hadash (1582); 4c. Italia Shalom (1606 rebuilt in 1890); 5a. Sicilia Yashan (1423); 5b. Sicilia Hadash (1562); 5c. Beit Aaron (1575); 6a. Gerush Sefarad (1492); 6b. Kastilia (1492); 6c. Mayor (1492); 6d. Mayor Sheni (mid 16th century); 6e. Catalan Yashan (after 1492); 6f. Catalan Hadash (mid 16th century); 6g. Aragon (1492); 7a. Lisbon Yashan (1510); 7b. Lisbon Hadash (1536); 7c. Portugal (1497); 7d. Evora (1512); 7e. Yahia (1560); 8a. Neve Shalom o Calabria Yashan (1497); 8b. Calabria Hadash o Yishmael (1537); 8c. Kiana (1545); 8d. Neve Tsedek (1550); 9a. Pulia (1502); 9b. Otranto (1537); 9c. Estroug (1535); 10. Talmud Torah (1520); 11. Mograbis (1578); 12. Shalom (1606). *Other Jewish institutions*: 13. Chief Rabbinate; 14. Alliance Israélite Universelle Boys' schools; 15. Alliance Israélite Universelle Girls' schools. *Sacred precincts*: A) Catholic church and French consulate; B) Greek-Orthodox complex of St. Menas; C) Monastery of St. Theodoras; D) Greek-Orthodox Metropolis and hospital

³⁰ After Salonika was taken by the Ottomans in 1430 an open letter was addressed to the Jews encouraging them to settle in Turkey, where there was no fear of persecution, see Isaac-Samuel Emmanuel, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique* (Paris: Librairie Lipschutz, 1936), 46-47.

³¹ Emmanuel, *Histoire des Israélites*, 46-47. Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. I, 107-110.

Provincia – a term then indicating a cultural area covering southern France from the Garonne to the Alps – was established in 1394 by Jews expelled from France by Charles VIII.³²

Once a flourishing center of trade where merchants from Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Ancona, Bari and Trani had their quarters and/or businesses,³³ in the early 15th century Salonika experienced the turbulence that preceded the actual end of the Byzantine Empire. Following occupation by Venice (1423-30), when the city was all but an island in an Ottoman sea, many Jews from Sicily and Venice moved there and built the *Sicilia* and *Italia* synagogues.

These Jewish groups had little in common. Greek Jews, for the most part espoused traditions based on the Palestinian Talmud, while the European Jews generally followed the Babylonian Talmud.³⁴ The Romaniotes spoke Greek, the Ashkenazi Jews spoke Yiddish, the Provence Jews French and the Italians spoke various forms of that language; Italian and Provençal Jews had little difficulty over integration though this was not so for the Romaniotes and Ashkenazim.³⁵

Thessaloniki morphing into Selanik

On March 29, 1430 Sultan Murat II took possession of Salonika, the great military base of the Byzantine emperors. Situated at the end of the Thermaic gulf, easily accessible from inside the Balkan Peninsular and Central Europe, the city also lay on the *Via Egnatia*, connecting the Adriatic to Constantinople.³⁶ Following years of war, depopulation and impoverishment, Salonika was almost deserted and the harbor no longer in use. With a view to restoring life to the city, Murat II seized houses from the townsfolk to find shelter for the Greek and Turkish colonists then arriving.³⁷ The first Ottoman census carried out in central Macedonia (1478) showed that all the Jews of Salonika had been forcibly moved to Constantinople in the wake of the city's conquest (1453); these same documents bear evidence to a mixed settlement pattern, with twenty-

³² Nar, *The Synagogues*, 31-32.

³³ Diehl, *Salonique*, 12. Emmanuel, *Histoire des Israélites*, 48.

³⁴ Mention should also be made of the presence of Karaite and Rabbinical Jews.

³⁵ Stavroulakis and DeVinney, *Jewish Sites*, 162.

³⁶ The *Via Egnatia* was an extension of the *Via Appia* eastward. Crossing the Adriatic at Brindisi it reached Durazzo and Valona. The two routes met in the valley of the River Shkumbin then diverged near Elbasan. Arriving at the lakes of ancient Pelagonia, the *Via Egnatia* followed a series of valleys towards the plain of Salonika. Some 30km before reaching the city, the *Via Egnatia* met the great road running along the Vardar and Morava valleys, linking the Danubian plains with the Thermaic gulf.

³⁷ Apostolos Vacalopoulos, *A History of Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1972), 74.

seven new Muslim communities partly occupying each of the ten pre-existing Christian quarters.³⁸

A greater change, however, occurred with the arrival of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal following edicts promulgated by the Roman Catholic Monarchs in 1492 and 1496.³⁹ Salonika at that time had only a small population: a handful of Greeks, the Turkish garrison and some Turkish families from nearby Yannitza, a small colony of merchants from Venice and Marseilles, and two or three thousand Jews.⁴⁰

At midnight on August 2, 1492, when Columbus embarked on his expedition to the New World, his fleet departed from the relatively unknown seaport of Palos as the shipping lanes of Cadiz and Seville were encumbered with Sephardi Jews expelled from Spain. During their journey they had been told that the Sultan would allow them entry: this massive immigration of Sephardim provided Sultan Bayezid II with an opportunity to bring Jews back to the cities⁴¹ from where they had been deported by his father Murat II.⁴²

“Towards the end of the summer of 1492, on approaching the coast of the Thermaic gulf, crowded on the decks of their ships, they passed alongside the dark mass of the Great Cape, leaving the snow-capped peaks of Mount Olympus on their left and the muddy delta beyond which the silver ribbon of the Vardar stretches back into the plain. From within the gulf they entered a bay that seemed like a quiet lake. With avid eyes they sought the promised city.”⁴³

The number of exiles disembarking in Salonika was initially very small but increased progressively in the following years with new arrivals from Sicily and Southern Italy (1493), Calabria (1497), Portugal (1497), Provence (1497) and Puglia (1502).

³⁸ Heath W. Lowry, “Portrait of a City: the Population and Topography of Ottoman Selanik (Thessaloniki) in the Year 1478,” in *Studies in Deftology: Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. Analecta Isisiana IV* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1992). See also Joseph R. Hacker, “Ottoman Policy toward the Jews and Jewish Attitudes toward the Ottomans during the Fifteenth Century,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis (New York – London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), vol. I, 117-126.

³⁹ What Leroy defines as *aventure séfaraide* had started in the 14th century with internal migrations to Portugal and Navarre. Cf. Beatrice Leroy, *L’aventure séfaraide* (Paris: A. Michel, 1986).

⁴⁰ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. II, *La communauté Sefardite, Période d’installation* (Salonika: Librairie Molho, 1935), 14-15.

⁴¹ To Salonika, Patras, Arta and Thebes in Greece to Edirne, Tokat and Amasya in Anatolia, to Safed and Jerusalem in Palestine, to Damascus and to Egypt.

⁴² Sultan Bayezid II sent the Ottoman Navy to Spain in 1492 in order to evacuate the Jews safely to Ottoman lands. He also sent out proclamations throughout the Empire to ensure a welcome for the refugees. Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World Since 1260: The Making of a Global Community* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 82.

⁴³ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. II, 11.

The Ottoman census taken in 1519 reported a population of 29,000, and showed that over a period of 41 years, during which it tripled, nearly 54% of Salonika's inhabitants were Jews.⁴⁴ Between 1493 and 1536 over 20,000 Jews and Marranos⁴⁵ poured into the city.

Settlement patterns

Scholars from many disciplines,⁴⁶ have frequently commented on the “religious pluralism” of the Ottoman Empire, explaining how the relationship between the Muslim ruling class and non-Muslim communities was regulated by the *millet* system,⁴⁷ according to which the “People of the Book” (non-Muslim adherents to faiths which have a revealed scripture, namely Greek Orthodox, Jews, Armenians, Syrian Orthodox, and Catholics) were granted a fairly high margin of freedom and administrative autonomy. Within this framework, confessional communities acted as one entity in terms of taxation and were collectively responsible for administering law and establishing their own welfare and educational institutions. Even if the Jewish *millet* was formally recognized as late as 1835, Jews enjoyed de facto privileges similar to the Greek-Orthodox population, and were directly represented by the Chief Rabbi (*Hakham Bashi*) who held wide legislative powers for enforcing the laws governing their presence in the Empire.

The *millet* system was somehow reflected in the urban topography of most Ottoman cities, each being a mosaic of *mahalle* – districts of established residents, each with a religious building and community institutions, administrative units governed by a *Muhtar*. Although Salonika underwent dramatic changes following the Ottoman conquest⁴⁸ and massive immigration of Sephardim, the city nevertheless retained its Hellenistic structure featuring main roads set at right angles to mark off and link the three main ethno-religious quarters, each one facing onto the *Via Egnatia*.⁴⁹ [Fig.3]

⁴⁴ From 10,144 to 29,220 inhabitants, see, Lowry, “Portrait of a City,” 73.

⁴⁵ Jews who had converted to Christianity.

⁴⁶ Xavier de Planhol, *Minorités en Islam* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997). *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds., Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, 2 voll. (New York: Holmes & Maier Publishers, 1982).

⁴⁷ The Arabic word *millet* means “nation.”

⁴⁸ Many churches were converted into mosques or housing units, while others were demolished to provide building materials, Oreste Tafrali, *Topographie de Salonique* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1913).

⁴⁹ Along the *Via Egnatia* the conquering Ottomans had built the first public structures, namely the Bey Hammam (1444), the bedesten (1455-59), and the Hamza Bey Mosque (1467-68).



Fig.3
Ethno-religious quarters at the beginning of the 20th century.⁵⁰
(drawing by C. Pallini)

While Greeks assembled in the south-eastern area of the Hippodrome and the Palace of Galerius, and Turks occupied the upper town, the Jews were concentrated in the partially-deserted lower town adjacent to the port and market areas.⁵¹

This initial separation among the congregations became attenuated over time during a slow process of permeation and alteration to boundaries, while the chief community institutions of the original group based close to the market remained consistent.

According to Joseph Nehama, Gilles Veinstein and Argyres Petronitis the Jewish master builders introduced and established in Salonika and other Macedonian cities the Toledo-style house with an interior patio or *cortijo* around which the spare, simple

⁵⁰ 1. Jewish quarters; 2. Greek-Orthodox quarters; 3. Turkish quarters; 4. Jewish cemeteries; 5. Turkish cemeteries.

⁵¹ Research carried out by Dr. Hekimoglou on old property deeds shows the core of the Sephardic Jewish settlement. According to the 1913 population survey, organized by the Greek authorities, approximately 88 % of the residents in this area were Jewish. A map prepared by Dr. Hekimoglou show this banana-shaped area which included dozens of synagogues. The older they were, the bigger their plot. This is because when Sephardim arrived in Thessaloniki, the population density of the city was very low and there was enough land unoccupied. See kehilotsalonika.blogspot.com.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

dwellings were built.⁵² The Jewish districts therefore featured inner courtyards where most of the daily activities were conducted:

“In olden days, The Jews of Salonika lived in houses which surrounded large courtyards called *cortijos*. The houses formed a kind of square around the courtyard. Facing the courtyard were open galleries, with roofs held up by wooden pillars. At the back were the living quarters with small grilled windows overlooking the street. (...) Each house would give refuge to a family comprised of many souls (...) To house these new generations it was necessary to construct room after room, reducing the size of the courtyard with new extensions, and sometimes even to overflow into the street. (...) The Jewish dwellings always had a modest and inexpressive exterior, sometimes even a shabby look. The *cortijos* were not completely devoid of foliage and fig trees, pomegranate trees, vines and jujube trees gave welcome shade during the warm summer. In the spring, jasmine and roses emitted a delicious perfume which permeated the air.”⁵³

[Fig.4 / Fig.5]

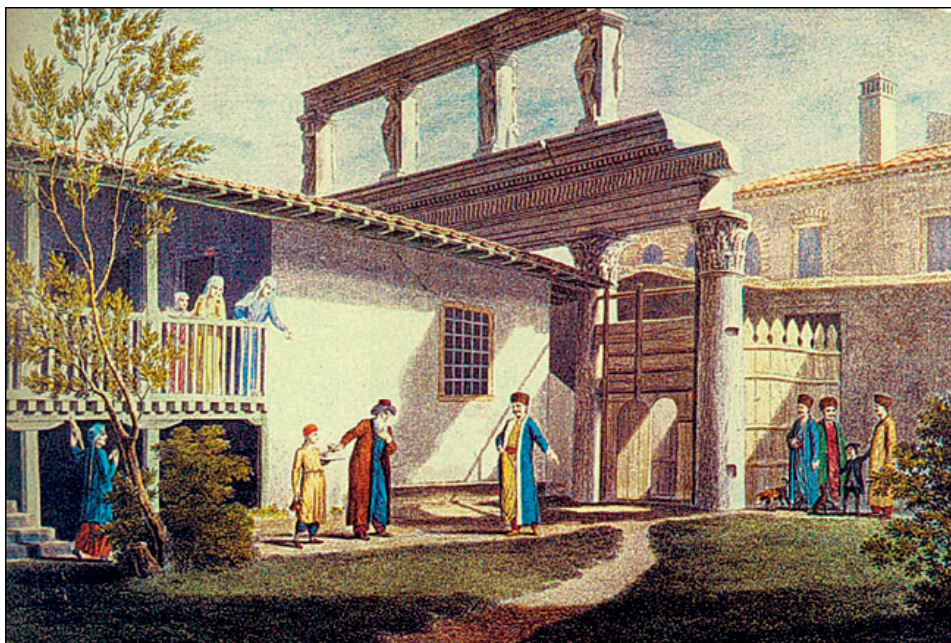


Fig.4

The Idol Arcade at Salonika, from J. Stuart and N. Revett, The antiquities of Athens, 1794 (Private collection, Salonika). This is an example of a cortijo which was formed by the conjection of multiple Jewish dwellings around an interior courtyard where most daily activities were carried out.

⁵² Argyres Petronidis, “Jewish Masons and Architects,” in *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe*, 399-400.

⁵³ Michael Molho, *Traditions & Customs of the Sephardi Jews of Salonica* (1950. New York: Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, 2006).



Fig.5
A dye-works in cortijos of Salonika, early 20th century

The Poleogenetic Role of Synagogues

The Jews who arrived from the Iberian Peninsula found there the old Romaniote synagogue *Etz Haim* and the more recent synagogues *Askhenaz*, *Italia* and *Sicilia*. Those who had originally come from Spain considered themselves more civilized and refined than the other immigrants and were inclined to remain aloof. They came from many areas and, like the Italian Jews, tended to group together by home town, city, or area of origin. Thus new Jewish communities became established and new synagogues were founded: *Gerush Sefarad* (Expelled from Spain), *Castilia*, *Catalan*, *Aragon* and *Mayor* (Majorca). Others were founded by Portuguese Jews (*Portugal*, 1497 or 1525; *Lisbon*, 1510; *Evora*, 1512 or 1535) and by Jews from Calabria (*Calabria*, 1497) and Southern Italy (*Puglia*, 1502). The 1519 survey reports the 16 Jewish neighborhoods⁵⁴ that recreated 15th-century Spain in Salonika.

The high intellectual level of the Sephardim resulted in cultural and economic revival. The city and its port acquired fresh life from the manufacturing activities initiated by the new arrivals. Of these activities weaving later became an established industry⁵⁵ and

⁵⁴ The population comprised 6870 Muslims, 6635 Christians and 15,715 Jews. The 16 Jewish quarters were Rogoz, Aya Sofia, Kaldirgoc, Pulia, Leviye, Aguda, Yeni Havli, Baru, Findik, Kadi, Bedaron, Külhan, Salhane, Tophane, Malta, Etz-Haim, see, Nar, *The Synagogues of Thessaloniki*, 42. For Jewish quarters see Vassilis Dimitriadis, *Topography of Salonika during the Ottoman Period 1430-1912* (Salonika: Society of Macedonian Studies, 1983, in Greek).

⁵⁵ See Robert Mantran, *Storia dell'Impero Ottomano* (Lecce: Argo, 1999), 244.

soon of interest to the state. The Jews were especially skilled in wool spinning, an industry imported from Spain which spread to all localities around the Thermaic Gulf. Having once been granted the right to obtain raw materials at less than market prices and the exclusive rights to produce the fine woollen cloth used for garments worn by the Janissaries (1578), Salonika was soon swarming with *telares* (textile workshops); each terrace and each *cortijos* had its workshop: the whole city functioned like a huge spinning factory, dripping with water that gushed from under the door-sills and painted its streets in a variety of colours.

In the Salonika of the 16th century Jewish communities functioned like little “states” inside the city, diverse in language, rites, traditions and cultures, their respective synagogues expressing a tangible sign of autonomy. In this mosaic of *cité synagogales*⁵⁶ the various Jewish congregations shared a self-determined body of laws covering religious and social issues (e.g. how new settlers were to be divided among existing congregations, how the Marranos were to be treated and how commercial activities were to be directed).⁵⁷ Led by a Rabbi (a role which in many cases passed from father to son) and guided by the Assembly (attended only by those who paid community taxes), the synagogue acted as the *soul* of each group and formed the core of each neighborhood, the focal point in public celebrations and daily toil, business, haste. For immigrants it was a corner of “home.” To preserve the customs and rituals peculiar to their respective congregations, each synagogue had its own school, library and a seminary for higher studies, a philanthropic foundation and a burial society. The synagogue functioned as a center for administration of the law and the economy; butchers, bakeries and dairies were nearby, all supplying food in the way required by the Jewish religion.

When visiting Salonika in the mid-16th century, the French geographer Nicolas de Nicolay mentioned eighty synagogues,⁵⁸ all of which had until then maintained their individual identities. Each synagogue was at one and the same time a religious and a civic structure, a historical and cultural landmark, a fundamental element of the “sentimental topography” shared by all members of the community. When a synagogue was destroyed by fire it was rebuilt on the same sacred site.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. III *L'âge d'or du Sephardisme Salonicien* (Salonika, Librairie Molho, 1936), 82.

⁵⁷ Emmanuel, *Histoire des Israélites*, 117-132.

⁵⁸ Nicolas de Nicolay, *Navigazioni et Viaggi nella Turchia* (Antwerp, 1576), 197.

⁵⁹ Nehama *Histoire des Israélites* vol. VII 768.

Synagogue Architecture: Three Case-Studies

A question still unsolved

Can any form of settlement, building type or stylistic feature be attributed to the Sephardi Jews? When presenting the proceedings of an international meeting on Sephardi architecture, Petruccioli raised this point.⁶⁰ Since, as we know, the Sephardi language and culture remained alive longer than those of other Jewish groups, we could assume that their imprint was preserved in the form and features of Ottoman cities in cases of gradual assimilation. This would particularly apply to Salonika, where the Sephardim formed the largest ethnic group and where Sephardi culture and economic influence were most firmly established. Architecture, however, still had a marginal role in Jewish culture, and Jews had always adapted themselves to a variety of architectural and constructional traditions in different contexts, especially in the Ottoman cities where the distribution of trades among ethnic groups clearly marked Jewish indifference towards the art of building (or that builders' guilds were closed to the Jews).⁶¹

Having emphasized the importance of the relationship between the *heikhal*, the *tevah* and the minimum space for the congregation in the prayer hall, Nitzan-Shiftan⁶² explains how the synagogue of Spanish rite changed from a basilica-type layout to a single hall, and to the four-column type in particular (an adaptation to forms of local architecture), recalling that, in the Sephardi liturgical tradition, the bifocal space between *heikhal* and *tevah* had been adapted to the plan of the basilica, creating the four-column type in the smaller synagogues. This layout, with the *tevah* in the center, was the most common in the Ottoman Sephardi synagogues which, in most cases, included the school and refectory both inside a walled courtyard (*cortijos*). These considerations are echoed by Messinas, who refers to published sources who connect the *Mudéjar* style to the early Salonika synagogues.⁶³ In Greek cities under Ottoman rule (as also in Venice, Ferrara or Izmir) their external aspect differed little from neighboring houses, and followed the basilica-type plan.⁶⁴ According to Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, the absence of monuments belonging to Salonika's Jewish community should not be ascribed to a lack of architectural tradition, but rather to the harsh circumstances of Ottoman rule.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Attilio Petruccioli, "La deriva dei continenti," in *Sefarad*, 5-16.

⁶¹ Maurice Cerasi, "Vicini e vicinato," 157-186.

⁶² Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, "The Sephardic Synagogue: the fusion of Sephardic Jewish Tradition with Ottoman Architectural Forms," in *Sefarad*, 129-144.

⁶³ A style of architecture and decorative art partly Islamic (from the Moorish and Mozarabic traditions) and partly Gothic, that evolved in the Iberian Peninsula reconquered by Christianity.

⁶⁴ Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika*, 30

⁶⁵ Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou "The Architecture of Thessaloniki's Synagogues," 305-306.

Nehama wrote that the first temples built by the Jews who arrived from the Iberian Peninsula –*Gerush Sefarad* (the very first), *Catalan*, and *Lisbon* – included “architectural embellishment” recalling the synagogues of Toledo, Cordoba and Lisbon, adding that all four Portuguese synagogues featured a highly elaborate interior decoration.⁶⁶

Established by the Jews from Aragon and Galicia, the *Aragon* synagogue⁶⁷ was the largest and richest in town until the early 18th century; comprising a circular courtyard, it was laid out so that one part of the congregation stood on the spacious *tevah*, another next to the *heikhal* and a third at the center of the prayer hall, surrounded by wooden columns.⁶⁸ The *Catalan* synagogue was established by refugees from Catalonia, mostly from Barcelona and Girona. It may be added that the *Provincia* synagogue was one of the most significant, and the *Italia* synagogue was located next to a source of water known as the *Madresika del Agua* (mother of waters).

The Anglo-Jewish author and historian Elkan Nathan Adler said, on visiting the historic synagogues of Salonika in 1898:

“I arrived in Salonica on Friday, the 23^d September, 1898, and attended the synagogue on Sabbath (...) Most characteristic is the marble flooring in these Schools. The seats are movable benches and sometimes chairs. The Sicilians possess quite gorgeous purple or crimson armchairs (...).

But each form is but the evidence that years ago the Salonicans, like the Persians of today, squatted on the ground as they prayed. Accommodation for the female synagogue-goers was none too abundant. The galleries, or corners reserved for them, are scrupulously trellised or curtained off from the indiscrete gaze of opposite sex. They were just like the shelters provided for the Harem beauties in the theatre boxes at Cairo. (...) Of all the synagogues that of *Aragon* seemed the most picturesque. It is large, and the Almemar is a lofty dais at the extreme west end, gallery high. The Ark is also highly placed and many elders sit on either side on a somewhat lower platform. *Italia* was most striking, for the synagogue is but half-built, the floor not yet bricked in, and the galleries of rough lathes, and yet the women climbed up the giddy steps on the scaffolding, and the hall was full of worshippers. The sacred appurtenances were borrowed from diverse Chevras, and, of course, there were lots of lofty thirty-hour candles.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. III, 96-97.

⁶⁷ Synagogues with the same name are to found in Istanbul, Edirne (Adrianople), Kastoria, Bitola (Monastir).

⁶⁸ Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika*, 66.

⁶⁹ Adler, *Jews in Many Lands*, 142.

This description is integrated with photographs of the *Catalan* and the *Talmud Torah* synagogues in ruins after the fire of 1890: strongly built square piers without capitals linked by Islamic ogee arches, which were decorated with a cornice in the form of a recessed arch. These rubble masonry structures were very similar to public buildings erected by the Ottomans soon after the conquest.

The following is an attempt to describe the three central synagogues of Salonika, namely the *Talmud Torah* (1520-1917), the *Beth Saul* (1917-1943) and the *Monastirioton* (from 1943 onwards).

The multi-purpose Talmud Torah

According to E.N. Adler the lost *Talmud Torah* synagogue was “one of the most ancient and authentic of the community.”⁷⁰ Any city or town of importance in the Ottoman Empire had its own Talmud Torah (I am taught the Law), but none was equal to that of Salonika.

“Here it represents *l'œuvre des œuvres*, the glory of all the synagogues, under constant care. (...) It was a town hall, a temple, a school complex, an hostelry and a center for philanthropy. In the 16th century the Talmud Torah had to cater for multiple and varied collective needs, growing progressively as the institution concentrated all vital forces of the Jewish population of Salonika.”⁷¹

The establishment of the *Talmud Torah* in 1520 (whose council, which included members from other synagogues, changed every three years), marked the beginning of a “federal policy” aimed at promoting cultural unification of Jewish communities.⁷² Education was the *raison d'être* of the new institution; while primary schools were also attended by orphans and children of the poor, its secondary school was the best in Salonika by the end of the 17th century. A symbol of the unity of the Jews, the Talmud Torah provided lodging for travelers and a soup kitchen, as well as handling the release of Jewish prisoners and receiving and re-homing refugees.⁷³

During the golden age of Sephardism (1536-93),⁷⁴ when Salonika became a textile center, the *Talmud Torah* was also equipped for textile manufacture, functioning as a permanent market/meeting place for artisans and for workers seeking employment.

⁷⁰ Ibidm, 144.

⁷¹ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. III, 104.

⁷² The problems of integration between the different Jewish communities attenuated only in the course of time (and Spanish tended to prevail as a common language).

⁷³ New waves of Sephardim reached Salonika between 1536 and 1560, followed by others during the first half of the 17th century, from Provence, Poland, Italy and Hungary. In 1568 Marranos expelled from Portugal, France and Italy took refuge in Salonika, Sarajevo, Sofia, Belgrade and Istanbul. In 1578 a group of refugees from North Africa established the Mograbis synagogue.

⁷⁴ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. III and IV.

Initially consisting of makeshift buildings, the *Talmud Torah* “microcosm” was destroyed and rebuilt many times. A depiction of a festival celebration shows the interior as a “messy *caravanserai* resembling a noisy fairground”⁷⁵ still in existence before the reforms of 1884.

“It was built in the Arabic style, with a large square building on two floors, and it opened up to an interior courtyard. (...) The first floor was the prayer house. It consisted of a large corridor, a kind of gallery open to sun and wind, and enclosed by a balustrade. 26 pillars, corresponding to the numerical value of the name of God, *Yahveh*, held up the roof, forming a series of arcades around to the patio. It was here that the faithful would come together during the services. For the congregation, there were graduated benches in the form of an amphitheater along the four sides of the patio. If there were a large gathering, the patio itself would be used. The ground floor was not open to the central patio. In this large hall there were benches where the classes were organized, but no divisions between them. It was in this hall that people came to hear the decision of the rabbinical council in matters concerning the Jewish community.”⁷⁶

Visiting Salonika around the mid-17th century, the Turkish scholar and writer Kâtib Çelebi suggested visiting the *Talmud Torah* as it housed many libraries and was staffed by over 200 teachers, as well as having approximately one thousand pupils, from children to adult men. The Scottish traveler William Lithgow (1609) wrote that Salonika had been converted into a university for the Jews where the Jewish clergy was educated to be sent to different cities.⁷⁷

The metamorphosis of the *Talmud Torah* took place towards the end of the 19th century, alongside the westernization and economic development of Salonika, a process largely led by the Jewish community. Following an educational reform promoted by the local Alliance Israélite Universelle,⁷⁸ the *Talmud Torah* complex was reorganized in 1880 and partly rebuilt in 1884:

“30 classrooms opening onto a corridor were built around a vast courtyard. A smaller building was set up to offer lodging to homeless people and travelers who were passing through.”

⁷⁵ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. VII, 649.

⁷⁶ Molho, *Traditions & Customs*, 114-115. Molho’s description is echoed by J. Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. III, 108.

⁷⁷ Both quotations are taken from Nar, *The Synagogues of Thessaloniki*, 52-53.

⁷⁸ Established in Paris in 1860, the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) aimed for cultural emancipation of the Jews by spreading the French language and culture. Active in Salonika since 1873, the AIU purported to preserve the specific nature of Jewish culture and its integration in the Greek world, its home since 1912.

In 1898 the *Talmud Torah* complex was again destroyed by fire, and rebuilt with the help of many donors (1899-1904). The new synagogue was praised by Joseph Klausner (1910) for its ample size and fine colonnades:

“Though different from European synagogues, the result is wonderful. Here is the oriental atmosphere and originality, holiness but also simplicity.”⁷⁹

The newspaper *L'Indépendant* (1915) stated that this was the largest synagogue built by the Salonika Jews since their expulsion from Spain, and was also the most significant in the city in terms of both size and architecture.⁸⁰ The rectangular central hall, 38 meters long, 24 meters wide and with 14 meter high ceilings, was surrounded by a portico with arches and columns of Tuscan marble; the balcony of the women's gallery ran the length of the walls.⁸¹ The entrance led straight onto the *tevah*, also of marble, that extended towards the center of the hall. The *Talmud Torah*, a complex of 1600m², had its own courtyard around which the schools and chief community institutions were built.

“Here beat the heart of the Jewish community; this explains why the Turkish Baths was called Yahudi Hammam, even if it was mostly used by the Turks.”⁸²

The seat of the Arch-Rabbinat, the Jewish market, the ambulatory of the *Bikour Holim* foundation (1888) and the gymnasium of the *Maccabi* athletic club, founded in 1908, were all close by. The schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Eli Modiano, 1908-10), where young Jews were educated according to French culture, lay a few blocks to the south along a road parallel to Frank Street.⁸³ Research carried out by Evangelos Hekimoglou shows that the plot of the Talmud Torah, was the greatest one of intra-muros city. Extending for 4,200m² at the core of the Jewish quarter, the Talmud Torah complex included a number of synagogues and internal yards, a school and an asylum, as well as the bakery for unleavened bread.⁸⁴ [Fig.6 / Fig.7]

⁷⁹ The quotations of travelers' words are from Nar, *The synagogues of Thessaloniki*, 76.

⁸⁰ Nar, *The Synagogues of Thessaloniki*, 53.

⁸¹ Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika*, 78-79.

⁸² Nar, *The Synagogues of Thessaloniki*, 52.

⁸³ Now Tsimiski Street.

⁸⁴ I wish to thank Dr. Hekimoglou for sharing this information, and some of his research material, in a meeting we had in Athens on 3 March 2014.



Fig.6

Ruins of the Talmud Torah in 1898 (from E.N. Adler, Jews in Many Lands, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1905), 144.

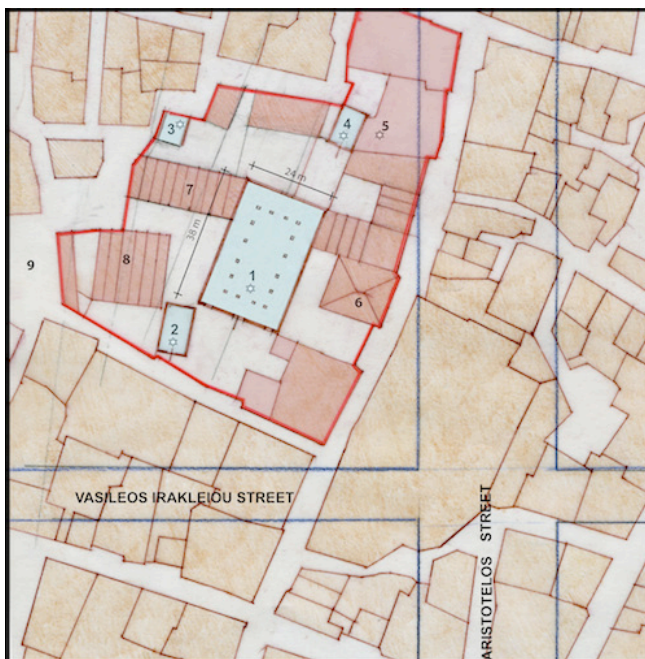


Fig.7

Map of the Talmud Torah complex in 1917 (reconstruction by C. Pallini based of material shown in the panels of the exhibition A city in search of its kehilot; invisible cultural monuments of Salonika). Aerial photos taken after the fire of August 1917 show that most buildings forming the Talmud Torah complex were still standing.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ 1. Talmud Torah synagogue; 2. Sicilia Yashan synagogue; 3. Mograbis synagogue; 4. Lisbon Hadash synagogue; 5. Lisbon Yashan; 6. School; 7. Asylum; 8. Bakery for unleavened bread; 9. Rabbinate Square.

The Beth Saul synagogue

The Beth Saul synagogue was established in 1898 by Fakima Modiano in memory of her husband Saul, one of the leading figures in the city's economic growth of the 19th century, whose activities ranged from international trade to banking, while constantly supporting community schools and institutions.⁸⁶ Saul Modiano (1817-1883) was a *Francos*, a Jew whose ancestors had taken refuge in the port of Livorno during the exodus from Spain, moving to Salonika halfway through the 17th century; *Francos* were not subjects of the Ottoman Empire and therefore enjoyed the favorable regime of capitulations.⁸⁷

The synagogue was designed by the Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli⁸⁸ who at that time was also working on reconstruction of the Catholic church in Frank Street (1897-1900). A few years later Poselli was to build the new mosque for the Dönmehe⁸⁹ (1902) and the Armenian church (1903).

Poselli was sent to Salonika by the Ottoman government, to design state-sponsored buildings which were to 'cloth in stone' the major reforms: clearly visible from various viewpoints and combining principles of symmetry and regularity, these western-inspired structures were to give a progressive modern aura to a centuries-old city.

While the earlier synagogues were modest structures along blind alleys, or placed in upstairs rooms, but always an integral part of the urban fabric including auxiliary spaces and community institutions, the Beth Saul stood alone in a garden next to the new family mansion (Villa Ida, V. Poselli, 1886-90).

Built for private use inside a private estate, the synagogue was oriented with its main facade towards the *Avenue des Campagnes*, but was quite distant from the public eye.

Running parallel to the coast road outside the eastern walls, this road served the Hamidiye district: a specifically Levantine suburb "similar to the Island of the Princes at Istanbul,"⁹⁰ where the most luxurious villas and a number of consulates were to be found, and where the traditional separation by religion and ethnic provenance had come to an end. [Fig.8/ Fig.9]

⁸⁶ Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites*, vol. VII, 701-705.

⁸⁷ Capitulations were bilateral agreements between the Ottoman Sultan and the states that traded with the Empire, under the terms of which juridical foundations existed to allow the presence of foreign traders at the arrival and departure ports used for international commerce. Such individuals enjoyed conditions of extraterritoriality and were subject to the jurisdiction of their own consul or ambassador in the event of any judicial dispute whether between foreigners or between foreigners and natives.

⁸⁸ Vassilis Colonas and Lena Papamattheaki, *Architect Vitaliano Poselli. His Works in 19th Century Salonika* (Salonika: Paratiritis, 1980) [in Greek]. Vassilis Colonas, "Vitaliano Poselli. An Italian Architect in Thessaloniki," *Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* (1990): 162-171.

⁸⁹ A community of Jews converted to Islam whose origin dates back to the messianic movement of Sabbetai Zevi in the second half of the 17th century.

⁹⁰ Jovan Cvijić, *La Péninsule Balkanique* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1989), 200.

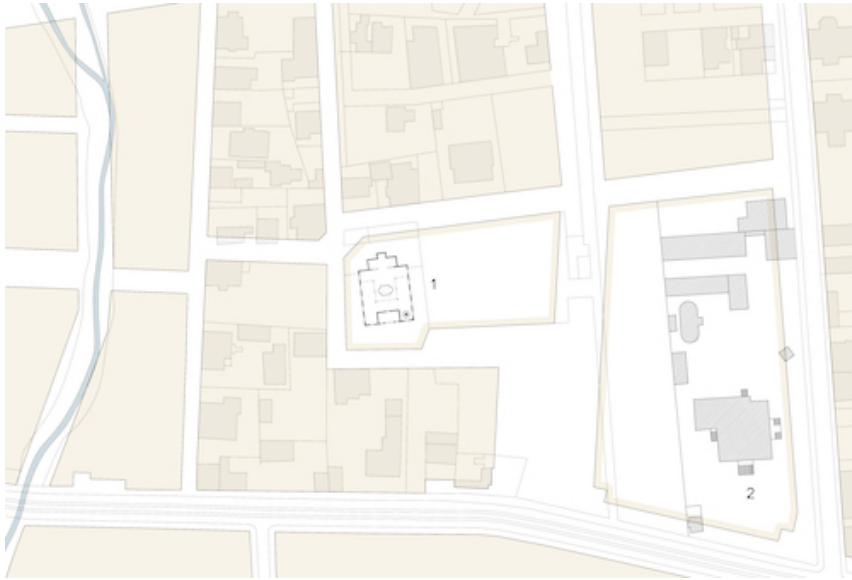


Fig. 8

The area of Beth Saul synagogue (1) and Villa Ida (2). Drawing by A. Scaccabarozzi based on a 1925 map published in V. Colonas and L. Papamatthaiakis. The Architect Vitaliano Poselli – His Work in Thessaloniki, 80.



Fig. 9

Map of the eastern suburbs of Salonika in the period 1912-1917 (Authors' reconstruction).⁹¹

⁹¹ 1. White Tower; 2. Headquarters of the 3rd Imperial Corps (V. Poselli, 1903); 3. Lycée Français (1906); 4. Greek Hospital (E. Ziller, 1892); 5. Hirsh Quarter (1890); 6. Russian Hospital (1907); 7. Jewish Hospital (P. Arrigoni, 1907); 8. Matanoth Laevionim soup-kitchen (1901); 9. Allatini brickworks; 10. Villa Jacob

The Beth Saul synagogue was a western-inspired building marking a clear break with the past.⁹² Its main facade was characterized by side bays and a central section with a curved gable at the top of which stood the Ten Commandments carved in marble. With its horizontal bipartition, round-headed and circular windows alternating with strips of Tuscan pilaster, the exterior combined elements of Romanesque and Neoclassical architecture, clearly revealing the inner layout: a three-aisled prayer hall with a women's gallery above the entrance and side aisles; a generous space accommodated the *heikhal* and the deep platform in front of it, adjacent to which was the elaborately decorated *tevah*. [Fig.10]

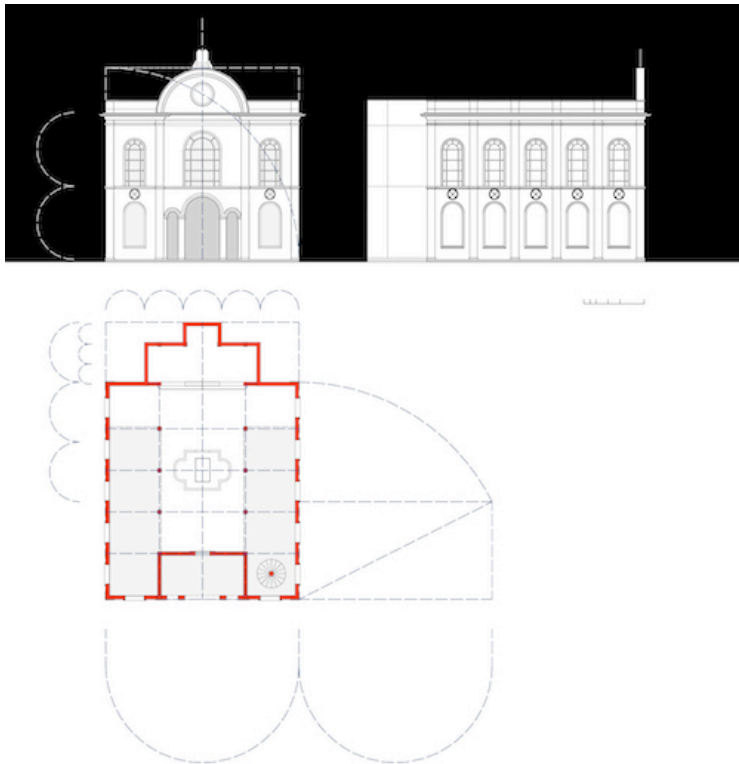


Fig.10

Beth Saul synagogue. Drawings by A. Scaccabarozzi based on photos published in E. Messinas, The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia, 87-89.

Modiano (E. Modiano, 1910-11); 11. Jewish community institutions; 12. Villa Ida (V. Poselli, 1886-90); 13. Beth Saul synagogue (V. Poselli, 1898); 14. New Mosque (V. Poselli, 1902).

⁹² According to Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou, the recessed entrance loggia of the Beth Saul was a typical and popular feature of 19th-century European synagogues. In addition, the two Tables of the Law surmounting the pediment were a clear sign of the new rights granted by the Ottomans to non-Muslims subjects. See, Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou "The Architecture of Thessaloniki's Synagogues," 310.

While bearing witness to a phase of cultural transition,⁹³ when the Jewish community was also fraught between tradition (integration into the Ottoman Empire) and innovation (assimilation into French culture), the Beth Saul synagogue reflects a pursuit for modernity and an expression of cultural identity.⁹⁴ E.N. Adler remarked that: “at Fakima Modianos (...) Kippur-lights were *Europeanized* by having donors’ visiting cards neatly attached to them with silk ribbons, as in our way with floral offerings.”⁹⁵

The Monastirioton synagogue

After the Balkan wars Salonika was incorporated into the Greek State and separated from the territories that had formed its economic hinterland. Despite unease created over the new reality, local and international Jewry soon regarded the Hellenic government with increasing confidence, so much so that Jews from Monastir, Istip and Stroumitza moved to Salonika. It was the fire of 1917 which dealt the Jewish community a blow from which it never recovered: the historic synagogues were destroyed, as well as *midrashim* and community buildings, the old library of the *Talmud Torah* and the modern schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. According to the 1916 census the Greek population was already prevalent, and became even more so after 1923 when the city received 88,612 Greek-orthodox refugees from Asia Minor.⁹⁶ The city center was a *tabula rasa*, and the suburbs were swarming with a new wave of refugees, living in what were little more than wood or tin huts according to their area of origin: Cesme Rysion, Istanbul, Varna, Konya, Izmir.

The Monastirioton synagogue was founded in such turbulent years, with a donation made in 1925 by Ida Aroesti from Monastir in memory of her husband, Isaac, for the Jews from Monastir who had settled in Salonika.⁹⁷ The synagogue was built in the fire

⁹³ Rena Molho, *The Jews of Thessaloniki 1856-1919* (Athens: Themelio, 2001, in Greek). Paul Dumont, “La structure sociale de la communauté juive de Salonique à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle,” *Revue historique*, 263/2 (1980): 351-393.

⁹⁴ While the three-part synagogue facade with the center part rising highest was usually intended to recall the facade of Solomon’s Temple, the curved gable may be a reference to the rue de la Victoire synagogue in Paris (1861-74), initially supposed to unite the Ashkenazi and Sephardi rites. This synagogue inspired many later ones, including that of Florence designed by Mariano Falcini, Vincente Micheli, and Marco Treves (1874-82). It may be added that the curved gable is a distinguishing feature of Renaissance churches built by Mario Codussi in Venice. The quest for a Jewish style of architecture, closely linked to the official policies defining the Jews’ place in society, led to a series of experiments in most European cities. Egyptian, Romanesque and *Rundbogenstil*, Byzantine, Moorish-Islamic, Gothic, and other styles considered appropriate in a particular country or district.

⁹⁵ Adler, *Jews in Many Lands*, 140-142.

⁹⁶ At the end of the Greco-Turkish war (1919-22) and under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne (July 1923) 1.3 million Christians were forced to cross the Aegean Sea in exchange for half a million Muslims, crowding Salonika and its territory. Data on population have been taken from Domna Iordanidou, “1900-1922: Salonico in transizione tra il dominio ottomano e l’annessione allo stato ellenico” (<https://uoi.academia.edu/ΌμναΙορδανίδου>).

⁹⁷ Rena Molho and Vilma Hastaoglou Martinidis, *Jewish Sites*, 33-34.

zone, on a plot in the Turkish quarters, now zone V of Hébrard's reconstruction plan. The new town-planning scheme gave the Greek government an opportunity to "Hellenize" Salonika, making radical changes to the old system of ethno-religious quarters⁹⁸ by combining principles of urban composition (urban axes of symmetry as functional units, diagonal streets favouring circulation, regular geometrical shapes for squares and open spaces) with a Neo-Byzantine architectural style recalling the city's pre-Ottoman past.

Close to the site of a large school complex,⁹⁹ the Monastirioton synagogue was to fit into the newly designed urban blocks along Syngrou Street featuring a neo-Byzantine style, possibly following the aesthetic aspects of the reconstruction plan [Fig.11].

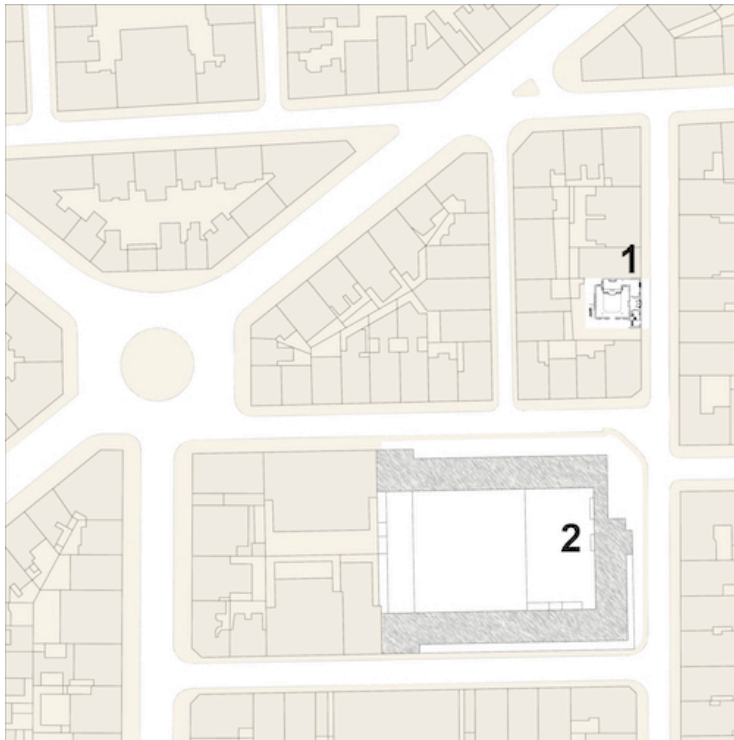


Fig.11

*The area of Monastirioton synagogue (1) and Vardari school complex (2).
(Authors' reconstruction).*

⁹⁸ The reconstruction plan was accompanied by legislation specially designed to meet the case, according to which property owners in the fire zone were to be dealt with collectively. On the reconstruction of Salonika see Alexandra Yerolimpos, *The Reconstruction of Thessaloniki after the Fire of 1917* (Salonika: University Studio Press, 1995, in Greek).

⁹⁹ The Vardari school complex designed by Thukidids Valentis (1930-32), included two primary schools and a high school.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

It was placed at the center of a plot cut out from an urban block, the square prayer hall (16.6 x 16.6 meters) surrounded on two sides by a narrow courtyard and, on the other two, by auxiliary spaces. The fine building designed by the Jewish architect E. Levy combined the four-column type layout with that of the basilica-type: the main longitudinal axis of the prayer hall lay parallel to the street, with four columns dividing the space into a central nave with lateral aisles; the Π-shaped women's gallery ran along three sides of the hall with graduate benches above the aisles. The main façade on Syngrou Street was divided into three vertical compartments, the central one marked by a recessed porch with three entrance bays and a curved gable as a crowning feature. From the porch, men could gain access to the *midrash* or to the prayer hall, while women had a separate entrance to the staircase leading to the gallery and reception room on the upper floor [Fig.12].

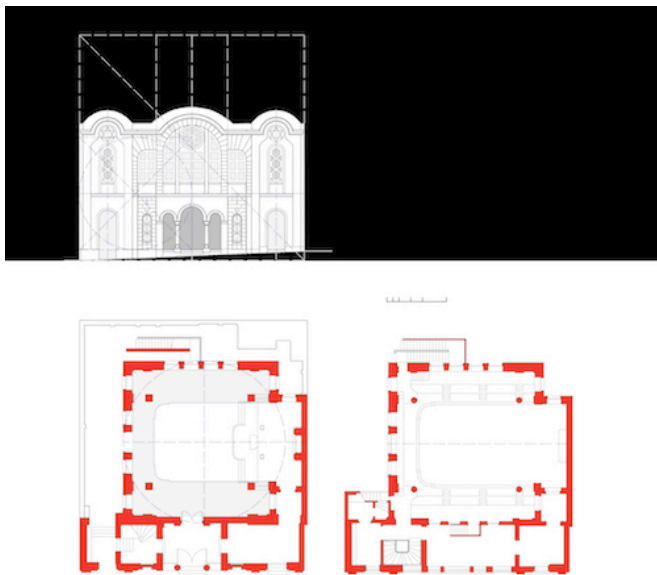


Fig.12

Monastirioton synagogue (E. Levy, 1925-27). Drawings by A. Scaccabarozzi based on maps and photos published in E. Messinas, The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia, 101.

The *tevah* and the *heikhal* formed part of a grand composition: a tribune-like platform which reflected a tradition in Salonika's synagogues.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ See, Stavroulakis and DeVinney, *Jewish Sites*, 182-183.

During the German occupation the synagogue was occupied by the Red Cross and was therefore spared. Since destruction of the Beth Saul in 1943, it has served as Salonika's central synagogue.

Conclusion

The list of synagogue names may perhaps suffice to show that no question raised by research, even one on architecture, can be answered without considering the complex settlement processes which have led to Salonika being called the *city of the Jews*,¹⁰¹ or *mother of Israel*.¹⁰² A study of its synagogues therefore raises many questions: firstly, the exceptional nature of this “city of refugees” comes to the fore in the *longue durée*,¹⁰³ already a port in its ever-changing anthropological makeup, even before any *ad hoc* infrastructure had been established.

Other issues concern the way architecture and urban design have played a part in implementing strategies “of eradication and dispossession, erasing one uneasy past to revive another; it may be added that, paradoxically, the radical changes imposed by the reconstruction plan proved the importance of the historic synagogues as documents to the Jewish presence in Ottoman Salonika, expressing as they did a centuries-old “right of citizenship.”

Along this line of thought, one key aspect of this study – certainly worthy of a more scholarly work – indicates the importance of understanding the lost early-Ottoman city, its frequent reconstruction and space-based pluralism.

The topography of synagogues (real and symbolic), the multi-purpose *cortijos*, or the *caravansera*-like Talmud Torah, show some traits of a city where the structural role of architecture has been revealed in the most dramatic of circumstances, completely different from those of the “modern city” merely requiring easy access and a functional spatial organization.

In a regime characterized by a blending of cultures, by interpositions from near and far, even the idea of context presents several aspects. This may be extended to include the institutional set-up, so entirely different from that prevailing in Europe, but also communities of such variety as to make simplification impossible. The idea of context acquires solidity the more we consider the original features of the city, and how these

¹⁰¹ Veinstein, *Salonique 1850-1918. La “ville des Juifs,”* 11-13

¹⁰² In 1537 Salonika was called *Mother of Israel* by Samuel Usque, a Jewish poet from Ferrara.

¹⁰³ A period long enough to identify the main agents responsible for changes in alternating social, political and economic factors. In 1958, resuming a subject already treated in *La Méditerranée*, Fernand Braudel published an important article in the *Annales* entitled “La longue durée,” a category of historical periodization by means of which substantial factors of change can be examined without being confused by the visible but superficial turmoil of human activity.

have reacted to exceptional processes of settlement, as in cases where a ceaseless inflow of populations and cultures has taken place.

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Her focus on architectural heritage, planning and landscape dates back to her PhD thesis - a comparative study on the *Sacro Monte* at Varallo, the *Vittoriale* at Gardone Riviera, the *Scarzuola* at Montegabbione – and is fundamental in current research.

Her key publications include: Scaccabarozzi, “Gerusalemme sulle Alpi. Progetti per il Sacro Monte di Varallo,” *Sacri Monti*, 2 (2010): 114-134; Scaccabarozzi “Due Sacri Monti laici: il Vittoriale e la Scarzuola” in *L'architettura del Sacro Monte: storia e progetto*, eds. I. Balestreri and M. Meriggi (Milano: Libraccio Editore, 2012), 90-105.

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**‘The Jews have got into trouble again...’
Responses to the Publication of *Cronaca Israelitica* and the Question of
Jewish Emancipation in the Ionian Islands
(1861-1863)**

by *Dimitrios Varvaritis*

Abstract

In late August 1861 Giuseppe Nacamulli published the first issue of his bi-lingual (Greek-Italian) newspaper Ισραηλιτικά Χρονικά/Cronaca Israelitica thereby inaugurating the first Jewish newspaper in the Greek speaking world. The appearance of a newspaper that advocated for full civil and political rights for Ionian Jews did not go unnoticed and provoked numerous responses of varying degrees of hostility and indeed praise. This article examines these responses within two broader contexts, namely the political and social ferment of the final years of British rule and the long-term, and often tense, co-existence of Jews and Christians on the islands.

- **Introduction**
- **Venetian Legacies and British Realities: Ionian Jewry during the British Protectorate**
- ***Cronaca Israelitica*: the Newspaper and its Publisher**
- **Responses to the *Cronaca Israelitica***
- **Conclusion**

Introduction

In 1861 – the year in which the bi-lingual Ισραηλιτικά Χρονικά /*Cronaca Israelitica* first appeared – a Jewish citizen of the British-administered Ionian Islands could not vote in parliamentary elections and could not practice as an Advocate (*Avvocato*) at the Bar, but could appear before the Islands’ lower courts merely as an Attorney (*Interveniente*). Jewish merchants were excluded as official assessors in commercial litigation. The Islands’ 1817 Constitution did not guarantee freedom of religion for Jews but it explicitly provided that “forms of religion” “other” than Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity were “tolerated.”¹ Jews were thus able to worship in relative freedom and as well as maintain their long-established right of internal self-government. The Code of Civil Procedure provided that Jews were not obliged to appear before any

¹ Chapter I Article 3 & Chapter V Section I Article 1-3, Constitutional Chart of the United States of the Ionian Islands, in *Statistics of the Colonies of the British Empire*, ed. Robert M. Martin, (London: Allen and Co, 1839), 258-270.

court on the Sabbath or during specific high holy days.² In accordance with the widely practiced custom of petitioning the islands' rulers the Jews could (and did continually) petition the British authorities for redress of their grievances. Furthermore an Ionian Jew could, as a consequence of a set of constitutional reforms that introduced freedom of the press, publish a newspaper. And indeed the publisher, Iosif Nachamoullis (Giuseppe Nacamulli), of *Ισραηλιτικά Χρονικά Cronaca Israelitica* (hereinafter *Cronaca*) undoubtedly took advantage of this reform in order to publicise the issue of civil emancipation of the Islands' Jews but also broader themes concerning Jewish history and culture. The following is not however an analysis of the content of the *Cronaca*. The existing albeit limited literature³ concerning the *Cronaca* has already summarised its content. And despite the breakthrough made in recent years with the publication of a major study of the Jewish history of Greece as well as a history of antisemitism in Greece,⁴ no attempt has yet been made to incorporate the *Cronaca* – especially its reception and impact – into the historiography of Ionian Jewry let alone Greek Jewry. This article aims to address this lacuna by presenting and contextualising a number of the manifold and predominately public responses to the newspaper's appearance and content. By its very existence and advocacy for full Jewish civil rights the *Cronaca* provoked responses that engaged with fundamental questions concerning not only Jews and Judaism but also their status in an imperial polity caught up in a process of change and passage from colonial to national rule. These responses thus merit close inspection, if for any other reason, than for what they tell us about the closing phase of British rule in the Ionian Islands.

² Article 36, *Codice di procedura civile degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Ionie* (Corfu: Tipografia del Governo, 1844)

³ While Noutsos' analysis places the *Cronaca* within a survey of Modern Greek Intellectual history, the other literature listed below provide the main factual details concerning the *Cronaca*'s publication and content: Panagiotis Noutsos, *Komvoi sti sizitisi gia to ethnos* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2006), 310-315; Grigoris Kasimatis, "Oi Evraioi tis Eptanisou kai i Enosis" [The Jews of the Ionian Islands and their Union with Greece], *Nea Estia* 21 (1937): 724-735; Rafael Frezis, *O Evraikos typos stin Ellada* [The Jewish Newspaper Press of Greece] (Volos: Ores Publications, 1999), 162-171; Rafael Frezis, "Israilitika Chronika/Cronaca Israelitica," *Egkyklopaideia tou Ellinikou Typou* [Encyclopaedia of the Greek Newspaper Press], (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Research Foundation, 2008), 4v, 2: 461-462; Pearl Preschel, *The Jews of Corfu* (New York: New York University, 1984 Unpublished PhD Thesis), 73; Kostas Dafnis, *Oi Israilites tis Kerkyras* [The Jews of Corfu] (Corfu: n.p., 1978), 16. A comprehensive study of the content, reception and readership of the *Cronaca* as well as Nacamulli's subsequent newspapers, *La Famiglia Israelitica* (1869) and *Mosè Antologia Israelitica* (1878-1885), is a pressing desideratum. Similarly a study on the establishment and evolution of his printing press, revealing named *Korais* after the seminal exponent of the Greek Enlightenment Adamantios Korais, would greatly enrich the existing historiography on book printing and the press in the Ionian Islands.

⁴ Katherine Fleming, *Greece A Jewish History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bernard Pierron, *Evraioi kai Christianoi sti neoteri Ellada* [Jews and Christians in Modern Greece] (Athens: Polis Editions, 2004).

Venetian Legacies and British Realities: Ionian Jewry during the British Protectorate

When, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Campo Formio⁵ the French Republican forces formalised their rule over the Ionian Islands the Islands' resident communities of Jews were not newcomers. The two main communities, those of Corfu and Zante⁶ had a continuous and long-established presence stretching back to the period of Angevin rule in Corfu (1267-1386) and, in the case of Zante, at least to the beginning of Venetian rule (1482-1797).⁷ The community of Corfu was initially made up of Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews but following the expulsion of Jews from the Kingdom of Naples (1540-1541) and the subsequent settlement in Corfu of a Sicilian and Puglian Jews as well as the arrival in the early 17th century a number of Ponentine Jews, the demographic composition of the Corfiot community began to change. The Italian or "Puglian" element became numerically dominant and the cultural and linguistic differences between these elements gradually solidified leading to the creation of separate synagogues, lay councils and even burial societies and cemeteries. In the case of Zante the community was much smaller and although initially of quite diverse origins, following the end of the War of Candia (1669) a number of Romaniote Cretan refugees arrived. Their arrival together with the subsequent erection in 1699 of a synagogue named *Candiotto* suggests that the Romaniote element came to dominate the community and impose its customs and practices on the whole community. This diverse

⁵ Under Article 1 Paragraph 5 of the treaty complete sovereignty of the former Venetian territories of the Levant passed to France, *Gazette Nationale*, 37, 7 Brumaire An 6/28 October 1797, 147-148.

⁶ For an overview of the history of Ionian Jewry see Antony Seymour, "Les séfarades de Corfou et des autres îles ioniennes," in *Les Juifs d'Espagne Histoire d'une diaspora*, ed. Henry Méchoulan (Paris: Liana Levi, 1992), 332-355. A recent issue of the *Mediterranean Historical Review* (27/2, 2012) contains the latest research on the various communities of the Venetian Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite their age the following works still remain relevant because of their use of original sources some of which no longer exist: Ioannis Romanos "I Evraiki koinotita tis Kerkyras" [The Jewish community of Corfu], *Chronika (Kentrikou Israiltikou Symvouliou Ellados)* 174 (2001): 8-21 (Reprint of 1891 *Estia* edition); Moise Caimi, "Corfu," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901-1906), 12v, 4: 269-273; Leonidas Zois, "Oi Evraioi en Zakyntho" [The Jews in Zante], *O Israelitis Chronografos*, 8 (1900) 1-3; 9 (1900) 2-3; 10 (1900) 6-7; Spridon de Viazis, "I Evraiki koinotis en Zakyntho epi Enetokratias" [The Jewish community of Zante during the period of Venetian rule], *Parnassos* 14 (1891-1892) 624-637; 662-670; 723-735.

⁷ Jews were also to be found living in Cephalonia and Leucas at various points in their respective histories. In the case of Cephalonia a Jewish presence can be traced to at least the early 19th century although the literature also points to an even earlier presence, while for Leucas Jews appear to have resided during the island's period of Ottoman rule (1479-1684). For further details: Aggelos-Dionysios Debonos, "Oi Evraioi tis Kefalonias" [The Jews of Cephalonia], *Chronika (Kentrikou Israiltikou Symvouliou Ellados)* 46 (1982): 5-9; 47 (1982): 8-12; Aggelos-Dionysios Debonos, "Evraikes oikogeneies stin Kefalonia" [Jewish families in Cephalonia], *Chronika (Kentrikou Israiltikou Symvouliou Ellados)* 115 (1991): 9-16; Anthony Seymour, "Leucas (Santa Maura): a forgotten Jewry," *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies* 7 (1990): 21-22.

Jewish population lived alongside a Christian majority that although predominately Eastern Orthodox also included a number of Roman Catholics and from the early 19th century a small number of Protestant missionaries.

Given the numerous and repeated attempts, by way of Christian petitions direct to the Venetian authorities, to impose sartorial, residential and other restrictions⁸ on the islands' Jews it would be fair to state that the coexistence of Christians and Jews was not always harmonious and indeed it would be easy to conclude that Jewish life during Venetian rule was particularly arduous and oppressive. Such an interpretation assumes that the Jews were only victims of Christian hostility and that the former lacked any initiative in the management of their affairs. Matters between Christians and Jews were somewhat more complex and this complexity is well illustrated with the example of Jewish residency restrictions. Although the Corfiot Christians managed as early as 1406 to persuade the Venetian authorities to impose certain restrictions on Jewish ownership of real estate, restrictions that in any case were strengthened a hundred years later in 1524 with an order limiting Jewish residence to a specific district of the town,⁹ the fact that the Christians continued to petition Venice throughout the 16th century (1532, 1536, 1542, 1546, 1596)¹⁰ is significant and should not be overlooked. It should not be overlooked because it demonstrates not only Christian hostility towards their Jewish neighbours but also a certain sense of defiance, perhaps even confidence, on the part of Corfiot Jews in their contravention of the law. One may speculate as to the reasons for the Jews' contravention of this law but when the example of residency is juxtaposed with other legal measures affecting Corfiot Jewish life such as the exemption from the 1571 edict of expulsion of Venetian Jewry,¹¹ the 1578 Ducal confirmation of the community's "ancient privileges,"¹² as well as the introduction in 1614 of harsh penalties for the crime of desecration of Jewish cemeteries,¹³ one begins to observe certain patterns concerning Christian-Jewish relations. These relations can be characterised by the interplay of both Jewish initiative and agency as well as the latent and enduring hostility of the Christian majority. Supplementary to this interplay is the role played by the Venetian rulers. The latter had to balance the competing (and often divergent) interests of a Christian

⁸ Within the first decades of Venetian rule the Christians of Corfu sent an embassy to Venice demanding that the latter authorities recognize their "rights" to "stone" Jews. And although the authorities did not grant this particular demand they did however issue an order (1406) requiring all Jews to wear, on pain of fine, a marker of yellow cloth on their outer garments. Furthermore they issues another order prohibiting Jews from owning real estate within the city and suburb of Corfu with the only exception being homes already owned. Romanos, "I Evraiki koinotita tis Kerkyra," 16.

⁹ Romanos, "I Evraiki koinotita tis Kerkyras," 18.

¹⁰ Elli Yiotopoulou-Sisilianou, "Oi Evraioi tis Kerkyras epi Venetokratias" [The Jews of Corfu during Venetian rule], *Chronika (Kentrikou Israilitikou Symvouliou Ellados)* 230 (2010): 5-6.

¹¹ Romanos, "I Evraiki koinotita tis Kerkyras," 14.

¹² Caimi, "Corfu," 270.

¹³ Romanos, "I Evraiki koinotita tis Kerkyras," 19.

majority against a Jewish minority. Such a balancing act was not easy to achieve because it needed to accommodate Jewish rights while simultaneously not alienate the Christian majority.

These competing interests did not dissipate with the end of Venetian rule and the complicated passage of the islands through French Republican, Russo-Ottoman, French Imperial and eventually British rule. Indeed of the numerous cultural and political legacies bequeathed by the Venetians to subsequent rulers was the tense and often hostile coexistence of Christians and Jews in the islands. This coexistence was particularly tense at times of prolonged crisis and instability. The arrival of the French Republican forces in 1797 initiated such a crisis. The French abolished the long-established political structures of the Ionian *ancien régime* and sought to include Jewish participation in the formal political process through the appointment of Jewish delegates to the Provisional Government of Corfu. These developments in turn provoked a conservative reaction that soon manifested itself and thus during one of the first sessions of the Provisional Government (29 June 1797), “a tailor,” according to Ermanno Lunzi,¹⁴ put forward a proposal to exclude the Jewish representatives in order to “protect the [Christian] religion.”¹⁵ This proposal led in turn to a raucous commotion whereby a crowd that had gathered outside the meeting hall ejected the Jewish representatives and subjected them to abuse and physical violence. Eleven years later, at the time of the second period of French rule, the Corfiot Chief of Police issued a public order (2 October 1808) stipulating that “from now on”¹⁶ nobody shall ‘in any way either by deed or word’ disturb the “peace and security” of those “confessing the Jewish religion.”¹⁷

It is thus in the context of the above inter-communal relations that the British commenced their Protectorate of the Ionian Islands. And given the abovementioned incidents it should not be particularly surprising that within less than a year of the formal handover of Corfu to the British (21 June 1815) that the latter authorities issued an order¹⁸ forbidding the movement of Jews outside the *Evraki* (Jewish district) of Corfu from Good Friday to the Tuesday immediately following Easter. Another even more strongly worded proclamation followed a year later informing the Corfiot population that anyone who ‘insulted’ or harmed Jews and their property would be immediately

¹⁴ Ermanno Lunzi, *Storia delle Isole Ionie sotto il reggimento del Repubblicani Francesi* (Venezia: Tipografia del Commercio, 1860), 44.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Romanos, “I Evraiki koinotita tis Kerkyras,” 21.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Proclamazione,” 19 April 1816, Ionian State Records, File 682, Subfile 23/209, Corfu Prefecture Archives, Corfu.

imprisoned on the charge of disturbance of peace.¹⁹ Thus from the outset of British rule, the British like the French before them, had to face the prospect of inter-communal and inter-religious tensions and take some preventative measures. The latent antisemitic hostility that these proclamations evidence remained a constant throughout the Protectorate manifesting itself subsequently on several occasions, one case being in Cephalonia in the 1820s when in early 1823 some of the local Christians attempted to raise a riot against the island's small Jewish community.²⁰ Another occasion was the desecration of the Jewish burial ground of Corfu in the early months of 1861. In response to this desecration the head of the Orthodox Church of Corfu Metropolitan Athanasius published an officially endorsed encyclical letter²¹ in which he called on the members of his flock to halt acts that are "contrary to the Gospel and Christianity."²²

The antisemitic hostility exemplified in the events of 1823 as well as the cemetery desecration also found expression in a number of laws that in their practical application discriminated against Jews. The laws in question were three, those governing the Legal Profession (1845), Elections (1849) and the appointment of professional assessors drawn from the merchant body in the islands' commercial courts and tribunals.

As part of their modernising agenda of 1830s and 1840s the British colonial authorities reformed the Court system, revised the old legal codes and extended the electoral franchise to certain sectors of the male population hitherto excluded from the political process. It is in this context one should view the provision of the 1845 Law²³ concerning the Professions of Advocate (*Avvocato*) and Attorney (*Interveniente*). Article Two of this law stated that all future advocates had to be inscribed in the official list of advocates maintained by the judicial authorities. But in order to qualify for inscription on the official list one had to be a Christian. Article Three listed all the pertinent qualifications one of which clearly stipulated that a candidate 'must be of the Christian faith.'²⁴ The other qualifications concerned age, Ionian citizenship, ability in the Greek language, good character, possession of a degree in Law and practical work experience – qualifications that given the situation of some members of the Jewish elite could have been easily achieved. That said this law did provide some exceptions. Article One

¹⁹ "Proclamazione," 28 March 1817, Ionian State Records, File 682, Subfile 23/239, Corfu Prefecture Archives, Corfu.

²⁰ William Napier, *The life and opinions of General Sir Charles Napier* (London: John Murray, 1857) 4v, 1: 322, 327.

²¹ "Notice," May 27 / June 28, 1861, *Efimeris Episimos tou Inomenou Kratous ton Ionion Nison*, 1-2.

²² Ibid.

²³ N. 20, "Act of Parliament to establish a Regulation with regard to the exercise of the Profession of Advocate and Attorney in the United States of the Ionian Islands," 30 May 1845, *Acts passed by the Eighth Parliament of the United States of the Ionian Islands during its First Session* (Corfu: Government Printing Office, 1845).

²⁴ Ibid, Article 3, Paragraph 3.

permitted all advocates already inscribed in the list to continue as before. Thus the law intended to discriminate against all new Jewish advocates. Furthermore it must not be forgotten that the same law did not discriminate against Jews in its provisions concerning the lower profession of Attorney. In short the law sought to limit the lucrative position of Advocate to Christians only by narrowing the entry requirements for new advocates.

In a similar fashion Article One of the 1849 Electoral Law²⁵ provided that for an Ionian citizen to qualify as an elector he had to be at least 21 years of age, be domiciled in the Ionian Islands, possess either property (of various kinds) or a University degree or practice a profession, be able to read and write, could not be a bankrupt or convicted felon and finally he had, through birth or naturalisation, be an Ionian citizen and profess the Christian religion. On the basis of such a law it is clear that the intention of authorities that legislated this reform was to exclude Jewish men from the broadened franchise and thereby deny them the right to elect representatives to Ionian Parliament.

The third (and last) of the laws²⁶ that discriminated against the Jews differed from the first two in that it did not explicitly include any religious-based criterion for qualification as a court-appointed assessor in commercial litigation. Article One stated that an assessor was to be selected from ‘among the merchants’ and Article Two stated that merchants who were Ionian citizens qualified as long as they were at least of 30 years of age and were “honourably engaged in the mercantile profession at least five years.” On the basis of the above provisions there was no *prima facie* discrimination of Jewish merchants. But given the fact that within the space of two months of the law’s promulgation a number of prominent Jewish merchants petitioned²⁷ the Lord High Commissioner for redress it is obvious that in practice the law’s provisions were disregarded. And the way in which these provisions were circumvented was that the

²⁵ N. 87, “Electoral Law,” 19 December 1849, *Acts passed by the Eighth Parliament of the United States of the Ionian Islands during its Fifth (Extraordinary) Session* (Corfu: Government Printing Office, 1849).

²⁶ N. 6, “Law respecting the appointment of Assessors in the sittings of the Commercial Courts and Tribunals,” 22 July 1857, *Acts passed by the Eleventh Parliament of the United States of the Ionian Islands during its First Session* (Corfu: Government Printing Office, 1857).

²⁷ Petition 400, 1857, “Messrs Yarak, Mordo and other members of the Jewish community at Corfu requesting to be admitted to appear before the commercial court as ‘assessors,’” 8 December 1857, Colonial Office Records 136/857, National Archives, Kew. For a discussion of this petition see the following studies by Sakis Gekas: “The Port Jews of Corfu and the ‘Blood Libel’ of 1891: A tale of many centuries and one event,” *Jewish Culture and History* 7/1-2 (2004): 181-182; “Business culture and entrepreneurship in the Ionian Islands under British rule, 1815-1864,” *LSE Working Papers in Economic History*, 89 (2005): 10-13. This particular issue also received some coverage in the Corfiot press. The following articles do not appear in Gekas’ studies: “To Eparchiakon Symvoulion kai oi Israilitai” [The regional council and the Jews], *O Paratiritis* 17 February 1858, 1-2; [Leader], *Ta Kathimerina* 8 March 1858, 1-2; “To Eparchiakon Symvoulion Kerkyras kai o Paratiritis” [The regional council and the (newspaper) Paratiritis], *O Paratiritis* 17 March 1858, 1-2.

executive authority responsible for the compiling the list of qualifying names did not include Jewish merchants despite the fact that numerous, especially Corfiot Jewish merchants were both Ionian citizens and had been engaged in commerce for more than five years.

Cronaca Israelitica: the Newspaper and its Publisher

It is within the political and social contexts described above that Giuseppe Nacamulli published the first issue of *Cronaca* on 22 August/3 September 1861. Nacamulli's newspaper was bi-lingual that is Greek and Italian and was published monthly from its first issue of August 1861 through to its final in May 1864. Its subtitle "periodico politico-morale" together with an accompanying note stating that "all profits" from its publication were intended for the education of the poor – "l'istruzione della classe indigente" – are clear indicators of how the *Cronaca* viewed itself. Furthermore its motto, taken from the Torah, "One law and one manner shall be for you and for the stranger that sojourneth with you" (Numbers 15:16) is yet another sign that is revealing of the publisher's attitudes and aims. Given these details it should not be surprising that an extensive amount of space²⁸ was dedicated to publicising the issue of Jewish Emancipation. However it would be incorrect to characterise the newspaper as only campaigning in favour of full rights for Ionian Jews. It also published public notices, biographical notes and obituaries, the opinions of learned rabbis on questions of religious law and morality as well as short fiction and divers news items. Thus the inclusion of the latter material tends to suggest that the *Cronaca* sought to educate a local Ionian Jewish leadership on matters concerning Jews and Judaism more broadly. That said one should not overlook or indeed ignore the possibility that motives other than the edification of Ionian Jewry may have influenced Nacamulli's decision to publish the *Cronaca*. As a practising *interveniente* Nacamulli, together with his fellow Jewish *intervenienti*,²⁹ stood to benefit from any potential changes to the existing laws governing the legal profession. Either way what is clear is that by publishing the *Cronaca* Nacamulli³⁰ and his editor A. Coen³¹ did not only establish the first Jewish newspaper in

²⁸ With the exception of a large American university library (UCLA) no complete set of the *Cronaca* is held in any of the major national and regional libraries of Greece or Israel. I have not been able to consult UCLA's copy but despite this a small number of individual issues are held in various archives in both Greece and Israel. Within these issues is the collected table of contents of *Cronaca*'s first two years (Anno II, No 12 - 1/13 August 1863) that provides a very clear thematic overview of its content.

²⁹ "Pros to Exochotaton Lord Megan Armostin" [To His Excellency the Lord High Commissioner], *Patris*, May 29/June 9, 1849, 103.

³⁰ For a brief overview of Giuseppe Nacamulli's career as a publisher, writer and translator see Rena Molho, "Nachamoulis, Iosif," *Egkyklopaideia tou Ellinikou Typou* [Encyclopaedia of the Greek Newspaper Press], (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Research Foundation, 2008), 4v, 3:229 and the commemorative pamphlet *In memoria di Giuseppe Nacamulli* published in Corfu on the first anniversary of his death (1887).

the Greek speaking world but also sought to influence the political agenda vis-à-vis Jewish Emancipation at a time when *Enosis* or the political union of the Ionian Islands with the neighbouring Greek Kingdom was becoming increasingly likely. If anything the *Cronaca's* most significant aspect (and its most enduring legacy) was that it externalised a process that had been hitherto private and confidential. Before the newspaper's appearance the advancement of issues directly concerning Ionian Jews was an *ad hoc* and piecemeal process in which the islands' Jewish elite appealed through formal and long-established political channels³² for redress of grievances. The *Cronaca* removed this air of confidentiality and openly publicised a plethora of issues directly affecting the lives of Ionian Jewry. In the period since press freedom was established some issues, such as the commercial assessors law among others,³³ did receive some attention but the issue of Jewish Emancipation *per se* does not appear to have been raised in the evolving print media of the islands. Thus in the politically polarised climate of the early 1860s the appearance of the *Cronaca* did not go unnoticed either by the islands' press or by the authorities. To these responses we shall now turn.

Responses to the *Cronaca Israelitica*

The responses evoked by the publication of the *Cronaca* were in no way uniform nor indeed were they written by disinterested observers. They are however enough to enable us to present the basic thematic outlines that the newspaper's appearance and subsequent regular publication provoked. As part of their regular correspondence with their superiors in Britain, the Lord High Commissioner Henry Storks³⁴ and the

³¹ The pertinent literature of reference (Frezis, *O evraikos typos stin Ellada*, 162; Frezis, "Israilitika Chronika/Cronaca Israelitica," 461) list Giuseppe Nacamulli as "founder, publisher and editor." In all of the issues I consulted "A. Coen" is listed as editor without unfortunately any further details.

³² The numerous Registers of Petitions held in the extensive archive of the Colonial Office (COR 136/1032-1062) document a considerable number of appeals to the Lord High Commissioner by both Jewish communal leaders and individual Jews. Two such examples are: Petition 832 "Jewish Committee Corfu prays that a wall be erected round their cemetery," December 1862, COR 136/1060; Petition 519 "Governors of the Jewish Synagogue at Zante praying that an annual allowance may be allocated by the Government to the Synagogue for the education of the children of the Jewish community of that island," September 1859, COR 136/1054. For additional details on these and other petitions see Giorgos Zoumbos, "Israilitika Koimitiria tis Kerkyras" [Jewish cemeteries of Corfu] *Chronika (Kentrikou Israilitikou Symvouliou Ellados)* 138 (1995): 8-11; Giorgos Zoumbos, "Israilitiki koinotita Kerkyras" [Jewish Community of Corfu] *Chronika (Kentrikou Israilitikou Symvouliou Ellados)* 149 (1997): 19-22.

³³ The desecration of the Jewish Cemetery attracted relatively wide press coverage throughout the Islands. Although the Corfiot *Paratiritis* (Observer) provided the fullest coverage in the period from late May to August 1861, the *Ethnegersia* (National Rising) of Corfu, the *Foni Ioniou kai Rigas* (Voice of the Ionian and Rigas) of Zante and the journal *Lychnos* (Lamp) of the Cephalonian writer Andreas Laskaratos published comment and the full text of various letters of gratitude sent by numerous Rabbinical and other Jewish leaders in Italy and France. For articles on the commercial assessors law see note 27.

³⁴ After serving in a number of posts in the British military Sir Henry Knight Storks (1811-1874) became the last Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands in February 1859. For further biographical details,

protestant missionary William Charteris³⁵ each provide both an account of a significant antisemitic incident occurring in the immediate aftermath of the appearance of *Cronaca* as well as a more general account surrounding the paper's initial reception.

Storks places the appearance of the *Cronaca* clearly within the context of recent events. Having in mind the encyclical of Metropolitan Athanasius he wrote that the Jews of Corfu 'were flattered by the notice they had attracted'³⁶ and having 'gained courage, probably showed a little more exultation than was prudent'. Having thus brought into question the wisdom of the communal leadership Storks reported that 'amongst other acts of questionable discretion, they [the Jews] started a newspaper written in Greek' and continued declaring that,

"Only one number of this journal has appeared and although there is nothing in it which would offend the most sensitive Christian opposers of them and their religion, still a Jewish newspaper was a novelty displeasing to the ignorant and narrow minded amongst the Greek Christians."³⁷

Notice should be given as to how Storks juxtaposes the two opposing groups. Although critical of the Jewish leader's lack of "prudence" he views some of the Greek Christians as "ignorant and narrow-minded." The latter echoes a similar description sent a few months earlier at the time when desecration of the Jewish burial ground occurred. In the earlier dispatch Storks explains that the animus shown to the Jews was based on religious and economic grounds. The "[Greek Orthodox] people of these states," Storks writes,

E.M.Lloyd, "Storks, Sir Henry Knight (1811-1874)" rev. James Hunt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, Online edition 2008 [accessed 18 February 2014].

³⁵ Reverend William Charteris (1822-1886) was a Protestant missionary in the service of the English Presbyterian Church. In November 1845 he and his wife arrived in Corfu in order to establish the Church's mission to the Jews of Corfu. The mission lasted until the end of the Protectorate. Charteris was one of numerous Protestant missionaries –attached to organisations such as the London Missionary Society, British and Foreign Bible Society, London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, American Baptist Missionary Union and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions- that dedicated the greater part of their lives to missionary, educational and medical work in Corfu and other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean. Further details on Charteris' mission are to be found in: "Mission to Corfu," *English Presbyterian Messenger*, 1845, 2, 107, "Missionary Intelligence Corfu," *English Presbyterian Messenger*, 1847, 308-309, "A Jewish missionary in the Ionian Islands," *The Jewish Herald*, May 1, 1870, 74-76 while the following cover in detail the work of other missions in Greece, Palestine and Asia Minor: Yaron Perry, *British mission to the Jews in nineteenth century Palestine* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), Theodore Saloutos, "American missionaries in Greece 1820-1869," *Church History* 24(2) (1955): 152-174, Gerasimos Augustinos, " 'Enlightened' Christians and 'Oriental' Churches: Protestant missions to the Greeks in Asia Minor, 1820-1860," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 4(2) (1986): 129-142.

³⁶ Lord High Commissioner Sir Henry Storks to Secretary of State of the Colonies Henry Pulham-Clinton 5th Duke of Newcastle, 15 September 1861, Colonial Office Records 136/175, National Archives, Kew (hereafter Storks to Newcastle, 15 September 1861, COR 136/175).

³⁷ Storks to Newcastle, 15 September 1861, COR 136/175.

are “ignorant and prejudiced,”³⁸ “the tenets of the Greek Church are selfish and illiberal” and concludes that “other Christian religions, particularly the Roman Catholic, are looked upon as heresies of a formidable nature and the Turks and Jews are considered as out of the pale of humanity.”³⁹ Although rather frank and judgmental Storks’ comments were by no means novel. Like a number of his predecessors these comments reflected well-established and broader discourses⁴⁰ that viewed the Ionians as ‘unruly’ ‘an untrustworthy population’ and more broadly not fit for self-government. Returning to Storks’ dispatch on the *Cronaca*, he recounted the events surrounding the closure of the *Borsa* and specifically the decision of its members to exclude Jews,

“There is in the town of Corfu a Mercantile Exchange or “Borsa”, a private establishment, raised by shares and maintained by private subscription. The members of this society comprise almost the whole mercantile body of Corfu amongst whom are reckoned many members of the Jewish persuasion. On Thursday night, the 12th instant, a meeting was held at the Exchange, and which was convened for the purpose of excluding the Jews from that establishment. After a long discussion it was resolved to break up the society, sell all the furniture, and reconstitute it afresh. When steps are taken to reestablish the Exchange, the members of the Jewish persuasion will be of course excluded.”⁴¹

Storks ends his account of the *Borsa* incident by noting that a crowd gathered outside it during the meeting in question and that although the former Jewish members were ‘hissed’ at (and the Christians ‘cheered’) the ‘public tranquility was in no way disturbed’. William Charteris’ account of this incident does not differ substantively from Storks and it is especially noteworthy that Charteris, like Storks, does not consider the actual content of the *Cronaca* to be controversial. The point at which the two sources differ is the reason (or rather reasons) they each attribute for the antisemitic backlash at the *Borsa*. The relevant part of Charteris’ letter is as follows,

“The Jews have got into trouble again, a frequent occurrence in this place. They published a journal styled ‘The Israelitisch Chronicle’, which was very respectfully compiled and was of a very moderate political tone. But the editors did not disguise their intention to claim for the Jews privileges equal to those of other Ionian citizens, such as admission to seats in the Legislative Assembly, the right to pleas as advocates in courts of

³⁸ Storks to Newcastle, 15 May 1861, COR 136/174.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ These discourses have been extensively studied in Thomas W Gallant, *Experiencing Dominion: Culture, Identity and Power in the British Mediterranean* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) 15-55; Maria Paschalidi, *Constructing Ionian Identities: The Ionian Islands in British official discourses 1815-1864* (London: University College London, 2009, Unpublished PhD Thesis) 174-176, 247-263, 357-358.

⁴¹ Storks to Newcastle, 15 September 1861, COR 136/175.

law etc. A copy of this journal was laid on the table of the Exchange. It occasioned an uproar among the Greek subscribers to that institution. Backed by a large mob, they struck off the list of subscribers every Jew, and the ferment on both sides, in consequence of this act, continues. The Jews are very much crest fallen. They expected great things from the influence of their journal, but I had warned them that they might be disappointed and told them that there are better influences than those of journalism for the elevation of their race, and the vindication of their rights.”⁴²

The extract above seems to suggest that the reason for the incident at the *Borsa* was related to the demands the Jews of Corfu made for the acquisition of specific civil rights. Such a point of view contrasts with the reason given by Storks. Towards the end of his dispatch Storks makes it clear that he considered commercial rivalry as the reason behind the *Borsa* incident. Thus,

“The real cause of this animosity on the part of the merchants is that the Jews are almost entirely in possession of the oil trade in this island, and some members of the mercantile body think by the unworthy proceeding of excluding the Hebrews from the Exchange to do their trade an injury and secure some of it for themselves.”⁴³

Despite the differences of opinion in these accounts what is worth noting is that neither of the two cite religious reasons for the ‘animosity’ or ‘ferment’ against the Jews. Clearly they both understood that the *Borsa* incident was either politically or economically motivated. This fact is significant because it demonstrates a gradual and by no means complete shift away from Christian medieval contempt concerning Jewry and Judaism towards modern antisemitism, the latter prompted, at least at an ideological level, by secular motives. This is not to say that religious antisemitism disappeared completely from the Ionian Islands but simply that Storks’ and Charteris’ opinions document a steady secularisation of anti-Jewish thought symptomatic of Post-Napoleonic Europe when Jews across the continent were swept into a very long and uneven process of civil emancipation. The Ionian Islands were not immune from this process and thus the *Borsa* incident remains important because it created a precedent. And although the hostility the Jews were exposed to on that day does not appear to have been repeated (at least for the duration of the *Cronaca*’s publication), the antisemitic rhetoric it articulated set the tone for the numerous antisemitic responses published subsequent to this incident. That said not all the responses to the *Cronaca* were negative some were indeed quite the opposite.

⁴² *English Presbyterian Messenger*, 1861, 353.

⁴³ Storks to Newcastle, 15 September 1861, COR 136/175.

A case in point is the newspaper *Alitheia* (Αλήθεια) or ‘Truth’, a short-lived Cephalonian title⁴⁴ closely allied to members of the ‘Old’ Radical Party. In October 1861, just over a month after the first issue of *Cronaca* appeared, *Alitheia*⁴⁵ greeted positively *Cronaca*’s publication declaring that it ‘followed in the path of progress and common benefit’ and praising the “Heptanesian people” for its proven “inclination” towards “progress, liberty and equality.” However it did also comment on the British Protectorate. It did not shy from criticising the “oppressive system of foreign rule” that deprived the Jews of the Ionian Islands their “natural and social rights”⁴⁶ the latter rights being in accordance with the “spirit of the century in which we live.”⁴⁷ And finally in its carefully worded conclusion the editorial not only acknowledges the antisemitic prejudice of the past but also urges its readers to attempt to overcome them,

“The people of the Heptanese, far removed from the spirit of medieval bigotry, must, in accordance with Christian principles and the divine commands of Jesus, consider all people as brothers and that only through such mutual love and tolerance may the barriers which divide humanity be obliterated and therein bring about the government of God on earth.”⁴⁸

The example set by the *Alitheia* editorial was repeated in a letter⁴⁹ sent to the editor of the *Cronaca* by the Cephalonian author and translator Augustinos Livathinopoulos (Agostino Livathinopulo).⁵⁰ Like *Alitheia*, Livathinopoulos was similarly critical of the British Protectorate. Written just under a year after the *Alitheia* editorial Livathinopoulos’ letter not only casts doubt on whether the British authorities truly⁵¹

⁴⁴ The *Alitheia* was published for just over a year (September 1861- September 1862) and openly advocated the principles of the ‘Old’ Radical Party, namely those first enunciated by Ilias Zervos Iakovatos and Iosif Momferatos in the 1850s. Further details are to be found in Eri Stavropoulou, ‘Alitheia’, *Egkyklopaideia tou Ellinikou Typou* [Encyclopaedia of the Greek Newspaper Press], (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Research Foundation, 2008), 4v, 1:171 & Maria Kotina, *To Rizospastiko kinima sta Agglokrotoumena Eptanisa* [The radical movement in the English-occupied Septinsula], (Athens: Panteion University PhD Thesis Unpublished, 2011), 314-315.

⁴⁵ “Diafora” [Varia], *Alitheia*, 14/26 October 1861, 18-19.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ [Agostino Livathinopulo], [Letter, 10 July 1862], *Israilitika Chronika/Cronaca Israelitica*, Anno II No 2, 10/22 September 1862, 221-222.

⁵⁰ Augustinos Livathinopoulos published extensively in numerous Greek literary journals and worked as a newspaper editor and publisher within the Greek Orthodox community of Egypt. See Manolis Yialourakis, *I Aigyptos ton Ellinon* [Egypt of the Greeks], 2nd Edition, (Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2006), 556 & Eugenios Michailidis, *Panorama itoi eikonografimeni istoria tou dimosiografikou typou tis Aigyptou* [Panorama: An illustrated history of the (Greek) Newspaper press of Egypt] (Athens: Centre for Hellenic Studies, 1972), 155-156.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 221

wished to grant Ionian Jews full civil rights but also introduces a new factor into the equation: nationality. In reply to the argument advanced by the opponents of Jewish emancipation, namely that the Jews of the Ionian Islands were serving British interests, Livathinopoulos openly and enthusiastically declares, “The Ionian Jews are Greeks with a Greek conscience, and in their veins flow pure Greek blood! They are Greek, they are not English, nor are they servants, as others are, of the English! The Jews are unjustly slandered.”⁵² Within the same letter he adds that Ionian Jews together with the island’s Christians “have in common,” the “same language, memories, tribulations, interests.” Livathinopoulos’ enthusiasm is reiterated in another letter⁵³ sent to the editor of *Cronaca*. In this case it was published following a key event in the lead-up to the formal cession of the islands to Greece, the visit of a Greek delegation headed by the War of Independence hero Admiral Constantinos Kanaris. In the admiral’s honour public celebrations were held in which the civic and religious leadership of the island participated and gave patriotic speeches praising *Enosis*. Written by the Cephalonian poet Epaminondas Anninos⁵⁴ the letter praises the Jewish community for their ‘love of the fatherland’ and envisions that under Greek rule Ionian Jews will be ‘counted’ as ‘brothers’ within Greece and will enjoy all the ‘benefits’ of belonging to the Greek nation, benefits that they were “deprived” of under British rule. The humane and philosemitic attitudes expressed by Livathinopoulos, Anninos and the *Alitheia* editorial were by no means coincidental. Although it is not clear whether Anninos or Livathinopoulos actually belonged to the “Old” Radical Party it is likely that the *Alitheia* editorial, although unsigned, was written by Panagiotis Panas,⁵⁵ a well-known veteran and member of the Radical Party of the 1850s. From its inception the short-lived *Alitheia* made it clear that it shared a political and ideological kinship with the earlier (and equally short-lived) radical newspapers *Anagenesis* and *Keravnos*. And through this kinship came a renewed commitment to the basic tenets of Ionian radicalism, namely national self-determination for the Greek populations of East under ‘foreign rule’ and the restoration of these peoples within a free and independent state in accordance with the “true and healthy principles of liberty and progress.”⁵⁶ That said the

⁵² Ibid., 222.

⁵³ “Filanthropia kai patriotismos. Epistoli tou k[yriou] Epaminonda Anninou Kefallinos/Filanthropia e Patriotismo. Lettera del Sig.r Epaminonda Anino, Cefaleno,” *Israilitika Chronika/Cronaca Israelitica*, Anno II, N. 11, July 1/13, 1863, 370-371.

⁵⁴ Brief biographical details can be found in Ilias Tsitselis, *Kefalliniaka Symmikta* [Cephalonian Miscellanea], (Athens: Leonis Press, 1904), 844.

⁵⁵ Over the course of his career as a journalist and militant of Ionian radicalism Panas wrote for, or edited, a number of newspapers and literary journals. Details are to be found in Eri Stavropoulou, “Panas, Panagiotis,” *Egkyklopaideia tou Ellinikou Typou* [Encyclopaedia of the Greek Newspaper Press], (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Research Foundation, 2008), 4v, 3: 414-415.

⁵⁶ Dinos Konomos, “Eptanisiakos Typos 1798-1864” [The newspaper press of the Ionian Islands], *Eptanisiakia Fylla* 5 (1964) 134; Eleni Calligas, *The “Rizospastai” (Radical-Unionists): Politics and nationalism in the British Protectorate of the Ionian Islands, 1815-1864*, (London: London School of Economics, PhD Thesis Unpublished, 1994) 140-167; Kotina, *To Rizospastiko kinima*, 314-315.

views expressed in these responses are really not new. They fit within a larger anti-colonial discourse repeatedly and openly espoused by the Radicals since the advent of press freedom in 1848. This discourse did not only advocate the social and political transformation of Ionian society based on values it regarded as being universal and eternal to human nature but it also viewed this transformation as part of the work of Christianity and divine providence.⁵⁷

Having examined some of the responses that openly welcomed the *Cronaca*'s publication it would be wrong to think that the philosemitism embodied in these responses was only held by the Radicals or their allies. The Cephalonian writer Andreas Laskaratos is one such example. By no means a radical (and indeed quite critical of them)⁵⁸ he advocated the general improvement of Ionian society through education and adoption of 'true' Christian morality. In his 1856 work *Ta mysteria tis Kefalonias*⁵⁹ Laskaratos took aim at various cultural and religious practices castigating the clergy and peasant folk of his native island for perpetuating inhumane and outdated customs. He describes, for example, the rituals of Good Friday as essentially idolatrous serving merely to 'renew and empower'⁶⁰ Christian hatred of Jews rather than instill any Christian ethic. Six years after the publication of this work, at the time of the desecration of the Jewish cemetery of Corfu, Laskaratos wrote in praise of Athanasius' encyclical appealing to like minded priests to not only follow this prelates' example but also take "charge" of the "religion" because like "a carriage left to horses" it has been "left in the hands of the mob."⁶¹ It is in the context of these rather paternalistic and judgmental remarks that one should read his comments on the *Cronaca*. These comments appeared in two consecutive issues of his monthly journal the *Lychnos* (Λύχνος) or "Lamp."⁶² His first comments, published in the thirty-first number of *Lychnos* were deliberately ironical and directed to a number of local politicians or "rabble-rousers" as he preferred to call

⁵⁷ Eleni Calligas, "The 'Rizospastai' (Radical-Unionists)" 152.

⁵⁸ For a brief analysis of Laskaratos' opposition to the Ionian Radicals and Panagiotis Panas in particular see, Spiridon Asdrachas, "O 'Lychnos' tou Andrea Laskaratos. Kata ton 'neon' rizospaston kai tou 'anarchismou' tou Panagioti Pana" [The 'Lychnos' of Andreas Laskaratos. Opposed to the 'new' radicals and to the 'anarchism' of Panagiotis Panas], *Epta Imeres Kathimerini*, May 30, 1995, 21-22.

⁵⁹ [The mysteries of Cephalonia], (Cephalonia: Kefallinia Press, 1856).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, §12, 57.

⁶¹ *Lychnos*, June 22, 1861, [Andreas Laskaratos] *Apanta* [Collected Works] (Athens: Atlas Publications, 1959), 3v, 3:339-340.

⁶² The *Lychnos* was published with long periods of interruption over a period of nearly forty years (1859-1896). The newspaper's stated aim was the 'moral, religious and political transformation' of Ionian society but it was often used by Laskaratos as a platform to challenge and attack the ideas and politics of many of his detractors. See Giorgos Alisandratos, "Lychnos," *Egkyklopaideia tou Ellinikou Typou* [Encyclopaedia of the Greek Newspaper Press], (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Research Foundation, 2008), 4v, 3: 81-83.

them. The *Cronaca*, Laskaratos wrote, “thanked”⁶³ all those “rabble-rousers” that utilised it as “rabble-rousing material” thereby enabling them to continue their work.⁶⁴ In the subsequent month’s issue Laskaratos followed up these comments reporting that the Jews of the Ionian Islands asked, by way of the *Cronaca*, “us to consider them as *humans* and citizens, *equal to us!*”⁶⁵ and added that the Jews’ request brought to light “our wretched medieval situation,” and how “we are drowned in corrosion and in the darkness of barbarism.” The metaphors of corrosion and barbarism are furthermore repeated throughout the rest of the editorial and are used as a pretext to attack the Zantiot politician Konstantinos Lomvardos and his supporters. By way of conclusion Laskaratos called upon his “brother Israelites” to show for the moment “patience” because the present generation was born at a time when “the European wind of progress” had not yet blown in “our islands.” “The degree of inanity of the mob’ and ‘the corruption of our leaders,” Laskaratos continues, does not permit the desired equality of Christians and Jews to come about immediately. Although one can’t doubt the sincerity of Laskaratos’ attitudes on Ionian Jewry his remarks about the *Cronaca* are essentially another variation on the same theme, namely the alleged backwardness of Ionian society and irresponsible mob politics of the local political leaders.

While Laskaratos was making the abovementioned comments, a number of other newspapers expressed doubt if not outright hostility concerning the publication of the *Cronaca*. The paper that initially set the tone for what was to follow was a Corfiot newspaper closely allied to the *Enosis* cause the aptly named *Ethnegersia* or “National Rising.”⁶⁶ Just over a week after the *Cronaca* appeared the *Ethnegersia* published its opinion on it and made its opposition patently clear. Despite the *Ethnegersia*’s assurances that its opinions were not motivated by a “spirit of fanaticism” or “superstition,”⁶⁷ it began its argument with the claim that there was no need for an exclusively Jewish newspaper to defend the rights and interests of Jews. Such a defence, the paper continued, could be done through the existing newspapers and moreover Jewish rights and interests did not, in any case, need any defence. Another two claims about Ionian Jewry are particularly revealing and exemplify the gradual secularisation of anti-Jewish hostility within the Ionian Islands. Firstly it argues that despite the fact that on numerous occasions Ionian Jews demonstrated their support for “[Ionian] nationalism,” the “addition of eight hundred Jewish voters”⁶⁸ to the electoral rolls will

⁶³ “Dimosia Fylla” [Public (news)papers], *Lychnos*, November 14 1861; *Apanta Laskaratos* [Collected Works of (Andreas) Laskaratos], eds. Christina Micha, Michalis Meraklis, (Athens: Lychnies Publications, 1981), 5v, 1: 311-312.

⁶⁴ Kotina, *To Rizospastiko kinima*, 216-221, 247-263.

⁶⁵ “Alloimono” [Alas!], *Lychnos*, 14 December 1861, *Apanta Laskaratos* [Collected Works of (Andreas) Laskaratos], eds. Christina Micha, Michalis Meraklis, (Athens: Lychnies Publications, 1981), 5v, 1: 324-325.

⁶⁶ For basic data on *Ethnegersia* see Konomos “Eptaniasikos Typos 1798-1864,” 113-114.

⁶⁷ “Diafora” [Varia], *Ethnegersia*, August 14, 1861, 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

essentially be of no benefit either to the Jews themselves or the Christian majority because for “reasons beyond their control, they [the Jews] do not possess the requisite cognitive development.”⁶⁹ And secondly it explicitly insinuates that the Jews of the Ionians are serving the interests of the British colonial rulers because of their alleged affinity for “commerce.” The editorial’s conceptualisation of the Jews (and their alleged relationship to trade) is worth citing in full,

“A people that it is generally said is dedicated to commerce may be offered thousands of temptations by the Protectorate, the most commercially-minded people in the universe, and a half hour meeting may suffice in order to destroy forever the national question.”⁷⁰

The insinuation made in this rather clumsily written extract is not difficult to decipher: the Jews, like the British are two similar peoples, both dedicated to commerce and thus given this fact it is possible that they could ally themselves, to the detriment of the Ionian Islands, by deliberately sabotaging the “national question,” namely the cause of *Enosis*. On this basis the editorial ends by declaring that it is a ‘national duty’ to “fight”⁷¹ the *Cronaca*. Although quite dismissive in its attitudes towards granting Jews the vote the fact that the *Ethnegersia*’s editors actually included it is of itself important and indeed foreshadows the electoral politics of the islands in the post *Enosis* period.⁷² Taken together with the clear insinuation that the Jews could potentially betray the *Enosis* movement one begins to notice how antisemitic stereotypes such as alleged Jewish omnipotence, treachery and avarice were instrumentalised for obvious political purposes. And judging from a follow-up editorial⁷³ it is clear that the *Ethnegersia*’s editors did not neglect their “duty to fight.” This second editorial once again sought, by way of conjecture and insinuation, to discredit the Ionian Jews rather than addressing in any substantive way the issues the *Cronaca* was attempting to place into the public arena. After asserting that the Jews “do not have the courage to tell us to which party they belong,”⁷⁴ the editorial deliberately equates the Jews with the Reformist Party,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² In the period following *Enosis* the notion of the so-called “Jewish vote” first appeared in Greece and was deliberately exploited by Corfiot politicians in order to attack their opponents and disseminate the antisemitic charge that the Jews of Corfu decided the outcome of an election by voting collectively as a block. One such example concerns the parliamentary elections of 1885; Gekas, “The Port Jews of Corfu,” 187-189; Kostas Dafnis, *Georgios Theotokis* (Corfu: Society for Corfiot Studies, 1998) 86-87.

⁷³ “Ta Israilitika Chronika” [Cronaca Israelitica], *Ethnegersia*, August 30, 1861, 1-2.

⁷⁴ Ibid

“due to the nature of their [the Jews’] demands, it is obvious that they belong to the Reformist party, and even if there existed any other reason against them, this reason alone suffices for the majority of the Septinsula’s population to justifiably fight them.”⁷⁵

Given the fact that the *Ethnegersia* made it clear from its inaugural issue⁷⁶ that it opposed the Reformist Party (and was thus in favor of Union of the Ionian Islands with Greece) it would seem quite odd, given also the opinion of the Radical paper *Alitheia*, that it would take such a negative stance in relation to Jewish Emancipation. An examination of the *Ethnegersia*’s reactions to another event directly related to Ionian Jewry may provide a clue for this negative stance. In response to the news of the desecration of the Jewish cemetery of Corfu and the subsequent publication of Athanasius’ encyclical, *Ethnegersia*’s coverage began with a brief two-line news item stating that “some Jew has slandered us in the *Diavoletto*.”⁷⁷ In the subsequent issue it reminded the Jewish community that as far as “religious tolerance” was concerned the “Greek nation” was “not inferior to any other”⁷⁸ and furthermore followed up this statement by casting doubt, in light of the Encyclical’s publication, whether the Orthodox faithful did truly commit the desecration.

Although lacking the strident and openly confrontational tone of its articles on the *Cronaca*, these reactions are illustrative of the type of nationalist discourse it promoted. This discourse was in favour of Union but had an exclusivist and defensive streak. It sought to propagate a discourse of “us” (the Orthodox Greeks) and “them” (everybody else), in which the alleged faults and shortcoming of their opponents are emphasised and the virtues of the Greeks exulted. In practice this meant defending the Greek nation against unjustified slander, as in the case of the cemetery desecration, but it also meant, as in the case of the *Cronaca*, openly attacking Ionian Jewry as allies of the Reformists and/or the British. Furthermore it often meant tapping the reservoir of antisemitic myth and stereotype in order to strengthen the paper’s point of view. And the *Ethnegersia*’s second editorial contains one such example. In its concluding remarks it draws upon the well-known blood libel. It reports that a certain Stefanos Palatianos (in all likelihood a book collector or antiquarian) possessed a “treasure of Jewish books, one of which is by a certain Rabbi Neofytos, that according to Palatianos will greatly benefit the national question.” The “book” by “Rabbi Neofytos” is none other than the antisemitic tract *Anatropi tis thriskeias ton Evraion kai ton ethimon ton* [Refutation of the Religion and Customs of the Jews] originally published in Iași (Jassy) in 1803 by a Jewish convert, Noah Belfer,⁷⁹ who following his conversion to the Orthodox Church took monastic

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ “Prooimion” [Preamble], *Ethnegersia*, February 16, 1861, 1.

⁷⁷ “Diafora” [Varia], *Ethnegersia*, May 6, 1861, 3.

⁷⁸ “Diafora” [Varia], *Ethnegersia*, May 13, 1861, 4.

⁷⁹ For details on Belfer and the Blood Libel charge more generally see, Hermann Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice* (London: Bloch Publishing, 1909); Vincenzo Manzini, *L’omicidio rituale i sacrifici umani* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1925), 195-196; Alan Dundes, *The Blood Libel Legend: A Case-Book in Anti-*

vows and the name Neofit. The work was subsequently translated into Greek and published in Iași in 1818. Further editions were published in Nafplion (1834), Istanbul (1834) and more importantly Corfu (1861) and Zante (1861). Its basic thesis was a variation on a well-established theme, the blood libel. It specifically propagated the idea that a certain class of rabbis performed ritual murder in order to utilise their infant's blood for various religious purposes. The *Ethnegersia* was not however the first newspaper to make use of this tract. Another Corfiot newspaper closely allied to the "New" Radical Party⁸⁰ of Lomvardos the *Nea Epochi* (Νέα Εποχή) or "New Epoch" had, in an article published a few weeks earlier, attacked the Jews of Corfu and furthermore written approvingly of the Neofytos tract.⁸¹ This particular article was like the analogous articles of *Ethnegersia* in response to the publicity surrounding the desecration of the Jewish cemetery of Corfu. Given this precedent it should not be surprising that the *Nea Epochi's* first (and only) editorial relating to the appearance of the *Cronaca* was written in a similar pejorative (and antisemitic) vein. Appearing only two days before the *Ethnegersia's* second editorial *Nea Epochi* argued, like *Ethnegersia*, that the Jews were somehow being dishonest by not declaring with which party they are affiliated and what their aim was in establishing the *Cronaca*. Specifically it wrote that "If the Jews wish to acquire full political and civil rights," then they should have "announced their principles, because their concealment gives us the right to say that we do not trust them, because they [the Jews] did not honestly and courageously express what path they wish to follow at the time of enjoyment of civil rights."⁸² What is clear from the preceding extract and indeed that one that follows below was that part of the rhetorical strategy of the opponents of Jewish emancipation was to avoid addressing the deeper question of emancipation. Instead other issues are highlighted such as the alleged partisan allegiance of Ionian Jewry, their disloyalty to the *Enosis* cause and its corollary their lack of patriotism, but also their supposed ingratitude for the 'tolerance' historically shown to them in the Ionian Islands. The latter is especially well-illustrated here,

"If they wish to indoctrinate us, then they are again mistaken, because we have no appetite to deny our religion. If they wish to defend their religion, then again they are mistaken because no one has insulted them, If they demand for us to tolerate them, then again they are mistaken, because nowhere did they [the Jews] find more tolerance and love, and [especially] during the medieval persecution, than in the Corfu and the East."⁸³

Semitic Folklore (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, *Les académies princières de Bucharest et de Jassy et leurs professeurs* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974), 413-431; Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 264.

⁸⁰ Kotina, *To Rizospastiko kinima*, 325.

⁸¹ "I pros ton evraion apandisis mas" [Our reply to the Jew(ish) author], *Nea Epochi*, July 8, 1861, 3-4.

⁸² "Israilitika Chronika" [Cronaca Israelitica], *Nea Epochi*, August 28, 1861, 2.

⁸³ Ibid

This oft-repeated and self-serving interpretation does not clearly correspond to any basic understanding of the evolution of Christian-Jewish relations in the Ionian Islands and should not be given any credence. The content of *Nea Epochi's* responses to *Cronaca* parallel those of *Ethnegersia*. Both papers sought to belittle the issue of Jewish Emancipation by denigrating Jews *in toto* through accusations such as treachery and dishonesty. But looking back at the context in which these two papers and indeed the other newspapers discussed in this article appeared one notices that all these newspapers were first published in the period 1858-1861. This was a period of particularly intense political ferment in the Islands. It was also at this point that divisions within the ranks of the Ionian radicals became more acute and eventually led to a split between the predominately Cephalonian "Old" Radicals and the "New" Radicals congregating around Konstantinos Lomvardos. As a consequence of the long internal exile of the movement's founders the centre of gravity and support of the Radicals moved from Cephalonia to Zante and with it to the leadership of Lomvardos. The latter took the Radical movement in a different direction by advocating the internationalisation⁸⁴ of the Ionian Question and the intervention of the Great Powers to bring about a diplomatic solution. This point of view alienated leaders such as Momferratos and gradually led to the formation of the "Old" Radicals and the "New" or Unionist radicals as well as newspapers that reflected this split.⁸⁵

Having in mind the material examined above it appears that the Old Radicals, by way of the *Alitheia* editorial, were in favour of Jewish Emancipation while the Unionist Radicals were dismissive and hostile. The latter hostility appears however to have waned, although not quite disappeared, as the *Cronaca* continued to be published. And it is interesting to notice that on the eve of the British decision to end its rule⁸⁶ the intemperate language that *Ethnegersia* initially used was largely gone. In response to a specific article of *Cronaca* on the progress of the "Ionian Jewish Question" it acknowledged the Jews' "justified" claims for civil rights but it also argued that if the "Jews are truly Greeks," "they must, like the Greeks, make sacrifices"⁸⁷ in the short term in order to bring the ultimate goal, *Enosis*, the latter granting them full rights. Furthermore the *Cronaca*, must not in the meantime the *Ethnegersia* argues, provoke "scandals" and upset the "harmony, unanimity and tranquility" of Ionian society. Following, a few months later, the announcement of the British government to

⁸⁴ Kotina, *To Rizospastiko kinima*, 295.

⁸⁵ These newspapers were the Unionist *Nea Epochi*, *Ethnegersia*, *Foni Ioniou kai Rigas* [Voice of the Ionian and Rigas] and the Old Radical *Alitheia*, *Alithis Rizospastis* [True Radical] and *Anagennesis* [Rebirth].

⁸⁶ The decision to cede the island was taken by the British cabinet on December 8, 1862, the Queen granting her assent the following day and the Greek Minister being officially informed soon after. For further details see Harold Temperley, "Documents illustrating the cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece 1848-1870," *Journal of Modern History*, 9(1) (1937): 48-55.

⁸⁷ "Pros tous sympolitas mas Israilitas" [To our fellow citizens Jews], *Ethnegersia*, November 8, 1862.

relinquish the Islands the *Ethnegersia* wrote that although it thought it “unnecessary”⁸⁸ to concern itself any longer with the issue of Jewish Emancipation, given that *Enosis* was near, it did however make one final and noteworthy attack against the *Cronaca*, arguing that it did not represent the interests of the community whose rights it advocated and that it ought to cease “provoking scandals in our society.”

Admittedly in comparison to the *Ethnegersia*'s initial reactions to the *Cronaca* these comments are an improvement. But one should lose sight of the fact that although the general tone of the commentary improved the target of critical attack was still Jewish. The *Cronaca* may have been a narrower target but a Jewish target nonetheless. Moreover this final set of reactions in the *Ethnegersia* demonstrates that even though political developments allowed for an easing of hostility towards Ionian Jewry the newspapers that reflected the views of the Unionist Radicals retained a basic kernel of antisemitism.

Conclusion

Having examined above a number of the published as well as private responses to the *Cronaca* a few tentative concluding remarks are in order. Firstly the *Cronaca*, with its publication of editorials advocating Emancipation of Ionian Jewry, served as a catalyst for an open and public dialogue on a plethora of issues concerning the legal and social standing of Ionian Jews, thereby exposing them to either praise or hostility, depending on the circumstance of each case. Secondly the responses the *Cronaca* garnered were by no means all the same and given that most originated in the party-affiliated press they reflected the party and factional divides of the period. It is thus clear that while the Old Radicals supported Emancipation the New Radicals rejected it with immense hostility. But the *Borsa* incident together with Andreas Laskaratos' responses complicate matters. Although quite vocal in his criticism of traditionalist Cephalonian society Laskaratos was equally vocal in his criticism of both the Old and New Radicals, while as far as the *Borsa* is concerned, it is by no means clear under what circumstances its governing body decided to exclude Jews. If anything these latter factors tend to suggest that the *Cronaca*'s impact went beyond the divisive politics of *Enosis* of the early 1860s and reflected other social, political and ideological forces at work such as interreligious rivalry within the Corfiot merchant classes or a political vision for the future of the islands that was not necessarily predicated on *Enosis*. *Enosis* however did take place and with it the recognition of equal rights, under the treaty arrangements and 1864 Constitution, for Ionian Jews and Roman Catholics. This leads us to the third, and final, point. Although the extension of full legal rights ultimately fulfilled the goals of *Cronaca* it did not correspond to any significant shift in attitudes concerning Jews within Greece. Despite the general goodwill demonstrated at the time of *Enosis* and the subsequent abolition of all British-era discriminatory laws as well as the election in 1870 of Giuseppe Nacamulli

⁸⁸ “Diafora” [Varia], *Ethnegersia*, January 4, 1863, 4.

as an alderman of Corfu,⁸⁹ antisemitic hostility did not take long to reappear. Within a few months of the formal handover of late May 1864 an antisemitic incident took place in Corfu between Greek conscripts and Jews.⁹⁰ In August of the same year the newly established paper *Koinotis Kerkyras* led with editorials accusing 'Jewish usurers' as being the cause of the poverty and high rate of indebtedness of the Corfu peasantry.⁹¹ Of themselves these events tell us little about the perpetuation of antisemitism in the islands but in a manner reminiscent of earlier 'regime changes' in the islands they remind us of the repeated pattern of latent antisemitism rising to the surface during moments of political change and adjustment. Moreover if these events are considered together with a number of other incidents directly concerning Jewish participation in the 1872 and 1875 parliamentary elections⁹² in addition to the well-known blood libel riots⁹³ of 1891 questions begin to arise as to how Ionian Jewry was incorporated into the Greek Kingdom and to what extent the latter actually enjoyed their political rights in practice. These questions however belong to another story.

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⁸⁹ "La libertà non è una vana parola in Grecia," *La Famiglia Israelitica* (1869) 145-146.

⁹⁰ *Despatches from Her Majesty's Consuls in Corfu, Zante and Cephalonia, containing information on the state of those islands since the withdrawal of British Protection, and their annexation to the Kingdom of Greece*, London, British Parliamentary Papers 1867 [3827]

⁹¹ [Leader], *Koinotis Kerkyras*, 24 August 1864, 1; [Letter to the Editor], *Koinotis Kerkyras*, 9 September 1864, 1-3 and reply by Jewish merchant Ilias de Mordo [Letter to the Editor], *Ellas*, 29 August 1864, 4.

⁹² According to reports and other complaints made at the time Corfiot Jews were threatened and physically prevented from voting on polling days. Gunnar Hering, *Ta politika kommata stin Ellada* [Political Parties in Greece] (Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, 2004), 2v, 1: 406-407, 665 and Note 72 above.

⁹³ Eftychia Liata, *I Kerkyra kai i Zakynthos ston kyklona tou antisimitismou* [Corfu and Zante in the cyclone of Antisemitism] (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Research Foundation, 2006); Maria Margaroni, "Antisemitic rumours and violence in Corfu at the end of the 19th century," *Quest Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC*, 3 (2012) [www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=306].

**The Jewish Conspiracy Revealed (1897).
Adolf Stoecker and the 19th Century Antisemitism in Finland**

by *Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen*

Abstract

This article examines the antisemitic attitudes among the Lutheran clergy in Finland during the latter part of the 19th century. The Jewish question was discussed at the Finnish Diet by the estate of the clergy in order to determine if Jews could become Finnish citizens. By the majority vote this was considered undesirable. Adolf Stoecker's antisemitic ideology, his the ideas of a Jewish conspiracy for world dominance, found Finnish support.

- **Introduction**
- **Jews in Germany – Something to Think About**
- **Johan Samuel Pajula**
- **Dangerous Study Trips Abroad**
- **Many-Faced Counter-Enlightenment**

Introduction

In 2007 researcher Simo Muir published an article on Israel-Jakob Schur (1879–1949), a Finnish Jew, whose doctoral thesis *Wesen und Motive der Beschneidung im Licht der alttestamentlichen Quellen und der Völkerkunde* was rejected at the University of Helsinki in 1937. This article caught the attention of both the academic and general public in Finland. It suggested that contributing factors to the rejection of Schur's academic research were, among other things, the Finnish antisemitism as well as the involvement of some professors of Theology, who informally influenced the evaluation process. The University of Helsinki founded a committee in order to examine if Schur's academic reputation should be restored and if the doctoral dissertation was rejected for antisemitic motives. The result of this investigation, published in 2008, was, rather surprisingly, that this was not the case.

The committee of 2008 totally ignored the radical content of Schur's thesis, the political context of the time as well as the long history of Finnish antisemitism. In a sense this is understandable since the history of Finnish religious antisemitism is yet to be written. This article is an introduction into a religiously motivated Finnish antisemitism. Despite

what has been previously stated, the antisemitic ideas were present within the Finnish society already in the 19th century.

The 19th century religiously motivated Finnish antisemitism has not yet received a thorough study in Finland. It seems to have been a kind of under current sometimes touched by later Finnish historians and a theme uninteresting to Finnish theologians. Nevertheless, the religious antisemitism, in the context of Lutheran creed and country, was there, even if no-one in the 19th century seemed willing to openly declare himself as a religiously motivated anti-Semite. The Finnish religious antisemitism took the form of presenting “facts,” either on contemporary states of affairs or Bible interpretations, in order to legitimize its claims. Thus it represented itself like an argumentation not based on attitudes or prejudices even when claiming that there was a global Jewish conspiracy aiming at world domination.

Finnish historians have studied the difficult position of the Jews in Finland at the end of the 19th century. The Jews, their rights as well as their deportations from the country, were constantly on the official agenda. A decree by Alexander II had stated that former soldiers of the Russian army had after their military service a right to settle in the areas where they had been in service. Thus those Jews, the former soldiers and their families, who had been serving in Russian troops in Finland, could settle in even though they did not have any formally or legally defined position in the Finnish society. Finland was an autonomous grand duchy governed by Finnish laws, which did not allow Jewish immigration or recognize Jews as citizens, but an imperial decree over-ruled this and thus the Jewish problem was created. In 1890 there were about 1.000 Jews in Finland and after the deportations some 700 in 1893.¹

In 1872, in connection with the fact that there lived Jews in Finland and according to some foreign examples,² the Finnish Diet discussed the proposal of giving the citizenship to those Jews. The Diet was a rather peculiar legislative body that began its work in 1863. In its day it was considered a remarkable parliamentary reform, since for more than 50 years there had been nothing like this, and in the context of Russian empire this no doubt was the case. The form of this representative body dates centuries back and to time prior to 1809 when Finland was a part of Sweden. Prior to 1809 the Finns as Swedish citizens participated in the meetings of the Swedish Diet. The Finnish Diet

¹ Taimi Torvinen, *Kadimah: Suomen juutalaisten historia* (Helsinki: Otava, 1989), 62. Nils-Erik Forsgård, *I det femte inseqlets tecken: en studie i den åldrande Zacharias Topelius livs- och historiafilosofi*. Diss. Skrifter utgivna af Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 616. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland (1998), 195–196. Jari Hanski *Juutalaisviha Suomessa 1918–1944*, (Helsinki: Ajatus, 2006), 39–50. Antero Leitzinger *Ulkomaalaiset Suomessa 1812–1972* (Helsinki: East-West Books, 2008), 272–273.

² In Sweden Jews were given full political rights in 1870.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

consisted of four estates, the nobility, Lutheran clergy, land owning farmers and the middle class, the bourgeoisie. These different social groups or classes elected their representatives to the Diet deal with the internal matters like finances and discuss the laws of the Finnish Grand Duchy. The Diet had no legislative power; its role was preparatory and the suggestions for laws were subjected to approval of the autocrat emperor.

In dealing with the Jewish question, concerning the rights of the Jews that had settled in Finland, the discussions at the Diet, recorded by stenographers, provides source material on the Finnish antisemitism starting from the year 1872. That year the estate of the Lutheran clergy discussed for the first time whether it was appropriate to civil rights to the Jews that lived in Finland. As has been noted before, the attitudes of the Lutheran pastors, of those thirty that were representing the clergy, were rather antisemitic.³

This however is not the whole picture. The discussion on Jews was actually the first one concerning the immigration into Finland. The representatives of the clergy painted sinister pictures of the millions of the eastern Jews ready to immigrate into Finland if the civil rights were given also to the Jews. A motivating factor in this discussion was nationalism; large-scale immigration into a country with a population of only about two million was considered a threat. If citizenship would be awarded to those Jews already present in Finland, it was feared that the Eastern European uneducated and poor Jews, especially from Poland and Lithuania, would flock to the country in millions. The eastern Jews, the possible immigrants, were considered a threat themselves. As a people without a nation they would have no loyalties toward Finland, they were poor, uneducated, religiously conservative and thus hostile toward Christianity and a morally inferior stock of people.⁴

Even when these arguments were stated in 1872 most of Lutheran pastors thinking like this wanted to stress that they were not anti-Jewish. In their opinion they just stated the facts. In denying the civil rights of the Jews they thought they protected their country against influences alien to the Finnish society and against a possible mass-immigration. One representative of the Luther clergy stressed the criminal nature of the Jews to an extreme by referring to the parable of the Good Samaritan. He interpreted the whole suggestion of giving civil rights to Jews as an effort of the good Samaritans, the Finns, not helping the injured man, but his muggers. Many of the pastors who opposed the rights for Jews wanted to emphasize that they themselves were not antisemitics. They had, however, quite a clear opinion what these Eastern European Jews actually were like.

³ The Jewish question was discussed at the Diet in 1872, 1877–1878, 1882, 1885, 1894 and 1897 (see, Torvinen, *Suomen juutalaisten historia*, 35–38). Hanski, *Juutalaisviha Suomessa*, 40.

⁴ Pappissäädyn pöytäkirjat [Minutes of the estate of the clergy] (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seur, 1872), 441–449, 449–454, 463, 471.

As one representative put it “the vanguard is already here [in Finland].” It was maintained that Jews already living in Finland caused problems, broke the law, sold stolen goods, sold alcohol illegally, were devious, practiced money lending and led conspicuous lives. They were poor, uneducated and morally inferior as well as traditional in their beliefs and hated Christianity. They would not assimilate or become a part of Finland.⁵

Not all were of the same opinion concerning the Jews, Carl Gustaf von Essen (1815–1895), a professor of practical theology at the University of Helsinki, was of the opinion that nobody could be denied of civil rights because of their religion. He also added that the Jewish faith should be the religion “we” have the most sympathy for. Could not the descendants of Solomon be wise or those of the Maccabees be patriots, von Essen asked. With respect he referred also to Jewish scientists in general and to the prominent Christian theologians like August Neander, who came from Jewish background, and Franz Delitzsch.”⁶

Discussions on the position of the Jews continued at the Diet on the following decades, the Jews and the Jewish question were broadly discussed in newspapers, but a new kind of antisemitism reached Finland at the end of the 19th century. As an example of this the Finnish theological journal published an article on the Jews in Germany.

Jews in Germany – Something to Think About

An article “Observations concerning the Jews in Germany” was published in Finnish in 1897. Its point of departure was that Christian culture was under attack and being undermined in many ways. According to the article, the most noteworthy and most peculiar of the destructive forces were the modern Jews, dangerous to the whole fabric of Christian culture. The modern aggressive Jews – unlike the Orthodox Talmud Jews – had abandoned the faith of their fathers and were committed to “national” goals. Their faith, so to say, was this: “cosmopolitan principles of the French revolution of human rights and ideals concerning culture and progress.” By realizing these ideals these aggressive modern Jews imagined they would create an earthly paradise in order to become its leaders while other nations would be given a position of being lieges under to rule of the Jews.⁷

⁵ Pappissäädyn pöytäkirjat, 222, 459 (three million Eastern European Jews possibly heading for Finland), 469, 471–472, 473–474.

⁶ Pappissäädyn pöytäkirjat, 462, 463.

⁷ Johan Samuel Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen alalta Saksassa” Teologinen Aikakauskirja (1897), 340.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

The article pointed out the Jews as master minds behind this conspiracy and described how they already exercised power.

“It is well known how much the Jews have already done, since among them are the financial princes of the world. Their influence in various parliaments must be evaluated to be great and they usually support liberalism, which is not favorable towards Christianity.

In many countries the biggest and most read newspapers are under their leash and in this way they

[the Jews] largely control the public opinion.”⁸

In Germany, the political rights were given to Jews in 1871, and the article was convinced that as a result of this an antisemitic movement was born – as if there was no antisemitism prior to 1871. The writer enlightened his readers that even though one would not approve of this movement’s views and methods, one should “from a Christian viewpoint” acknowledge its justification to a degree, especially when educational matters were being discussed.⁹

In order to prove the point the article stated that of the Prussian population 86 % were Evangelical, 8,5 % Catholics and 5,5 % Jewish in 1890. However, in some schools in Berlin the religious background of students was as follows.

Table 1.

Percentages concerning the religious background of the students in some schools in Berlin according to the article.

School	Evangelical students (%)	Catholic students (%)	Jewish students (%)
Französische Gymnasium, Vorschule desselben	51,5 46,0	4 3	44,5 51
Sophien- Gymnasium	54,6	3,7	41,7

⁸ Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen,” 341.

⁹ Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen,” 341.

Friedrichs-Gymnasium,	59,1	3,4	37,5
Vorschule desselben	55,5	1,7	42,8

The Finnish readers learnt that a similar situation, the over-representation of Jews, was also at the universities. During the years 1886–1891 71,96 % of the university students were Evangelical, 18,73 % Catholic and 8,98 % Jewish. The article also reminded that if one omits the theological faculties, which did not have Jewish students, the proportionate number of Jewish university students was even higher, 11,95 % during the period of 1886–1891.¹⁰ According to the article, there were too few Protestants and too many Jews at the universities.

A part of Jewish conspiracy was that there were also too many Jewish school girls in Berlin.

Table 2.

The number of Jewish and non-Jewish students in some girl schools in Berlin on Feb 1st, 1896 according to article.¹¹

Schools for girls	total number of students (of them Jews)
Sophienschule	827 (385)
Margarethenschule	779 (352)
Charlottenschule	867 (346)
Luisenschule	852 (276)
Viktoriaschule	835 (264)
Dorotheenschule	193 (45)
Elisabethenschule	624 (127)

The article pointed out that the number of the Jewish students was so large in some schools that schools had to be closed on Jewish holidays since so many students were then absent. The writer of the article also told about his visit to a Jewish school in Halle, which brought about yet another worry. “It seems that the Jewish creed tries to push Christianity out of schools or allows only some type of deistic religious teaching -

¹⁰ Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen,” 341, 342.

¹¹ Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen,” 342–343.

miserable would be Christianity if children were taught mere morality.”¹²

The statistics presented in the article were not totally coherent and the sources of these numbers were not identified. Also statistics not commented at all were those concerning the Catholics: in proportion to the overall population the Catholic children were under-represented in schools. The numbers showed that of all Catholics getting married in Prussia in 1893 31,3 % of the men and 49,7 % of the women were illiterate. This did not seem to concern the writer; point was to prove that there were just too many Jewish students in schools and universities. Concerning writer's own intentions the article stated that it just wanted to give the readers of the Finnish journal of theology, i.e. the Finnish Lutheran pastors, something to think about.¹³

The threat was no longer the uneducated lower-class Jews of the east, like the representatives of the Lutheran clergy has previously thought, but the modern and educated Jews of the west. Interestingly, the problem was the modern society with its financial system and the developments toward the rule of democracy like parliaments, general human rights, newspapers and the public opinion, which all were interpreted as means for attaining a Jewish hegemony over the world.

It is important to recognize that from the point of view of the Russian imperial rule all this was politically correct in a situation where the Slavophiles gained power and influence over the Westerners. The Western developments, modernization, shifting power from kings and emperors to parliaments, free press and civil liberties were not only undesirable, but also a part of the Jewish plot and directed against Christianity. To believe all this was to believe what the Slavophiles wanted people to believe. As generally known, this ideology later materialized in *The Protocols of Elders of Zion* published in the beginning of the 20th century. In Finland the book was published in Swedish in 1919 and in Finnish in 1920. It is still quite unclear how long these revelations were considered genuine and what kind of reception they received among the Finnish Lutheran clergy.¹⁴ Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that the ideas concerning the global Jewish conspiracy, presented as a threat to Christianity and Christian culture in general, were present in Finland already in the 19th century.

¹² Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen,” 343, 345. Pajula informed his readers that in Breslau the situation was similar to Berlin and it had been necessary to place quotas on students of different creeds.

¹³ Pajula, “Havainnoita juutalaiskysymyksen,” 343, 345.

¹⁴ Andrew Taylor, *Kirjat, jotka muuttivat maailmaa* (Helsinki: Ajatus, 2008), 249–253. Forsgård, *On Westerners and Slavophiles*, (2009), 183. Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 135–151.

Johan Samuel Pajula

The writer of the article was Johan Samuel Pajula (1856–1918), Doctor of Theology in his 40s, a teacher and Lutheran pastor. He was one example of the social upward mobility of his time; a Finnish-speaking son of a saddle maker, who became a pastor and a doctor in his field of study. After finishing his Master's in the Faculty of Philosophy he took up the study of theology. Due to the fundamentalist theology called Beckianism and other contributing factors the level of scholarship and the research activity within the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki was quite low in the 1890s. In this situation and as a researcher Pajula was of the new generation.

When Pajula published his doctoral thesis in 1891 he was the first to publish a thesis on church history for 20 years. His work was based on archival study and as an academic thesis a sign of the new research activity within the faculty. Pajula's book was also the first thesis ever published in Finnish, the previous vernacular language, at the Faculty of Theology. He was one of the Finnish-speaking researchers challenging the Swedish-speaking elite of his time at the University of Helsinki. At the end of the 19th century Pajula was the first Finnish-speaking researcher with a lower-class background trying to obtain a chair at the Faculty of Theology where teachers originated from the gentleman class and had Swedish as their mother tongue.

Pajula's personal life and fate was full of tragic. His university career was murdered by two religious fundamentalists, who later became Lutheran bishops and were no historians themselves.¹⁵ This rejection had nothing to do with his views on Jews. Within the Russian empire and in the eyes of the Russian officials of the time anti-Jewish attitudes were no dismerit. Pajula was unsuitable in order to become a professor because his religious convictions were not those of the leading Finnish fundamentalists and because of his social background. Pajula was also one of the ten Lutheran pastors murdered by the reds during the Finnish civil in 1918.¹⁶ A part of his life tragedy was that in addition to other things he also was an antisemitic bigot. In many ways Pajula was a contradictory figure. He was an early animal rights activist in Finland, interested in developing the Finnish folk education and in his written studies also a propagator of religious tolerance and freedom. However, this "religious tolerance" is to be understood as tolerance in the context Christianity and within the Protestant creed.

Pajula was born and raised in a small town of Jyväskylä in Central Finland. It is unlikely

¹⁵ Chancellor's archive KA 6/1896 & Minutes of the Faculty of Theology (12 May 1898), § 1, The Central Archive of the University of Helsinki, Helsinki.

¹⁶ www.sotasurmat.fi/Pajula (a Finnish database on war-time and war-related deaths 1914–1922, read 1 Feb 2013).

that he had picked up these anti-Jewish attitudes in his childhood. There were obviously no Jews in his home town. In fact, the Jews were a small minority in Finland, some 700 individuals in 1893, allowed to settle in cities of Turku, Viipuri and Helsinki.¹⁷ Pajula's antisemitism seems to be even more irrational when we look at his personal career. The elites that destroyed Pajula's university career in Helsinki and humiliated him publicly in the eyes of the contemporaries were naturally not the Jews, but other Finns.

Pajula became rejected by many Finnish elites of his time. These included the Faculty of Theology at Helsinki, the academic senate of the university, but also the Lutheran diocese of Savonlinna and finally the Senate, as the Finnish government was then called in the Finnish Grand Duchy. Pajula, politically a Finnish constitutionalist, was elected as vicar for a large parish by a overwhelming majority of votes in 1902, during the period of intense russification of the Finnish society. The diocese and the government, in accordance with the official pro-Russian and anti-constitutionalist policy, rejected this vote.¹⁸ One might expect that Pajula did not harbor warm feelings towards the Finnish elites of his time. In this situation his choice for an object of resentment, the modern Jews, was rather surprising.

Dangerous Study Trips Abroad

Studying abroad was an important part of raising the general level of the Finnish academics in the 19th century. It was also an important means of keeping in contact with developments in European science, culture and research during the time when Finland was a part of the Russian Empire 1809–1917. In general, it has been considered a merit that a doctor or a graduate student travels abroad in order to do research or to write a thesis.¹⁹

However, within the 19th century Finnish theology, the academic study of religion at the University of Helsinki, the study trips abroad seem to have been like a double-edged sword. Studying in Germany in the 1830s contributed to the fact that a new field of

¹⁷ Leitzinger, *Ulkomaalaiset Suomessa*, 272–273.

¹⁸ Minutes of the economy department, XII 1294. Collection of the Finnish Imperial Senate, The Finnish National Archive, Helsinki.

¹⁹ Matti Klinge, "Humanistiset tieteet" in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria 2. Autonomian aika*, eds. Päiviö Tommila; Aimo Reitala; Veikko Kallio (Helsinki: WSOY, 1980), 193. Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen B. O., *Lille ja kirkkohistorianopetuksen alkuvaiheet Aleksanterin yliopiston teologisessa tiedekunnassa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2000), 176–177.

study and teaching, that of church history, was introduced into Finland.²⁰ Nevertheless, within the field of theology and theologians all influences adopted from Germany were not intellectually or morally sound or beneficial from the point of furthering the scientific study of religion or the academic education of the Lutheran clergy. Some theological study trips to Germany had most undesirable consequences in the 19th century.

So called Beckian theology, the Finnish school adhering to the ideas of professor Johann Tobias Beck (1804–1878) from Tübingen might be considered just a historical curiosity had he and his “school” not practiced such a powerful negative influence on the study of religion in Finland. This fundamentalist understanding of Christianity, “studying theology directly from the Bible,” came to Finland through students studying theology in Germany. It was a conservative religious reaction against a rapidly modernizing Finnish society and became the dominant religious and theological school in the latter half of the 19th century within the Lutheran church and at the faculty of theology at the University of Helsinki.²¹ Another anti-rational ideology, which was transferred into Finland through studying abroad, was the antisemitism of Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909).

Stoecker was a founder of the *Christlich-Soziale Arbeiterpartei* [Christian-social labour party] in 1878. Within the party his influence was great. Stoecker was a Lutheran, politically conservative pastor with a background in a religious revival movement. He championed against secularization, socialism and Jews. It has been stated that his long term plan was establishing a genuine German-Christian state. One target of his antisemitism were the modern Jews. Concerning their social background Pajula and Stoecker, these two Doctors of Theology, resembled each other, but more importantly so did their antisemitic message.²²

Stoecker thought that the devious Jews tried to control and monopolize the newspapers, and financial and political institutions. This was, as we have seen, the message of Pajula as well. The main target of Stoecker’s antisemitic propaganda, in addition to the Jewish capitalists in their stock market temples, was in the field of education. According to

²⁰ Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen, B. O., Lille ja kirkkohistorianopetuksen, 32–44. Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen, “Die Deutsche Kirchengeschichtsforschung und die Entstehung der Disziplin Kirchengeschichte als universitäres, theologisches Lehrfach in Finnland” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 113/2002: 75–90.

²¹ Martti Ruuth, *Ur Alfred Kihlmans brevväxling* (Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura, 1937), 338. Eino Murtorinne *Suomalainen teologia autonomian kautena 1828–1918* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 1986), 135–138, 173–178.

²² Matti Myllykoski, Svante Lundgren, *Murhatun Jumalan varjo. Antisemitismi kristinuskon historiassa* (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 2005), 336–337; 437–444. Jeremy Telman, “Adolf Stoecker: Anti-Semite with a Christian Mission” *Jewish History*, 2/9, 1995: 93–111. David Vital, *A People Apart. The Jews in Europe 1789–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 536–537.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

Stoecker, the number of Jewish teachers should be reduced in Germany and quotas should be placed on Jews in schools and universities. He was quite concerned about the proportionate over-representation of Jewish children and youth within the educational system.²³ These were all themes Pajula repeated in his Finnish article in 1897.

It is not clear exactly when Pajula stayed in Berlin. Nevertheless he did do research in Germany and German archives during the period of 1893–1897, and we know that during that period he stayed also in Berlin. It has been stated that Stoecker's attempt to fight against the social democratic movement was a failure, but that his ideas had an effect on the students of theology and on the future class of the educated in Germany.²⁴ When we remember what restrictions were placed on the education of the Jews since the National Socialist party took the power, Stoecker's ideas seem to have borne fruit. Jewish teachers started to become expelled from the universities from the beginning of 1933, quotas were placed on Jewish students and finally from 1938 it was forbidden for Jewish children to go to regular German schools. However, Stoecker's ideas concerning the education of Jews seem to have been transferred into Finland by Pajula.

Pajula and Stoecker had a similar kind social background and both experienced a social rise through education. Both were Lutheran pastors, conservative and had their religious background in revivalist movements. Pajula has not commented his antisemitic views, and we can only speculate why he adopted these and saw it fit to declare them in Finnish in his home country. One general reason for adopting extreme political views in Finland seems to have been a social dissonance between one's low social background and the high status achieved by education.

A study on the Finnish students of Theology between the years of 1853 and 1917 suggests that this dissonance has been one breeding ground for extreme religious and conservative right-wing attitudes.²⁵ Whatever the case, in Pajula's case this social dissonance and being not related to the elites or adhering to their religious or political views seriously hampered his career. Evil Jewish prices of finance could have been also a scapegoat for his personal resentment. It seems that in his antisemitic views Pajula was not alone among the Lutheran clergy, but his article seems to have been the most

²³ Werner Jochmann, *Gesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland 1870–1943* (Hamburg: Christians, 1988), 17; 24. Telman, *Adolf Stoecker*, 103; 106-107. Jouko Jokisalo, "Antisemitismin traditiot, kansallissosialismi ja Euroopan juutalaisten kansanmurha," *Rasismi tieteessä ja politiikassa – aate- ja oppihistoriallisia esseitä*. (Helsinki: Edita, 1996), 130.

²⁴ *Jyväskylän Lyseo 1858–1908* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1908), 242. Jochmann, *Gesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft*, 17; 24. Telman, *Adolf Stoecker*, 99. Jokisalo, "Antisemitismin traditiot," 130.

²⁵ Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen, *Sääty-ylioppilaasta ensimmäisen polven sivistyneistöön. Jumaluusopin ylioppilaiden sukupolvi kehitys ja poliittis-yhteiskunnallinen toiminta 1853–1918* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2005)

extreme one published by a Lutheran pastor in the 19th century.

Many-Faced Counter-Enlightenment

Counter-Enlightenment is a term and a phenomenon made known by Isaiah Berlin.²⁶ It is most helpful in describing, explaining and understanding not only religious or philosophical, but also social and political developments and the making of the modern in the 19th-century Europe. Multi-faced Counter-Enlightenment was, e.g., a reaction against reason and rationality and against the ideals of freedom, brotherhood and equality presented by the French Revolution. In a general level the counter-Enlightenment consisted of many reactionary developments within European politics, religion, art and concerning the field of scientific study in the 19th century.²⁷ The notion of counter-Enlightenment is also important in understanding various 19th-century Finnish phenomena, including antisemitism.

In Finland this counter movement was present from the early decades of the century. A contributing factor, as noted before, was the political reality. As a result of the Napoleonic wars, Finland was conquered by Russia and became a part of the Russian empire in 1809. From the imperial point of view, especially during the reign of Nicolai I, the Enlightenment as well as any liberal European ideas were dangerous and misguided.²⁸ In the Finnish context the Enlightenment ideas and ideals were not only politically incorrect. The whole notion of Enlightenment's dangerousness gained support among the conservative members of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki and among the Lutheran clergy as the religious fundamentalism gained more ground.

It seems that Pajula revealed the Jewish educational conspiracy to the Finnish audience. In his views of the Jews and in addition to Stoecker he was perhaps influenced by domestic sources also. Zacharias Topelius (1818–1898) was a writer, novelist and professor of history. Like Pajula, Topelius was somewhat of a contradiction: deeply religious, pro animal rights activist, defender of women's rights to university education and a writer of touching fairy tales for children. However, as Nils-Erik Forsgård has pointed out, antisemitism was an integral part of his mystical-eschatological world-view based on religious conservatism, literal Bible interpretations, visions on the end of the

²⁶ Berlin's article on Counter-Enlightenment in http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/published_works/ac/counter-enlightenment.pdf.

²⁷ Forsgård (2009), 181, 182–183.

²⁸ Anatole G. Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution 1825. The Decembrist Movement. Its Origins, Development and Significance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 29–32; 34–35; 265–266.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

world and on his opposition to rationalism and cosmopolitanism. The global economic rule of the Jews and the economic exploitation of Finland were threats Topelius wrote about in his published fiction.²⁹

According to Topelius, the Jews had eternal characteristics like deviousness, envy and treacherousness. The serious flaws of the Jews were, among other things, their lacking nationalism, open materialism and the denial of Christianity. A part of his mystical-eschatological world-view was that in his opinion the anti-Christ was already borne.³⁰ Pajula could have been informed about Topelius' views on Jews, most extreme of which he did not publish, simply through family connection; he married Topelius' granddaughter in 1892.

Pajula's antisemitism in the 1890s was a part of the Finnish Counter-Enlightenment in which he, following a German example and in accordance with the policy of the Russian empire, interpreted the legacy of the Enlightenment as well as the reforms identifiable to it to be a Jewish plot aimed at world dominion and against Christianity. The short chapters on the history of Finnish religiously motivated antisemitism seem to suggest, that the demonization of the Jews was well under way long before rise of the Third Reich.

We don't know if Pajula followed the Jewish question in France or was familiar with antisemitic ideas of Constantin Franz (1817–1891) or H. S. Chamberlain's (1855–1827) later book *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1899).³¹ In order to prepare his qualifying thesis for a chair in church history Pajula went to do research in Germany. As a by-product of his visit to German archives and studies on the history of pietistic movements he seems to have been influenced by the German antisemitic propaganda of Adolf Stoecker, as Pajula's article published in the Finnish journal of theology in 1897 clearly demonstrates. On its part and in addition to the previous discussions on Jews by the Finnish pastors, the article gives an affirmative answer to question if there was religiously motivated antisemitism in Finland.³²

²⁹ J. V. Snellman, later a professor, who has been turned into a Finnish national philosopher, wrote against the Jews from a nationalistic point of view already in the 1840s. In his opinion, civil rights could not be given to Jews in a Christian state, since they were not committed to the national spirit of the state. Forsgård, *I det femte inseqlets tecken*, 101, 177–195, 211–222, 235–236.

³⁰ Forsgård, *I det femte inseqlets tecken*, 235–236. Hanski, *Juutalaisviha Suomessa*, 50.

³¹ Forsgård *I det femte inseqlets tecken*, 10. Hanski, *Juutalaisviha Suomessa*, 18–21. Vital, *A People Apart*, 217–218; 540–566.

³² Hanski, *Juutalaisviha Suomessa*, 116.

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**From “Court Jew” Origins to Civil-Servant Nationalism:
Hajim S. Davičo
(1854-1916)**

by *Bojan Mitrović*

Abstract

This article examines the life and works of Hajim S. Davičo in the context of the history of Serbian Jews, of the “Court Jew” Davičo family and of the Serbian and Triestine context of the late 19th and early 20th century. Hajim Davičo was an active proponent of linguistic acculturation, and in his career as a diplomat he proved total devotion to Serbian national cause, to the brink of complete assimilation. Indeed, his national allegiance put Davičo in the position to interfere even in the matters of the Serbian-Orthodox Church. The provisions of the Berlin congress, the Davičo family background and the need of Serbian bureaucracy for capable and educated men, have all contributed to the rise of this Serbian Jewish diplomat in less than two decades after the emancipation of Jews in Serbia.

- **Introduction**
- **The Davičo Family as Court Jews**
- **The Jewish Civil Servant and a Peculiar Christian-Orthodox Community: Hajim Davičo in Trieste**
- **Retirement: Munich and Geneva**
- **Conclusions**

Introduction

The emancipation of Jews in Serbia was a result of foreign intervention of the Great Powers in the 1878 Berlin Congress. The recognition of the State's independence was, in fact, bound to the recognition of civil and political rights to religious minorities and thus, also, to the Jews. Yet, even before the Treaty of Berlin the juridical status of the Serbian Jews fluctuated greatly. During the First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) Jews were treated the same way as the Muslims (or “Turks”). The insurgent Serbs were overwhelmingly peasants and once in revolt, their wrath fell upon all city-dwellers as well as on the

infidels. Both Muslims and Jews were killed, their goods were plundered and even some cases of forceful conversion were registered.¹ However, already during the 1815 Second Uprising and the following reign of Prince Miloš Obrenović² the attitude towards Jews changed dramatically. The new Serbian leader took upon himself the exclusive right to judge in any civil or criminal cases in which the Jews were involved and the protection of the Prince was guaranteed to all Jews.³

The Davičo Family as Court Jews

The only comprehensive work on the Davičo family is the 1992 article by Milica Mihailović, the first curator and founder of the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade.⁴ Mihailović already called the first Davičos “Court Jews” without discussing the term itself and how it could be applied in the Serbian case. Indeed, within the history of Court Jews, the Davičo family appears rather late, in the early 19th century. Furthermore they are situated on the border of Central Europe and outside of the Germanic world.⁵ The Davičos were the Serbian branch of the Haim family that fled Belgrade during the First Serbian Uprising and settled partially in Zemun (Semelin) and Vienna, and partially in Belgrade. Of the Habsburg branch, the most important member was probably Leon Israel Haim (?-1887) who was the president of the Jewish Sephardic community in Vienna.⁶ The Belgrade branch of the family remained Ottoman subjects and spoke fluently both Yiddish and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish).⁷

Between 1815 and 1839 Serbia was even more than an absolutist state. It was a vassal territory of the Ottoman Empire and its ruler, Miloš Obrenović, governed like a pasha of the late Ottoman period. The founder of the Davičo family, David (behor) Hajim, known as Davičo (c.1780-c.1860) was a business partner of Prince Miloš, providing the ruler with credit and luxury goods from Vienna and providing the Serbian army with guns and ammunition. In 1835, the old Davičo had seemingly saved the Prince’s life,

¹ Bogumil Hrabak, *Jevreji u Beogradu do sticanja ravnopravnosti (1878)* [The Jews of Belgrade until the obtainment of equality] (Belgrade: Srpski genealoški centar, 2009), 225-247.

² Miloš Obrenović (1780-1860) Leader of the Serbs (Knjaz) 1815-1830. Prince (Knjaz) 1830-1839, formally recognized by the Porte; deposed in 1839, returns to the throne in 1858-60.

³ Carole Fink, “Defending the Rights of Others:” *The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 25-26. Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Histoire de Juifs séphardes. De Tolède à Salonique*, (Paris: Seuil, 2002; Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2004), 169-170.

⁴ Milica Mihajlović, “Dva veka porodice Hajim-Davičo u Beogradu” [Two Hundred Years of the Hajim-Davičo Family in Belgrade], *Zbornik – Jevrejski istorijski muzej* (1992), 249-276.

⁵ *Hofjuden – Ökonomie und Interkulturalität Die jüdische Wirtshafselite im 18. Jahrhundert*, eds., Rotraud Ries, J. Friedrich Battenberg, (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 2002), 11-39.

⁶ Milica Mihajlović, “Dva veka,” 251.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

warning him of an assassination plot set up by the Pasha of Belgrade.⁸ The good relations between Davičo and Miloš, also influenced the overall Jewish culture in Serbia. In 1837, only six years after the establishment of the Serbian state printing-press, set of Jewish fonts were bought starting a printing activity that would last throughout the 19th century.⁹ David Haim's, son Haim (behor Haim David) Davičo (1800-1869), inherited the family business and continued to work even after Prince Miloš's downfall in 1839, yet mostly in Vienna.¹⁰ The deposition of the first ruler of the Obrenović dynasty was, however, not only a setback for the Davičo family but also, more generically, for the position of Jews in Serbia. By 1846 the Jews were banned from the interior of the country and could own real estate or engage commerce only in Belgrade. Within this new context, most of the Serbian Jews did not face physical threats but were driven to a state of extreme poverty and were concentrated in the capital.¹¹ Even within this setting the Davičo family managed to retain a certain degree of prosperity maintaining commercial relations between Belgrade, Vienna and Istanbul, running a few shops and taverns in the Serbian capital and working in the business of money exchange (*saraf*). Samuilo Davičo (1832-1911), son of Haim Davičo was himself a tradesman and was elected several times as the president of the Belgrade Sephardic Jewish community. By 1890, in Belgrade, out of 54.250 inhabitants, 2,599 were Jews, representing roughly half of the country's Jewish population.¹²

Hajim Samuilo Davičo, the grand-grandson of David behor Hajim-Davičo,¹³ was the first of the family to enter Serbian civil service. Hajim's literary, and maybe even

⁸ Bogumil Hrabak, *Jevreji u Beogradu*, 287. Milica Mihajlović, "Dva veka," 249-276.

⁹ Jennie Lebel (Ženi Lebl), *Jevrejske knjige štampane u Beogradu 1837-1905* [Jewish books printed in Belgrade] (Gornji Milanovac: Dečije novine, 1990).

¹⁰ Milica Mihajlović, "Dva veka," 263-266.

¹¹ The only known episode of violence against Jews in modern Serbia (up to 1914) was the so-called Šabac pogrom, in January 1865 when two Jews got murdered, whereas in April of the same year a sixteen year-old girl was baptized by force. Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia. A Quest for Community* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 31. Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews of Turkey and the Balkans 1808-1945*, vol. I (Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University, 2005), 183-184. Jennie Lebel, *The Evolution of the Serbian State and the Struggle of Serbian Jewry for Equal Rights*, ed. Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, vol. II (Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University, 2002), 45-65.

¹² Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, 33. Milan Ristović, "Belgrado, una capitale sul confine ('Ah, ma avreste dovuto vederla al tempo dei turchi!)" eds. Marco Dogo, Amando Pitassio, *Città dei Balcani, Città d'Europa. Studi sullo sviluppo urbano nelle capitali post-ottomane* (Lecce: Argo, 2008), 89-117.

¹³ Homonymy was very extended in the Davičo family as the eldest son of David behor Hajim-Davičo was called Hajim behor David Davičo and his youngest son was also named David Hajim. Finally, Hajim S. Davičo was the son of Samuilo Davičo and the grandson of Hajim behor David-Davičo. This situation has led to much confusion in historiography as even the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (2nd ed., Vol. 5, 444) attributes to

political, mentor was Stojan Novaković, a leading figure of Serbian intellectual and political life of the late 19th and early 20th century.¹⁴ Novaković was Davičo's professor in the lyceum (*gimnazija*) and had encouraged his talented student to publish prose writings. In fact, Davičo's final bibliography was almost as abundant as that of his mentor, although maybe not of equal quality. Hajim Davičo wrote on a wide variety of subjects including theatre reviews, the transcription of Belgrade Jewish folk tales and songs, current politics, commerce and literature and translated, mostly from Spanish. Davičo's works were published in the most important Serbian journals and periodicals, be it in Serbia (*Otadžbina*, *Videlo*, *Trgovinski glasnik*), Southern Hungary (*Brankovo kolo*) or Bosnia (*Bosanska vila*, *Zora*). After finishing the lyceum, Davičo enrolled in law studies at the Belgrade's *Grande école* (*Velika škola*) but entered the civil service before graduating, since, at the time, Jews could still not become lawyers. In the following years he had worked in the Justice, Finance and Education Ministries and served in the Serbian consulate in Budapest, where he married his wife, Lela, probably of Ashkenazi origin.¹⁵

Hajim Davičo most certainly was not the first Serbian diplomat of Jewish origin, but he was the first Serbian Jew to become a professional diplomat. It must be observed that the organization of the Serbian consular representations and the emancipation of the Jews in Serbia were both the product of the 1878 Berlin Treaty, which gave the country its independence and the local Jews equal rights. The first Serbian consul in Trieste (1884-1888) was a Triestine Jew, Salomon Kabiljo but, during his mandate, the consulate was an honorary one and Kabiljo continued to exercise his profession as merchant.¹⁶ Some ten years younger than Davičo was Pavle Marinković (1866-1925) who had an even more prominent career. Marinković served in the Serbian consulates of St. Petersburg and Athens (1895-1898) and rose to become the Minister of Education and Religious affairs in 1900-1901, becoming, also, one of the authors of the 1901 Constitution. Yet,

Hajim S. Davičo (1854–1918), the author of Jewish short stories, the business partnership with Prince Miloš Obrenović (1780-1860). Mihajlović, "Dva veka," 272.

¹⁴ Stojan Novaković (1842-1915) was historian, philologist and politician. He was twice the Serbian Prime minister (1895-'96; February-October 1909), ambassador in Istanbul and St. Petersburg, and minister in various governments of the Progressive Party (*Napredna stranka*). One of the first members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, Novaković was the author of some 500 bibliographical units, be it books or articles, mainly in the field of Serbian Medieval history and literary history.

¹⁵ Mihajlo B. Milošević, "Hajim S. Davičo (1854-1918)," *Jevrejski Almanah* (1965-1967), 129-135. Mihajlović, "Dva veka," 268. Biljana Sljivic-Simsic, "Women in Life and Fiction at the Turn of the Century (1884-1914)," *Serbian Studies*, 7/2 (1993): 106-122.

¹⁶ Đorđe Lopičić, *Konzularni odnosi Srbije (1804-1918)*. [The consular relations of Serbia] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2007), 202-204.

though his mother, Velika Klajn, was Jewish, Pavle Marinković was of Christian-Orthodox faith, as was his father Dimitrije.¹⁷

In 1893 Davičo published his first book of Jewish stories entitled *From the Jalija* (*Sa Jalije*), the old Belgrade Jewish neighbourhood (*mahala*).¹⁸ As the literary historian Predrag Palavestra has observed, these were probably the first works of fiction to describe, not only the Jews of Belgrade but also the Serbian capital.¹⁹ The plot of these stories, as in most of Davičo's writings, is rather naïve, and the changes that happen in the characters are seldom thoroughly motivated. Furthermore, the abundance of ethnographic material, and the observations on the life in Jalija, at times, depart from the main plot, leaving many loose ends. At the end of each story, these lateral plots are always resolved, *ex machina*, with a wedding. All three stories bear the name of the main female character (*Naumi*, *Luna*, *Perla*) and all three are, essentially, love stories, whereas only the first (*Naumi*) ends tragically. Yet, *Sa Jalije* is an incredibly interesting read, not only for a historian or an ethnologist. Descriptions of witches (*vidalonga*) and other unholy spirits are intertwined with quotations of *ladino* poems and, especially, with the description of the local *cousine* and the local kitchens. Kosher is, of course, an essential element of the Jewish religion, but in Davičo, food also connects the inhabitants of Jalija with the Serbian national cause:

“The writer of these images humbly admits that his words are too feeble to describe you, oh glorious kitchen of Jalija! As if you were a University, you have formed generations of honest men, filled with faith in the God of justice, that, in the bloody days of Belgrade, have embraced the struggle of the Serbian hero Miloš against Hagar's bloodthirsty breed.”²⁰

For Davičo, Jalija is, above all, the site of nostalgia.²¹ The author gives an almost timeless character to his stories, and to the Jewish quarter, and even when the story is set in a

¹⁷ *Znameniti Jevreji Srbije. Biografski leksikon*, ed. Aleksandar Gaon, [The Important Jews of Serbia. A Biographic Lexicon] (Belgrade: Savez jevrejskih opština Srbije, 2011), 149-150.

¹⁸ At the time of the writing of this text, the first edition of *Sa Jalije* was not accessible in any of the Belgrade's major libraries. Thus, all the quotations will refer to the second, recent edition of the book: Hajim S. Davičo, *Priče sa Jalije*, ed. Vasa Pavković (Belgrade: Centar za stvaralaštvo mladih, 2000).

¹⁹ Predrag Palavestra, *Jevrejski pisci u srpskoj književnosti* [Jewish Writers in Serbian Literature] (Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 1998), 87-91.

²⁰ Hajim S. Davičo, *Priče sa Jalije*, 69.

²¹ Although the author never mentions it, at the time the publication of these stories, the Jalija Hajim Davičo was born in already ceased to exist. In 1867-'68 the whole old part of Belgrade underwent heavy reconstruction, transforming the city's three *mahale* (the Serbian, the Muslim and the Jewish quarters) into a single Central-European urbanistic whole. Of course, similar transformations were happening throughout 19th century Europe, in Rome, Prague, Firenze and other cities. Divna Đurić-Zamolo, “Stara jevrejska četvrt i Jevrejska ulica u Beogradu” [The Old Jewish Quarter and the Jewish Street in Belgrade], *Jevrejski Almanah*

specific historical period (*Perla*) it retains certain qualities of a fairy-tale. Contrary to what might be expected, the female characters are rarely motors of change. Speaking against male predominance in the Belgrade Jewish society, Davičo writes:

“The oriental male despotism and jealousy cannot stand female company in public. The more men believe in the dogma of female modesty and virtuousness, the more cruel they are to women in everyday life.”²²

Yet his female characters are mostly dreamy, beautiful and desperately in love. Otherwise, if they are older, they all seem to be very *tachlis* about the household. The driving factors of social change in *From the Jaliya* are men, the fiancés or husbands of the leading female characters. Thus, David in *Naumi*, reads the Old Testament in the 1865 Serbian translation, writes down the songs sung by the old *tija*'s, and finishes as a soldier in the Serbian army, whereas Andžel, in *Luna*, tries to learn Serbian to find a better job. In the background of almost all the Jewish stories written by Hajim Davičo is, however, the conflict within the opposing factions in Jaliya. Davičo does not name these factions but they could reflect both the Ashkenazi/Sephardim divide in the Belgrade community, judging by the surnames of the characters, or the orthodox/non-orthodox division judging by the ideas exposed.²³ In *Buena*, a short story published in 1913, Davičo centres the conflict on the problem of school discipline and calls one faction *batinaši* (the rod-beaters) and the other *tikvani* (pumpkin-heads) though here the names of the factions are purely contextual to the conflict. The rod-beaters are those in favour of corporal punishment of students, whereas the pumpkin-heads are those who would prefer their children to remain less educated rather than treating them with too much severity. Be as it may, in all the stories Davičo explicitly holds the side of those who are not too strict in the application of religious norms and of discipline in general. Thus, one of his best villain characters is described in the following terms:

“Ćir Čelebon was uneducated, but he masked his lack of knowledge by pedantry and by fanatical orthodoxy, and these things absorbed his thoughts so much that he started speaking with disgust and with poisonous hatred against all those who did not consider the Jewish teachings as a dead pond but as big river that runs into the sea of mankind.

(1965-1967), 41-76. Ljiljana Blagojević, “La regolazione urbana di Belgrado nel 1867: traccia contro cancellazione,” in *Città dei Balcani, Città d'Europa. Studi sullo sviluppo urbano nelle capitali post-ottomane*, eds. Marco Dogo, Amando Pitassio (Lecce: Argo, 2008), 161-180; Stefano Caviglia, *Alla scoperta della Roma ebraica. La storia, i luoghi, la vita della più antica comunità della diaspora*, (Napoli: Intra Moenia, 2013).

²² Hajim S. Davičo, *Priče sa Jalije*, 50.

²³ Up to date, we lack significant literary analysis of these aspects of Davičo's prose in literary history and criticism.

Ćir Čelebon was a widower. People say it was his bad temper that drove his delicate and silent wife into the grave.”²⁴

Thus in all of his Jewish writings, Davičo demonstrated a very heavy instance towards acculturation and integration of Jews, though mostly in the linguistic aspect. This tendency, was coupled by his disdain towards strict orthodoxy, certainly demonstrate the progressist attitude. His protagonists, though conserving their Jewish identity have to embrace the nation-state in order to elevate themselves socially. It is interesting to observe that only in the case of old Čelebon, Davičo uses the title Ćir, similar to the Serbian Kir, probably derived from Κύριος (lord). In 1837, the playwright Jovan Sterija Popović has staged for the first time one of his best-known comedies, “Kir Janja,” about a stingy old man of Greek origin. Thus, Davičo’s short story might be one of the first cases in Serbian literature where Jew is a negative character, even if only in a all-Jewish setting. In any case, the insistence on linguistic assimilation, the opening towards female social emancipation, the attitude against the strict observance of religious norms and the appearance of anti-Jewish stereotypes have all probably contributed to a vehement reaction of anonymous Belgrade Jews against the author of *Sa Jalije*. Though the letter was addressed to the Serbian government, and is still conserved in the private fund of the then Prime Minister Vladan Đorđević, it is clearly directed against Davičo. The letter did not address any particular issues but accused Davičo of atheism and of exposing the Jewish community to ridicule. The letter ended with quite a serious threat.

“In the end, you should know that we will not bear offences silently and that we will persecute you by all means, even in the press. We will beat you up so that the government will see that those who are not loyal to God and to their faith cannot be loyal to the government. You should be aware by now that you have committed your misdeeds in the wrong moment, and that what you have done will cost you your life. You malicious fool, you cosmopolitan scum (*obrazino svetska*)! Many have done as you have, but they have caused their own ruin, while God’s commandments remain unchangeable. So it will be with you, you will pay with your life, while the commandments of our God will remain sturdy as a rock. Amen.”²⁵

In the following five years, until his diplomatic mission in Trieste, Davičo remained silent in the Serbian public life. It is most probable that these intimidations had quite a harsh effect on Hajim Davičo as a person, though it is unlikely that his appointment as a consul had anything to do with this affair.²⁶ It is true, however, that after 1897, Hajim

²⁴ Hajim S. Davičo, *Priče sa Jalije*, 49.

²⁵ Zaveštanje Vladana Đorđevića (Fund Vladan Đorđević), file 121, Arhiv Srbije (Archive of Serbia), Belgrade.

²⁶ Predrag Palavestra, *Jevrejski pisci*, 90; Mihajlović, “Dva veka,” 268.

Davičo did not return to live in Serbia. After his 1897-1900 service in Trieste he got retired and went to live in Munich and Geneva. The author of this essay has not been able to conduct further analysis of when did Hajim Davičo join freemasonry,²⁷ but it is possible that it was in the period after the publication of *Sa Jalije*. The threatening letter does not seem to address Davičo as someone who is no longer a Jew but as a renegade from the Jewish community.

The Jewish Civil Servant and a Peculiar Christian-Orthodox Community: Hajim Davičo in Trieste

Though not a capital, *fin-de-siècle* Trieste was roughly three times larger than Belgrade, as it had 155,471 inhabitants in 1890 and 176,383 by 1900. The Adriatic city had an exponential growth in the 18th and, especially, 19th century as it was granted the status of free port by Emperor Charles VI in 1719. Trieste was thus envisaged by the Habsburgs to represent an aggressive competition to Venice and, later on, Vienna's main outlet to the sea. The 1719 patent was, indeed intended to be temporary but it was confirmed by the new 1725 patents. With these juridical acts, persons of "any nation, condition, and religion" were invited to move to Trieste and engage commerce. Trade was exceptionally profitable with the Ottoman empire as the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz secured low customs duties with the territories of the Sublime Porte. The early 19th century saw the development of various insurance groups, some of which still exist, such as Assicurazioni Generali (1831) and Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà (1838). By 1857 the city was connected to the Habsburg railroad system promoting a new boom in the city during the 1860's.²⁸ The port-city was now engaged in a global system of trade including import of grain from the Americas and the exportation of wood to Egypt, while, in the same time naval construction became an important local industry. It is in the 1860's that the number of Jews in Trieste reaches its highest point around 4-5,000 individuals, remaining constant through the rest of the century.²⁹

Davičo's reports from the Serbian consulate in Trieste were, of course, official documents from which we do not see any particular attachment to Jewish identity or religion. Actually, we can observe the Serbian consul attending service in the Serbian

²⁷ Mihajlović, "Dva veka," 268

²⁸ Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Trieste. Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1999), 1-32; Roberto Finzi "Trieste perché," in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, eds. Roberto Finzi, Giovanni Panjek, vol. I (Trieste: LINT editoriale, 2001), 13-67.

²⁹ Tullia Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste (1781-1914). Politica, società e cultura* (Trieste: LINT editoriale, 2000), 60.

Christian-orthodox church fairly regularly.³⁰ In these writings, there is seemingly no echo of the Dreyfus affair, whereas Davičo adopted an openly negative attitude towards Italians and Jews from Trieste:

“All the most important bankers and financial operators in Trieste are *Jews*. Their social influence has weakened though, with the decline of house of Morpurgo the former president of the Austrian “Lloyd.” In the old days, this house competed in luxury and abundance with the most wealthy European aristocracy. Though the Jews do not have a predominant role in the local salons, and though the local patrician “casino vecchio”³¹ does not admit Jews among its members, they dominate the *public life* of Trieste. The Diet, the city council and all the financial, charity, (Italian) patriotic and even Catholic foundations and institutions are in their hands. The Jews have a complete monopoly over the local press and have on their side all the intelligentsia: medical doctors, lawyers, professors, artists etc. The Jews run all the exclusive clubs for Italians; they bring Italian patriots to Trieste, organize conferences and theatre plays. Until few years ago, Italian troupes were banned from Trieste because their theatre plays always transform themselves into political rallies. Last but not least, they manage to place their candidates for the Viennese parliament, for the Diet i.e. the city council. In other words the Italians of Trieste are Jews that lead around 20.000 hungry and miserable workers and the whole servile mass of clerks working for the municipality and the other local institutions.”³²

It is, of course, true, that the Jews of Trieste had very developed pro-Italian sympathies, they have almost unanimously gave their votes to the (Italian) Liberal-National party. One of the leaders of Triestine liberals was Felice Venezian, of Jewish origin, who had maintained friendly contacts with many Jews and even with the rabbi Sabato Rafaele Melli.³³ Finally, many Jews of Trieste were filed as *irredentisti* by the local police, a fact that even conditioned the functioning of the local Jewish community.³⁴ Yet, Davičo’s stand on the Triestine Jews resembled much more the rising antisemitic campaign lead in those same years by the Social-Christian League and other conservative, but minority

³⁰ Hajim Davičo to Đorđe Simić, March 4, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije /Archivio della Serbia. Generalni konzulat Kraljevine Srbije u Trstu 1884-1914/Consolato Generale del Regno di Serbia a Trieste 1884-1894*, (Belgrade: Arhiv Srbije, 2009), 31, 130.

³¹ “Casino vecchio” was a club reserved for the Triestine and Habsburg high society in the Adriatic port city. As a partial remnant of the Early Modern estates rationale, this club excluded the Jews, but only informally. It was simply well known in the city that the club would not admit Jewish members and even the richest Jews of Trieste never applied for membership. Tullia Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 223-224. Marina Cataruzza, “Tra logica cetuale e società borghese: il ‘casino vecchio’ di Trieste (1815-1867),” *Quaderni storici*, 26/2 (1991): 435-438.

³² Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, February 28, 1898, *Arhiv Srbije*, 103, 251. All the italics are from the original text.

³³ Tullia Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 234.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

elements of the Triestine society. Yet, antisemitism was also embraced by the Slovene-Triestine “Novi List” and “Zorja” periodicals as a mobilisation tool against the anti-Slav Liberal-Nationals.³⁵

In all of the dispatches, Hajim Davičo took a very strong pro-Slavic stand, not only towards the Serbs of Trieste but also toward the Slovenes and Croats who lived in the Upper Adriatic. The already quoted report about the Italians and the Jews continues with the following words:

“Luckily, the Triestine suburbs and the surrounding area are compactly inhabited by Slavs, who are filled with racial and religious hatred toward these usurpers of public rights.³⁶ In any given moment, at a simple wink of the state authorities, the Slavs could destroy all this histrionic urban Italian hood (*varoška izveštačena talijanština*).³⁷”

There are several explanations for this behaviour towards the minorities of Trieste. First of all, Davičo was probably influenced by anti-Jewish attitudes of the Triestine Slavs, or he might have tried to impress his superiors in Belgrade. Furthermore, the years of Davičo’s service in Trieste coincided with a very pro-Austrian turn in Serbian foreign policy. In 1897, the same year Davičo came to the North Adriatic port-city, king Aleksandar Obrenović made a coup in Serbia, abolishing the constitution and setting up a personal regime which was pro-Austrian and anti-Russian in its political outlook. Yet this stand in foreign affairs underlined the precarious position of the Obrenović dynasty. In the country the major party, the Radicals, were decisively pro-Russian in their political orientation and so was the rival Karađorđević dynasty in exile. The independent principality of Montenegro was also traditionally and very strongly pro-Russian, and though poorer and smaller than Serbia, in the late 19th century it launched an intensive nationalistic campaign among the Serbs of Bosnia and Dalmatia in favour of the Montenegrine Petrović-Njegoš and the Serbian Karađorđević dynasties and against the Obrenovići. Furthermore, in 1883 Petar, the first in the line of succession in the Karađorđević dynasty, had married Zorka Petrović-Njegoš the eldest daughter of prince Nikola I (prince 1860-1910, king 1910-1918). In 1896, Zorka’s younger sister, Elena married the Italian king Vittorio Emanuele III thereby giving a rather negative image of Italy within the establishment of Serbia. Within this context, it is important to mention that the Serbs of Trieste were traditionally more in contact with Montenegro than with Serbia proper. Not only did many of the better-off families of the local Serbs come from Montenegro or the bordering Herzegovina,³⁸ but they had family ties with the Petrović-

³⁵ Ibid., 272.

³⁶ Davičo refers to the Italians and the Jews.

³⁷ Tullia Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 103, 251.

³⁸ Marco Dogo, *Profitto e devozione. La comunità serbo-illirica di Trieste 1748-1908* (Trieste: Lint editore, 2000).

Njegoš family. In 1855, the Montenegrine prince Danilo I, married a wealthy Triestine bourgeois Serb Darinka Kvekić.³⁹

By the late 19th century, the Serbian-Orthodox community in Trieste was undergoing a process of radical, though maybe not obvious, transformation from a merely religious community of Christian-Orthodox Slavs into a religious-national community of Serbs. The Christian-Orthodox community in Trieste was born in 1751, essentially as a Greek community which had obtained the right to build a church in the city directly from Maria Theresa. Yet, very soon, the Christian-Orthodox flock of Slavic origin started to grow in numbers.⁴⁰ In 1759 the first Serbian priest arrived in the North Adriatic port and ten years later, the Dowager Empress had ordered that in the Orthodox church of Trieste there should always be two priests, one Greek and the other "Illirian."⁴¹ Yet this decision marked only the beginning of the conflict between Serbs and Greeks. Since the Orthodox liturgy admits only one altar in a church, struggle arose among the two linguistic communities who would have the service on what days. Furthermore, the Serbs became increasingly wary that the Greek parson would impose even a second Greek priest. Thus, in 1771 the Habsburg authorities established the right of the confirmation of the priest by the Confraternity which was constituted by all the paying members of the Orthodox flock in the city.⁴² Although highly practical, this solution had created an absolute precedent within the Christian-Orthodox world as, with the 1772 and the 1793 Statutes, the Confraternity gained the right to confirm or refute the new priest sent by the bishop.⁴³ The priest's trial period lasted nominally only one year, but the Confraternity continued to exercise control over the priests morality even after that date. The first half of the 19th century was thus dominated by the struggle between the Serbian community of Trieste with the archbishopric of Karlowitz over the appointments of the parson and the priest of Trieste. De facto, the Serbs of Trieste used their right not only as a right of confirmation of the new priest but also to influence the archbishop himself on the election of the new priest. In the second half of the century, the arrival of two long-living and well-liked priests Savatija Knežević (parson, 1865-1900) and Bogoljub Toponarski (priest 1870-1897), meant at least a truce in the struggle

³⁹ Though prince Nikola directly succeeded Danilo on the throne of Montenegro, he was from the lateral branch of the Petrović-Njegoš family. Danilo and Darinka had only one daughter, Olga, before Danilo got killed in Kotor (Cattaro) in 1860. Miodrag Al. Purković, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkvene opštine u Trstu*, [The History of the Serbian Orthodox church community in Trieste], (Trieste: Comunità Religiosa Serbo Ortodossa di Trieste, 1960), 127-129.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 23-30.

⁴² Ibid., 33.

⁴³ This solution was incorporated in all the later Statutes of the community even after the Greeks left the church of St. Spiridion in 1781 to build a new church of St. Nicholas the following year. Ibid., 53-67.

between the Serbian community of Trieste and its diocese.⁴⁴ Yet the second half of the 19th century was also the time of the emergence of the nationalist ideas among the Triestine Serbs. In 1871, the wealthy merchant Jovo Škuljević proposed to the Board (*odbor*)⁴⁵ that the language of the official records of that body be held in Serbian instead of Italian. The proposal was not accepted until 1892 and the last Board report written in Italian is from 1897.⁴⁶ The name of the community was changed from “Comunità Greco-Ilirica” (Greek-Illirian community) to “Comunità Serbo-Orientale” (Serbian-Oriental) in 1893, though a board with the new name was placed on the church already one year earlier.

A sign of the increasing national identification of the Serbian-Orthodox community of Trieste is certainly the celebration of the day of the national saint, St. Sava, a 13th century Serbian prince-monk that granted autocephaly for the medieval Serbian Church and thus grounded Christian religion in Serbian history. In Trieste, these celebrations started only in 1888, but even ten years later, in 1898, Hajim Davičo still lamented that, in Trieste, this feast did not have the solemnly character it should have:

“The St. Sava Day, feast of the educator of all Serbs, has, in all the areas where the Serbs live, be it on the Adriatic Coast, be it in the newly occupied lands,⁴⁷ a very high importance. It is the day when the Serbs are filled with the love for their brethren. And, what is most important, the love for St. Sava is equally spread among Serbs of all religions,⁴⁸ and the consciousness of the unity of the Serbian tribe never pulsates harder than on that day.

Thus, the celebrations of the Day of St. Sava can be taken as a precise measure of the development of the Serbian national consciousness, but also of its decline. The latter is, alas, especially true among the Serbs of Trieste. “Here, January 14th, the Saint Sava Day passes as all the other religious feasts, and does not leave a trace, it does not awaken patriotic sentiment. It is true that the new priest Mr Leontije Kurtović gave a speech in the school hall but, as the members of this religious community did not make any celebration or gathering, as it is in use in all other lands inhabited by the Serbs, so did the good will of the priest remain unnoticed. It was my intention to give a reception that

⁴⁴ Ibid., 133, 147-149.

⁴⁵ *Odbor* (Board) is still the central governing body in the Serbian Orthodox Community of Trieste. It is elected by and from the confraternity (*bratsvo*).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁷ Bosnia.

⁴⁸ “Serbs of all religions” may, of course be referred to Jews but it is more likely that Davičo sees at least parts of Catholic Croats and Bosnian Muslims as Serbs.

day for the main local Serbian families but it was thwarted by grief with the news of the death of my cousins [*moga brata i sestre*].”⁴⁹

Thus, Davičo took upon himself the task of developing Serbian national consciousness in Trieste. Seemingly, this competence was neither discouraged nor fostered by the Ministry in Belgrade. In a letter to his predecessor, Marinović, the Ministry required from the consul the most detailed information on the Triestine Serbs but also recommended that his “relations with the community do not give raise to suspicion of the local authorities.”⁵⁰ We do not have any later instructions to Davičo or his predecessors. It is possible that the new Serbian-Austrian closeness gave the consul in Trieste a wider space for manoeuvre. It is also possible that Hajim Davičo’s character made him simply more incisive. The consular service of Hajim Davičo in Trieste was characterized by rather heavy intervention in the life of the local Serbian religious community.

Only a few months after his arrival in Trieste, Davičo started interfering with local ecclesiastic matters. Having observed, during his “frequent visits to the Serbian church”⁵¹ that in St. Spiridion, the liturgical songs were mostly from Russian composers, Davičo urged the Ministry to send the religious compositions of Serbian authors such as Stevan Mokranjac or Kornelije Stanković.⁵² Having accomplished this first task with success, Davičo started urging the Ministry to send schoolbooks, readers and catechesis for the pupils of the local Serbian school, and to send editions of the best Serbian fiction to the community library.⁵³ Davičo praised the local Serbs for any sign of patriotism. Thus, in one of his last letters, in May 1900, he wrote with enthusiasm about the local Serbian shopkeepers who put samples of Serbian bonds in their shop-window as a sign of their national belonging.⁵⁴ Yet, Davičo’s attitude towards the Serbs of Trieste is mostly negative. Not only they did not celebrate national saints with enough fervour but they did not even speak Serbian.

“Unfortunately, the indifference of the local Serbs towards the Serbian language is getting ever more worrying, as the older men start dying out and the youngsters marry mostly Italian women. It is true that the Serbian sea captains who live in this city with

⁴⁹ Hajim Davičo to [?], January 31, 1898, *Arhiv Srbije*, 98, 230-231. It is not clear whom does Davičo refer to in this passage. The Serbian “brat i sestra” could refer both to siblings and cousins, but usually siblings. Yet, Hajim’s older brother Benko died in 1913 whereas his sister died in 1870. Thus the passage probably refers to some of Davičo’s cousins, yet we were unable to find out who. Mihajlović, “Dva veka,” 273.

⁵⁰ Foreign Ministry to Marko Marinković, January 14, 1982, *Arhiv Srbije*, 12, 82.

⁵¹ Hajim Davičo to Đorđe Simić, March 4, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije*, 31, 130.

⁵² Hajim Davičo to Đorđe Simić, March 4, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije*, 31, 130.

⁵³ Hajim Davičo to Đorđe Simić, May 10, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije*, 36, 139-140.

⁵⁴ Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, March 15, 1900, *Arhiv Srbije*, 165, 513.

their families love the Serbian language and use it, as it is used by the sailors of the whole [Eastern Adriatic] coast. Yet we must fear even that their children will not learn Serbian since our books are a sheer rarity in these lands.”⁵⁵

In the following years, Davičo would come to blame the community Board even for the linguistic assimilation of Triestine Serbs, but by September 1897 a very serious conflict arose between the Serbian consul and the confraternity of St. Spiridion. The old priest Bogoljub Toponarski had died leaving an empty see, and on his place Leontije Kurtović was to be called by the Board. Not knowing, or willingly ignoring the peculiar situation of the parish of Trieste, Davičo’s report to Belgrade on the election of the new priest was furious:

“As I have found out, this monk comes from Dalmatia and he was recommended by a certain Opujić, a clerk of the Serbian national railroad. It seems that the local community got very positive reports on this monk from his birthplace because it is more than likely that this Kujundžić⁵⁶ will get accepted. He has already been called and is expected in Trieste any day now.

I would say that, apart from this monk, the community could not get any other priest because the Dalmatian Serbian bishops are unwilling to give the permit to any of their subordinates to come here.

I think that the ecclesiastic and lay press, wherever they are published, should start to treat the question of the church of Trieste in accord, so to convince the members of the local community that they are in sin against the spirit and the Canon law of the Serbian Church, that they vilify the sanctities of the Serbian people and of its Church by humiliating the servants of God by treating them as simple clerks.”⁵⁷

Seemingly Davičo did not expose any formal complaint to the church community, and no trace is left, in the existing documents of the Serbian-Orthodox community in Trieste, of the local dignitaries even mentioning the Serbian consul as a factor in the election of the new priest.⁵⁸ Yet, from the following dispatches we can observe a growing conflict between Davičo and the most important figure in the community of St. Spiridion, Risto Škuljević (1843-1908). It is quite interesting that Davičo’s main opponent on the question of ecclesiastical autonomy was one of the main promoters of the Serbian language use within the community of St. Spiridion. In 1886, within the

⁵⁵ Hajim Davičo to Đorđe Simić, May 10, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije*, 36, 139.

⁵⁶ Here Davičo makes a mistake the monks name is actually Leontije Kurtović, not Kujundžić, as Davičo himself will correct in the following letter. Davičo to Đorđe Simić, September 15, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije*, 70, 193.

⁵⁷ Hajim Davičo to Đorđe Simić, September 7, 1897, *Arhiv Srbije*, 70, 192.

⁵⁸ “Sveštenik – Upraznjeno mesto; izbor jeromonaha Leontija Kurtovića” [Priest – the empty position; election of the monk Leontije Kurtović], 1897, Section VI, 47, 47, 50-55, 71, Archives of the Serbian Orthodox Church Community in Trieste, Trieste.

Board, Risto repeated the request already put forward by his father in 1871, that the records be kept in Serbian.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Risto Škuljević was one of the main benefactors of the church of St. Spiridion and it is estimated that the total value of his gifts was around 100.000 Austrian crowns.⁶⁰ Davičo acknowledges the generosity of Škuljević by calling him “ktitor” (main donator) of St. Spiridion, but also characterizes the wealthy merchant as being “extremely short-tempered”⁶¹. It must be remembered that the conflict on the church autonomy developed on top of an already existing anti-Obrenović animosity in the Serbian community of Trieste. In a report regarding a civil decoration⁶² conferred to the president of the Serbian-Orthodox community in Trieste, Sima Malinović, Davičo described the following attitude towards the Serbian government:

“It is my duty to inform you that there are a few Serbs in Trieste who are systematically trying to undermine the importance of Serbian medals and to kill the pride and the happiness in the commended personalities. Such is the case of Mr Milinović who has been told to refuse this medal because he, as a president of a religious community, deserved, at least a class III honour.⁶³ Of course, this brilliant old man refused to act upon such provocations.

The only ones who truly appreciate Serbian honours are the seafarers and ship captains, who have a high sense of chivalry and patriotism. The other local Serbs know their country only from a strictly political-party point of view and while they harbour sympathy to some politicians they are full of prejudice towards the Serbian Royal House and they don't have neither the patriotic understanding nor the healthy ambition for acquiring Serbian honours.”⁶⁴

We do not know whether Škuljević was in the afore mentioned group of Serbs that acted against the acceptance of the medal by Milinović, but by August 1898 the Triestine magnate had acted openly against the House of Obrenović, as he had openly opposed the religious celebrations for the birthday of King Aleksandar. As Davičo puts it:

“It was by the middle of the last month that I paid a visit to the president of the local church community, Mr Sima Milinović, in order to reach an agreement about the celebrations of a mass in honour of His Royal Majesty King Aleksandar. I did so

⁵⁹ Miodrag Al. Purković, *Istorija*, 149.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶¹ Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, February 15, 1898, *Arhiv Srbije*, 101:241.

⁶² Davičo was very keen on conferring medals and other decorations. In December 1898 he had contacted the British consul Haggart asking for an intervention at the Humane Society in order to confer a medal to a Serbian captain who had saved the life, at sea, of a British subject. John G. Haggard to Foreign Office, December 5, 1898, FO 590/10: 455-456, The National Archives, Kew Gardens, London.

⁶³ He received the Order of Takovo class IV.

⁶⁴ Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, February 17, 1898, *Arhiv Srbije*, 102, 247-248.

knowing that some scared member of the church Board might make some troubles or obstacles in the last moment, as it had happened last year.⁶⁵ Mr Milinović told me to speak directly to the priests as the local church Board does not make any celebrations for foreign rulers, and does not want to participate in them, whereas the priests are free to celebrate given services on the request of private citizens. Thus, I went to see the priest Leontije Kurtović, who had told me he would be delighted to serve the religious service of thanksgiving, but that he needed to discuss the matter with his superior, Savatije Knežević, who was on a leave, at that time.

Yet, after some ten days, Kurtović not only did not give me any response but had started avoiding me. Thus, with utmost discretion, I tried to find out the reason for the delay and I came to know that Mr Škuljević, a local millionaire and partner of Messrs Aničić, had prohibited the priests to give the thanksgiving mass in honour of His Royal Majesty King Aleksandar, because of 'King Milan who resides in Serbia.'⁶⁶

[...]

Not willing to give a complete victory to Messrs Škuljević and Aničić, I had invited for lunch all the brighter young people of the local Serbian colony, including Mr archimandrite Kiril (Živojin Jovičić) and Mr professor Milovanović from Novi Sad, both of whom were here on a visit, and Messrs priests Knežević and Kurtović. On the very day of August 2nd, I have attended, in my ceremonial uniform, to the mass in the local Serbian church, and there, after the church service, I have gathered the greetings of well-known ship captains, of Ilija Korać from Belgrade, of the president of the Serbian community Mr Milinović and of various other Serbs from different countries.⁶⁷

Thus, by August 1898, in the conflict with the Serbian-Orthodox community of Trieste, Hajim Davičo was losing his battle. In the following two years he had tried the strategy of appeasement in order to regain some influence within the community. According to Davičo himself, the central piece of this new strategy was a short story, entitled *On the Adriatic Sea*, published in Karlowitz (Sremski Karlovci) in 1899.⁶⁸ The stories generic setting in a town on the Adriatic is made more specific by the name of the coffeehouse in which part of the story unfolds, that is, "kod Severnjače" – At the Polar Star. *Caffè Stella Polare* still exists in Trieste, in the same block of houses as the Church of St. Spiridion,

⁶⁵ No such record has survived.

⁶⁶ King Milan Obrenović (b.1854-d.1901; prince 1868-1882; king 1882-1889) had abdicated after a more liberal constitution was introduced by the Radicals. During his reign, the Serbian court was one of the main topics of most European tabloids, due to his problems with queen Natalija, of Romanian origins and of strong Russian sympathies. The two had separated in 1886 giving much scandal. After a certain time spent abroad, Milan returned to Serbia in 1897 and this return was symbolic for the personal rule of his son, king Aleksandar.

⁶⁷ Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, August 15, 1898, *Arhiv Srbije*, 120, 319-320.

⁶⁸ Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, December 15, 1899, *Arhiv Srbije*, 159, 491. Hajim Davičo, "Na Jadranskom moru," *Brankovo kolo* 28/V(1899), 866-872, 899-904.

and since the early 19th century it was the gathering-place of the local Serbs, among others.⁶⁹ The ethnographic descriptions in this Davičo's story are rather meagre, when compared from those of the Jalija. The only passage with such ambitions is the one describing a mass in the local church:

“It was Sunday, and the Serbian church was full of people, mostly merchants, who were visiting the city N. for business. Oh my God! But so many different characters were there! The whole Empire of Dušan⁷⁰ could have been read on those faces. Genteel Serbs, handsome Bosnians, Herzegovians with their heavy moustache, the brave Montenegrines, the shapely Dalmatians, and the serious inhabitants of Old Serbia, and a whole range of Serbian figures, mostly from the southern parts of Serbdom. Side by side, they prayed to God.”⁷¹

Again, the plot is rather naïf, revolving around two long-lost friends who had separated when one of them, Stojan, had planned marry an Italian woman. The story starts with the other friend, Simo, arriving to the city N., where Stojan resides, and chatting with the local crowd at the “Polar Star.” Simo is feeling guilt for his chauvinistic anti-Italian beliefs:

“I have left this city full of prejudice, without any hope in the better future of Serbdom, - he told them. I thought that the Italian influence [taljanština] made us weak and that it had dried out the spine of our national consciousness. I thought that all Catholics are spies and enemies of the Serbs. I was desperate, believing that we were morally and materially doomed. This, and many other illusions, oppressed my soul. But I have shaken them off during my last travels and now, as I think of these sad thoughts, it seems as though I was mentally ill.”⁷²

Except for the general benefits of travel, Davičo does not specify where or how Simo had received this catharsis. But whereas Simo's prejudice in general is deemed wrong by the author, in the specific case of Stojan's engagement, Simo was right all along. As we find out a few lines later, Stojan's former fiancé wanted a large sum of money for the engagement and desired that Stojan use his influence so that her bridegroom become a

⁶⁹ Andrija Gavrilović, “Dositije u Trstu 1802-1806” [Dositiej Obradović in Trieste], *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića*, XXII (1904), 233-268.

⁷⁰ Dušan Nemanjić (b.1308-d.1355) Serbian medieval king (1331-1345) and Emperor of Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks (1345-1355). Actually, Emperor Dušan never controlled many of the territories described by Davičo, but in 19th century, “Dušan's Empire” was used as a synonym of all the lands inhabited by the Serbs.

⁷¹ Hajim Davičo, “Na Jadranskom moru,” 899.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 868-869.

baron or a *cavaliere*.⁷³ Thus, Stojan had broken the engagement. Both Stojan and Simo have female relatives who appear in the story as the two friends make peace, and the story ends as the two friends are falling in love with each other's relatives.⁷⁴

On December 15th 1899, Davičo reported to Belgrade:

“Last week, in the local Serbian Orthodox community, elections have been held for the new annual Board. Instead of the old members, who were already elected 8 times consecutively (i.e.: Sima Milinović, Lučić and Knežić), Messrs Škuljević, Kvekić (the brother of the Dalmatian deputy to the Viennese parliament) and Todorović were elected. Judging by these personalities, the new Board brings hope that the Serbian population in this city will be more strongly defended against decay. Many local Serbs are assuring me that my sketch “On the Adriatic sea” published in “Brankovo Kolo” had made a deep impression on the local Serbs and has influenced, somehow, the election.”⁷⁵

Of course, it is impossible to verify such claims, yet two observations can be made on this passage. First of all, though we do not know the exact modalities, the conflict between Davičo and Škuljević seems to have ceased by the end of 1899 as the latter is quoted among those Board members who are capable of bringing new hope for the community of St. Spiridion. Secondly, Davičo was most probably convinced that his short story had made some impact, be it political or literary, as he used the same plot-structure in 1913, to write the last of his Jewish stories, Buena. Yet, in the immediate aftermath, some grudge was still remaining. In his second-last report to Belgrade, Davičo had described the funeral of the parson Savatija Knežević in the following terms:

“In my previous reports I had the honour to inform you that the local Serbian church does not belong to any bishop's diocese⁷⁶ and that it elects its own priests and dismisses them as if they were private clerks. Thus, the late Knežević was not particularly considered and did not have much influence in the community matters. Serbian national consciousness did not get forgotten in this city but the Serbian language has largely fallen into disuse. Furthermore, the late Knežević belonged to the faction that considers Montenegro as the centre of Serbdom and in Serbia, it considers that only Radicals are good patriots. It is also true, however, that he always came to our general consulate to bless our holy water, but he was also among those who made problems about the thanksgiving religious service in the local church, for the birthday of His

⁷³ Ibid., 870. Davičo uses the term *đuvegija*, which, in Serbian tradition, is the man who contracts the marriage for the bride, usually the father or the brother.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 904.

⁷⁵ Hajim Davičo to Vladan Đorđević, December 15, 1899, *Arhiv Srbije*, 159, 491.

⁷⁶ Not entirely true. See p. on the history of the Serbian orthodox community in Trieste.

Royal Highness king Aleksandar. My wife and I have assisted the requiem in the church, but for the reasons quoted above I have not sent a wreath on the grave.”⁷⁷

Upon his arrival in Trieste in 1897, Hajim Davičo came in contact with a very peculiar Serb-Orthodox community he seemingly refused to understand. It is quite curious that, at least in the aspect of the flock’s capability to elect and dispose of their own spiritual leader, the community of St. Spiridion might have resembled more a synagogue than a traditional Christian-Orthodox church. Of course, no such parallel is given by Davičo in his dispatches to Belgrade. As Davičo himself acknowledges in this last dispatch, the nationalism of the Serbs of Trieste had taken a relatively different form than the nationalism fostered by Belgrade. Instead of religious hierarchy and linguistic unity, the flock of St. Spiridion fostered community participation accompanied with a more abstract sense of national belonging. Again, no parallel with the Jews was made by the Serbian consul. Unlike his predecessor, consul Marinović, who considered the question of the Serbian church in Trieste outside his area of competence,⁷⁸ Davičo took a very aggressive stance against the local ecclesiastic autonomy. There is no evidence that, at any point, Hajim Davičo had converted to Christianity, nor does any trace of *herem* against him exist in the Archives of the Jewish community in Belgrade⁷⁹, yet during his mission in the North Adriatic he acted as if he were of Serbian-Orthodox faith and seemingly his interlocutors accepted him as such. Hajim Davičo was a zealous diplomat that had sent his dispatches to Belgrade roughly once in every 8 days (7,934 days) whereas the mean of dispatches of both his predecessor and his successor are considerably higher.⁸⁰ Yet, when he presents his victory to Belgrade in the 1899 election of the Board of St. Spiridion, and even in the dispatch on the funeral of Savatija Knežević one cannot help but notice that it was Davičo’s own stand that had become considerably softer. On the long run, his

⁷⁷ Hajim Davičo to Vukašin Petrović, June 16, 1900, *Arhiv Srbije*, 173, 538.

⁷⁸ Marko Marinković to Mihajlo Đorđević, January 17, 1892, *Arhiv Srbije*, 13, 82.

⁷⁹ The Archives of the pre-World War II Jewish community of Belgrade have been looted by the Nazis, intercepted by the Soviets and, after the end of the Soviet regime, are undergoing the process of restitution and cataloguing in the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade. See *Nazi-Looted Jewish Archives in Moscow: A Guide to Jewish Historical and Cultural Collections in the Russian State Military Archive*, eds. David E. Fishman, Mark Kupovetsky, Vladimir Kuzelenkov, (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2011). Thus, my previous statement is based only on the exam of the two archive inventories of Moscow and Lviv available at the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade: ЦДДА УРСР у м. Львов, [Central state Archive of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic in Lviv], *Церковно-шкільна єврейська громада, м. Белград, 1866-1928*, [The religious and school community in Belgrade], Fund 497, and; Російски государственный военный архив, [The Russian State Military Archive] *Єврейська синагогально – просветителна община, г. Белград. 1815-1941гг.* [The community of the Jewish synagogue and school in Belgrade, 1815-1941], Fund1429/k.

⁸⁰ The predecessor, consul Marinović wrote a dispatch roughly three times a year (109, 260) while the successor wrote to Belgrade once in a two and a half months (47, 714). The data is derived from *Arhiv Srbije /Archivio della Serbia. Generalni konzulat Kraljevine Srbije u Trstu 1884-1914/Consolato Generale del Regno di Serbia a Trieste 1884-1894* (Belgrade: Arhiv Srbije, 2009).

actions against the local church autonomy had absolutely no effect. A new Statute of the Serbian-Orthodox Community in Trieste has been proclaimed only in 1950 and even then the autonomy of the community did not get thwarted.⁸¹ In July 1900, after having finished his mandate in Trieste, Hajim Davičo was retired from state service and went to live in Munich.

Retirement: Munich and Geneva

There is considerable disagreement among scholars on the functions that Hajim Davičo had in Munich. Eli Finci states that Davičo was consul in Munich;⁸² Predrag Palavestra asserts that Davičo was a Serbian trade representative in Germany;⁸³ and Milica Mihailović affirms that Davičo got retired and was then made Head of the Serbian trade mission in the Bavarian capital.⁸⁴ Actually, the state almanacs after the year 1901, give Hajim Davičo only as a retired general consul.⁸⁵ On March 14th, 1903, Aleksandar Z. Jovičić, Head of Section at the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the honorary Serbian consul in Munich, Julius Auspitzer a letter ordering the consul to hand over the accountancy books of the Munich consulate to “Haim Davitcho, ehemaligen General-Consul in Trieste,” for inspection.⁸⁶ It was only on June 15th 1910, that Hajim Davičo got appointed as a Trade agent of the Serbian honorary consulate in Munich⁸⁷. But since no dispatch is conserved in the Archive of Serbia even from the consul Auspitzer, no trace of any practical activity seems to be connected with the function of the Serbian Trade agent. Furthermore, in the state almanacs, Davičo continues to be given as a retired consul.⁸⁸ On May 7th 1912 the Trade agency of Munich is transferred to Geneva, and that is where the documentary traces of Hajim Davičo in the Archive of Serbia seem to

⁸¹ Miodrag Al. Purković, *Istorija*, 173-180.

⁸² Eli Finci “Davičo, Hajim,” *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 2 (Zagreb : Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1956), 668.

⁸³ Predrag Palavestra, *Jevrejski pisci*, 88.

⁸⁴ Milica Mihailović, “Dva veka,” 268.

⁸⁵ Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije [The State press of the Kingdom of Serbia], *Državni kalendar Kraljevine Srbije za godinu 1901, koja je prosta*, [State almanac of the Kingdom of Serbia for the year 1901, which is ordinary] (Belgrade: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1901), 139.

⁸⁶ MID, K, Mh, F II, r.27/914 (Munich, consular, folder I, file 27/914) Arhiv Srbije (Archive of Serbia), Ministarstvo inostranih dela (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Belgrade.

⁸⁷ MID, K, Mh, F I, r.25/913 (Munich, consular, folder I, file 25/913) Arhiv Srbije (Archive of Serbia), Ministarstvo inostranih dela (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Belgrade.

⁸⁸ Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije [The State press of the Kingdom of Serbia], *Državni kalendar Kraljevine Srbije za godinu 1910, koja je prosta*, [State almanac of the Kingdom of Serbia for the year 1910, which is ordinary] (Belgrade: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1910), 167. Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije [The State press of the Kingdom of Serbia], *Državni kalendar Kraljevine Srbije za godinu 1911, koja je prosta*, [State almanac of the Kingdom of Serbia for the year 1911, which is ordinary] (Belgrade: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1911), 172.

disappear.⁸⁹ Yet retirement did not represent, for Hajim Davičo, an end in the participation in public life. From Munich and from his travels he had published a series of articles in the Belgrade business newspaper “Trgovinski glasnik” that shed a very interesting light on the worldviews of this writer and diplomat.

Most of Davičo’s articles in “Trgovinski glasnik” bear the title *Letter from Germany* (*Pismo iz Nemačke*) and range over a wide array of topics. Most are reports on new financial and economic tools and institutions such as checks, insurance companies or the new laws on commercials. Much space is given to the official German policy towards the Balkans and to the possibilities of German-Serbian trade. In a fashion very similar to his dispatches from Trieste, Davičo also recommends certain Serbs that live in Germany, mostly artists, to the Serbian public. Instead of asking honours and medals for the worthy from the Belgrade government, he now asked the wealthy merchants of Belgrade to support Serbian contemporary art abroad.⁹⁰ Davičo’s relationship towards Germany is, however, rather ambiguous. In most articles, he praises German progress but does not fail to mention that:

“It is true that great disorder reigns in our country. But we should not forget that we are building a new stately edifice and that, while construction goes on you always find some broken bricks and tiles around, as well as other forms of dirt. We should have patience and observe the unfolding of events without preconceptions, but with firm faith in the elementary force of progress, so that we shall see that beyond the scaffolding and beyond all the chaos, lies the future house of the Serb, more modern and comfortable than the one projected by those who see Prussia as their ideal and wish that we, too, import their police empire.”⁹¹

In fact, Davičo sharply condemns German militarism and the arms race Germany had started in Europe, but highly praises Prussian bureaucracy. In a 1910 article, Davičo discussed the new Prussian law on the retirement of civil servants in which the retirement age had been lowered to 65. Siding decisively for the conservatives who were in favour of a higher age limit, Davičo argued that it was the experience of the old bureaucrats and their true dedication to the interests of that nation to make Germany one of the Great European powers.⁹² This “letter” was, however, implicitly arguing against the Serbian law on retirement, an argument developed some two years later in the cover story of “Trgovinski glasnik” in an article entitled *Retirement in Serbia*

⁸⁹ MID, K, Mh, F III, r.36/914 (Munich, consular, folder III, file 36/914) Arhiv Srbije (Archive of Serbia), Ministarstvo inostranih dela (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Belgrade.

⁹⁰ Hajim Davičo, “Pismo iz Nemačke,” *Trgovinski glasnik*, March 18, 1912.

⁹¹ Hajim Davičo, “Žalbe sa svih strana” [Laments from all around], *Trgovinski glasnik*, December 3, 1911.

⁹² Hajim Davičo, “Pismo iz Nemačke,” *Trgovinski glasnik*, February 19, 1910.

(*Penzionisanje u nas*). Namely, in Serbia of the early twentieth century a civil servant would get retired after only ten years of service, and an early retirement apparently came as a shock for Davičo himself. In a segment that is probably crucial to the comprehension of Hajim Davičo's worldview and of his actions as a consul in Trieste, he writes:

“For a worthy clerk, no death is more horrible than having to leave the service he is dedicated to, and honoured by, and that had entered his very blood. Only those bureaucrats who were never really loyal to the state service can overcome, survive or even desire such a heavy blow.”⁹³

It should thus be rather safe to assert that one of the most important elements of Davičo's personal identity was that of being a civil servant. It is this trait that made Hajim Davičo intervene in questions that could be seen as internal to the Orthodox Christian faith, as in the case of the community of St. Spridion. On the pages of “*Trgovinski glasnik*” Davičo continued with a similar attitude as he argued, in the January 1st, 1908 editorial that the Serbs should pass from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. Though this did not affect directly the Serbian Church, which, in fact, still maintains the Old Style calendar, Davičo did find it necessary to underline that:

“Fortunately, the heavens do not make mistakes. For 5668 years, according to the biblical, and several million years, according to the scientific time count, the Earth has been orbiting the Sun, never making the slightest error. It is this regularity that compels the souls of men to believe in God.”⁹⁴

Yet, whereas Davičo's atheism or faith in God might not be in question, his attitude towards religion is an important part in reconstructing his identity. On this question, another of Davičo's later articles could be somewhat helpful. In 1911 he had published an article called *Reflections upon Holidays* (*Razmišljanja o praznicima*) in which he expressed his views on religious festivities and, thus, indirectly, towards religion. The article starts as a criticism to liberal economic theories that see holidays as the enemies of the productivity of national industries. To these unspecified theories, Davičo opposes both the Bible, i.e., the God's will that the men rest once a week, and natural history, i.e., the need for rest in other animals. Thus, he argues, even the French revolution had to comply to the natural need for rest, but in doing so it had changed the purpose of the holidays into events for “national and civic education.”⁹⁵

⁹³ Hajim Davičo, “Penzionisanje u nas,” *Trgovinski glasnik*, January 29, 1912.

⁹⁴ Hajim Davičo, “O računanju vremena” [On the calendar], *Trgovinski glasnik*, January 1, 1908.

⁹⁵ Hajim Davičo, “Razmišljanja o praznicima,” *Trgovinski glasnik*, December 21, 1911.

“In the civilized countries, many of the ideas of the French revolution on public holidays are getting accepted entirely or are getting adapted to the particular national individuality. Everywhere, we can observe the tendency to use the holidays for general national education and for the opening of the hearts of the young and the old. So, in the villages we can find church singing accompanied by the organ, concerts of spiritual music and shooting contests. In the cities, the museums remain open, or they give free entry to the visitors; galleries of all art forms are open too, as are the technical, craftsmanship and agricultural exhibitions. Public conferences have very low entry fees and, in theatres, dramas and musical concerts are shown that have a particularly high moral value.

The middle classes are delighted to participate in such celebrations thereby reinforcing the democratic spirit of the nation.

The Orthodox Christians have more festivities than the Catholics. Yet, the festivities are not harmful in themselves but it is the use we make of them that determines their efficiency.”⁹⁶

Conclusions

Emancipation, acculturation and assimilation are concepts that were not hitherto discussed in this article, which tried to provide an outline of Hajim S. Davičo’s biography rather than a structured conceptual analysis. Yet, some words could be said on these topics in the conclusion. Though in a very different context than the German or Central-European Court Jews, Hajim Davičo did wholeheartedly embrace modernity in its most nationalist form. Being largely imposed from the Great Powers, and coming after a period of general, though mild, discrimination, the emancipation of Serbian Jewry could not be opposed even by the Davičo family.⁹⁷ In his Jewish writings, Hajim Davičo was an active proponent of linguistic acculturation, and in his career as a diplomat he proved total devotion to Serbian national cause, to the brink of complete assimilation. Indeed, his national allegiance put Davičo in the position to interfere even in the matters of the Serbian-Orthodox Church in which, one would expect, he shouldn’t have competence, neither as a Jew, nor as a freemason. We must also remember that the last of Davičo’s Jewish stories was written in 1913, and it was breathing the same mixture of sympathy, identification and nostalgia as any of the 1893, *Sa Jalije* works. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Jews of Serbia were formally emancipated but they were still living in a highly traditional way. In contrast, Hajim Davičo, maybe even more than any other members of his own family, was highly acculturated into the Serbian and lay European culture of his own time. Paradoxically,

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ On the question of Court Jew opposition to emancipation: Steven Lowenstein, “Court Jews, Tradition and Modernity,” in *Hofjuden*, 153.

the question of “exit, voice or loyalty”⁹⁸ in the case of Hajim Davičo was turned upside down: his loyalty to the Serbian state and nation, voiced through a relatively mild critique of the Jewish community of Belgrade, probably influenced his exit, not wholly from the Jewish identity, but from the Serbian state.

Thus, it is possible to say that the authors of the anonymous 1893 threatening letter were right, to a certain degree. Even if Hajim Davičo was not an atheist, he had a very instrumental view of religion, subjugated to national interest. Yet he was, above all, a zealous servant of the State and a fervent Serbian nationalist. The provisions of the Berlin congress, the Davičo family background and the need of Serbian bureaucracy for capable and educated men, have all contributed to the rise of this Serbian Jewish diplomat in less than two decades after the emancipation of Jews in Serbia.

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⁹⁸ For a reconstruction of the 1974 debate between Brian Berry and Albert Hirschmann: *Paths of Emancipation. Jews, States and Citizenship*, eds. Pierre Birnbaum, Ira Katznelson (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995), 31-33.

**Early Identity-Politics:
The Case of Cahan and Schiff
(1915-1917)**

by *Ehud Manor*

Abstract

Today, the terms “identity-politics” or “recognition-politics” enjoy an important presence in public debate, and it is widely accepted that these terms started to be important especially the 1960’s. Yet, as this article wishes to prove, identity-politics form part and parcel of modern politics from its’ beginning some 200 years ago. In a nutshell, the essence of modern politics involves the constant process of power distribution, based on mass participation. Modern politics reveals a dichotomy between idealism propelled by concepts of ‘enlightenment,’ on the one hand, and the power and control of the various resources which in themselves constitute the essence of politics, on the other. Hence, various devices and mechanisms were created and used in order to close, or, at least, veil the gap. This historical process was accelerating in the 18th century, which gave birth among many others concepts to “ideology,” “enlightment,” “emancipation,” which in turn stood behind the emergence of mass-media. From this perspective, it becomes abundantly clear why “identity politics” must have been part of modern politics from the very beginning, and why the mass media became the de facto arena for political activity. All of these were present also in the modern-Jewish-history case: from early 19th century on, new Jewish leaderships were forging new Jewish ideologies, while trying to push them ahead through political groups whom expressed themselves through particular mass-media. Such was the case of the Jewish Daily Forward [JDF], an Yiddish daily newspaper, that was born in New York in 1897. The JDF was based on a specific sort of ‘identity-politics’ that in fact widen the gap between words and deeds. Hence, on the one hand it is a particular story of a particular Jewish case in a particular time and place. On the other, the JDF’s history provides an example of an early “identity politics” two generations before “identity” became a token and a reference-point.

I.

Today, the term “identity-politics” is commonly used within the political debate. According to one plausible definition,

“The term ‘identity politics’ has come to represent a wide range of political activities and theorizing originating in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social

groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestoes, or party affiliations, identity-political formations typically aim at securing the political freedom of a specific constituency which is marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness which challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of achieving greater self-determination.”¹

“Identity-politics” is also known as “recognition-politics.” If to follow Nancy Fraser’s distinction: “recognition politics” is the other side or the opposite of “class politics.”² In other words, the emphasis on “identity” leads activists to claim “recognition” of their “otherness,” be it on culture, gender or the likewise grounds. On the other hand, the emphasis on “class” leads activists to claim “redistribution” on economic scale. Fraser convincingly suggests that an “integrative approach” rather than an “either/or dichotomy” should be adopted in order to better understand reality “in the service of participatory parity,” which is needed to “meet the requirements of justice for all.”³

As to when precisely “identity-politics” came into being, conventional wisdom would suggest that it appeared during the post-2nd World War era, more especially the 1960’s. This common opinion is widely applied to other schools such as “feminism,” “criticism,” “environmentalism,” “globalism” etc., all of which supposedly came into existence in the last thirty to sixty years. As Nancy Fraser put it: “In today’s world, claims for social justice seem increasingly to divide into two types.” “In today’s world.” More specifically: although “egalitarian redistributive claims have supplied the paradigm case for most theorizing about social justice for the past 150 years, today however we increasingly encounter [or]... confronted with a new constellation.”⁴

Though true that “recognition” or “identity” politics are making more way these days, this article purports to suggest that identity-politics existed long before the 80’s, 70’s or 60’s. In fact, any attempt to pinpoint an exact date or specific era in which identity-politics came into existence would be foolhardy. A more reasonable assumption would be that identity-politics form part and parcel of modern politics, namely the processes described by social thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville and many others of his era.⁵ In

¹ See also, Deborah Dash Moore, “Introduction,” in *American Jewish Identity Politics*, ed. Deborah D. Moore, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 1.

² Nancy Fraser, *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation* (The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Delivered at Stanford University, 1996)
<http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/documents/a-to-z/f/Fraser98.pdf>

³ Ibid, 67.

⁴ Ibid, 3, at passim.

⁵ See for instance: Joseph Epstein, *Alexis de Tocqueville: Democracy’s Guide* (New York: Harpers and Collins, 2006).

a nutshell, the essence of modern politics involves the constant process of power distribution, based on mass participation. Modern politics reveals a dichotomy between idealism propelled by concepts of “enlightenment,” on the one hand, and the power and control of the various resources which in themselves constitute the essence of politics, on the other. Hence, various devices and mechanisms were devised in order to close, or, at least, veil the gap. According to Prof. Zvi Lamm, the term “ideology” was coined by the French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) in a 15 page-pamphlet published in 1790. Tracy no doubt suggested this term as part of the *enlightments* longing to create and enhance “the requirements of justice for all” politics. Yet, Napoleon depicted de Tracy and his likes as “chatter-box, detached from reality.” Later on came Karl Marx and from his times on “Ideology” is usually a word to be used in order to cover “interests” or hidden agendas.⁶ If to look for a common ground or a mid-point between de Tracy’s and Marx’s understanding of this term, Ideology is at its minimum a device or a method to bridge the gap between reality as it appeared or described, and reality as it should be or amended. No wonder 18th century gave birth not only to “ideology,” “enlightment” and “emancipation,” but also to mass-media which was the main vehicle to pass-on this or that “ideology” on its’ way to be translated into politics. From this perspective, it becomes abundantly clear why “identity politics” must have been part of modern politics from the very beginning, and why the mass media became the *de facto* arena for political activity.

II.

From mid-17th century to the end of the 20th, Jews all over the world, but especially in 19th and 20th century Europe, established and ran some thirty-thousand printed journals, newspapers, magazines etc. Most of them would not survive for more than two or three issues. One of them – *The Jewish Chronicle* – established in 1839 or 1840, and is still much alive and kicking.⁷ This amazing data, suggested by Shalom Rosenfeld, a journalist on his own and an historian of Jewish Press,⁸ reflects most and foremost Jewish process of politicization and modernization.⁹ As suggested in the previous chapter of this article, each and every Jewish periodical reflected on the one hand the longing of its’ creators, writers and readers for a better world (being it reformist, socialist, orthodox, Zionist, communist etc.). On the other – as the old Jewish joke goes: “where there are two Jews there are three opinions” - the mere fact that there were so many different periodicals

⁶ Zvi Lamm, *In The Whirlpool of Ideologies—Education in the 20th Century* (The Hebrew University Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2002), 21-23 [Heb.].

⁷ See for instance: Avraham Greenbaum, “Newspapers and Periodicals,” *The Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Newspapers_and_Periodicals

⁸ Shalom Rosenfeld, “Writing ‘with 70 pens’ and in Many Languages,” *Kesher*, 6 (1992), 5-6 [Heb.].

⁹ See for instance: Eli Lederhendler, *Responses to Modernity: New Voices in America and Eastern Europe* (New York: NYU Press, 1994).

reflects the above mentioned quest for “recognition,” so essential in the making of “identity politics.”

It was not “only” a question of language. Different Jews expressed their unique uniqueness in the same language. It was not “only” a question of class. Different Jews expressed their unique uniqueness even when they shared the same social status. It was not even a question of ideology or religion. Different Jews expressed their unique uniqueness also when they pledged allegiance to Marx, Marxism or any other Holy Scripture or God. Notwithstanding, Jewish press like any other tended to present also the mundane, the curious, the innovative, in a word: “the news.” Not to mention the fact that it was an ever growing market. In 1800 there were only 2 million Jews all over the globe. In 1900 there were some 11 million, more than 80% in Europe.¹⁰ This meant and even stronger bias toward uniqueness and recognition.

In short, if a daily newspaper was to become successful, it had to cater as much as to the natural human penchant for scoops from the darker side of life, as to give its readers a direction, a road map and an identity. The more complex and dynamic the social environment, the more so. Such was the case of the *Jewish Daily Forward* [*JDF*], a Jewish – even Yiddish – daily newspaper, that was born in late 19th century in USA. The history of the *JDF* is on the one hand a particular story of a particular Jewish case in a particular time and place. On the other, as this article wishes to show, the *JDF*'s history provides an example of an early “identity politics” two generations before “identity” became a token and a reference-point to the polemics concerning the ways and means to achieve “justice for all.” In short: some time “identity politics” would lead people away from it.

III.

The *JDF* was perhaps the single most influential publication in “Jewish” New York at the peak of the great migration. Reaching its highest circulation mark in 1915 – 200,000 copies – the *JDF* acted as the barometer of the Jewish street.¹¹ Established in 1897 by some fifty “Yiddish-speaking socialists,” the *JDF* attempted to provide a niche between the dogmatic “Marxist” socialism led by Daniel De-Leon, on the one hand, and Jewish Orthodoxy, led by influential dailies such the *Tagesblatt*, on the other. To further complicate matters, in 1905, Louis Miller, who had been pivotal in establishing the *JDF* during its “seven years of famine,” as some “forvertists” defined the years 1897-1903, established yet another socialist or “progressive” daily [*Die Wahrheit*]. Within this fraught environment, bearing in mind that this was America and thus synonymous with

¹⁰ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13992-statistics>

¹¹ For a comprehensive history of the *JDF*, see: Ehud Manor, *Forward - “The Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts)”* (Newspaper: Immigrants, Socialism and Jewish Politics in New York, 1890-1917, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, 2009).

business, ratings, commercial aspects etc., the *JDF* fought its way towards success... And it did indeed prosper.

By 1922 the *JDF* owned assets worth about one million dollars, after making one and a half million in the previous decade.¹² This financial strength gave the paper sufficient leeway to act along the lines that characterized its most influential personality, Abraham Cahan. Back in 1897, Cahan was Miller's friend and one of another fifty Yiddish-speaking socialists who had brought the *JDF* into existence. Since Cahan was an outstanding and gifted journalist, his decision to leave the paper was a hard blow. No wonder the "forvertists" were more than happy with Cahan's decision, in 1903, to return to the editors desk, though not before demanding (and receiving) – "absolute full power [sic]."¹³ Indeed, thanks to Cahan, the *JDF* grew to be an independent newspaper, running according to its own policies, supporting or opposing contemporary trends, without compromising its ideological identity. What enabled the paper to determine its special character, was the fact that the *JDF*'s ideology, which epitomized Cahan's own ideology, was sufficiently flexible to allow it to have its cake and eat it, as it were. It both maintained popular appeal, which was essential not only for financial reasons, whilst, in the words of Abraham Liesin, concomitantly succeeding in portraying an image of a "pure and moral" publication.¹⁴ One of the strategies the paper applied to achieve these somewhat contradictory goals, was to be sufficiently critical in its abstract ideas – such as "capitalism," "socialism," "Zionism" etc. – without paying too much attention to the question of what the resulting, tangible influence of this criticism would have on reality.

According to the afore-mentioned theoretical terms, indeed the *JDF*, far more than "[...] organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestoes, or party affiliation [...fostered] identity-political formations which typically aimed at securing the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. To put it more simply, the paper's "belief systems, programmatic manifestoes, or party affiliations," acted as its tools for forging a neo-marginalization of its "specific constituency." Since the Jewish immigrants came mainly from backward and hostile Eastern Europe, "Neo-marginalization" merely recreated their former Jewish world insulated from outside influences. In light of this objective reality, the *JDF* aimed ostensibly at the creation of a Jewish separateness, under the guise of the most universalistic ideology of them all: "socialism." What strikes an un-biased observer is the fact that whilst the *JDF* advocated "socialism," it also played a significant role in praising Jacob Schiff, who undoubtedly represented the incarnation of "capitalism." This issue generated popular comment, and Cahan saw fit to dedicate a full-length editorial explaining the discrepancy. In short, Cahan suggested, that

¹² Irving Howe, *World of our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 542.

¹³ Abraham Cahan, *Bletter fun main Leben*, Vol. 4 (New York, 1930), 342.

¹⁴ Abraham Liesin, *Zichronot u' Chavayot*, (Tel Aviv, 1943), 159-160 [Heb.].

“It has been a long time since we treated capitalists as *treifa* [sic]. If a capitalist is a good person, you can do good work with him [...] The Schiff’s and the Marshalls [sic] are not socialists, but they are warm-hearted Jews that have done some good deeds, which can be considered radical deeds [...] Schiff is one of the richest millionaires in America, and one of the richest Jewish millionaires in the world. He is a conservative, but he has a noble heart. If we were abstaining from working with this kind of people, we would have been deemed narrow-minded fanatics.”¹⁵

The fact is that Cahan and the *JDF* did treat the greater part of all other “capitalists as *treifa*,” especially if they were members of the Democratic Party or on the fringe. Hence, the special place kept by this “socialist” daily for “the Schiff’s and Marshalls,” should be interpreted as a deep expression of the *JDF* identity politics. If at all plausible, such an interpretation would constitute an alternative to the common view that the *JDF* was a harbinger of Jewish Americanization, but one of a long list of progressive factors that created “the progressive era,” etc.¹⁶

IV.

On the one hand, Schiff was the incarnation of American capitalism, rendering him, in theory, the major foe of socialism in general, and Jewish – or Yiddish- speaking – socialism in particular. Yet, on the other hand, Schiff was treated by most American Jews in the same light as the House of Rothschild was treated by most European Jews, namely as “the king of the Jews.” While it would be reasonable enough to expect a progressive factor to fiercely criticize such a symbol of conservativeness, the fact is that the *JDF* echoed the general sympathy most American Jews showed towards their benefactor, Schiff. Indeed, Schiff epitomized philanthropy, warm Jewish heartedness and an endless devotion to Jewish affairs. Born in Germany in 1847, Schiff arrived in America right after the end of the Civil War. Within the next ten years, Schiff’s reputation as one of the most influential financiers in the U.S, facilitated his renown as an eminent philanthropist. Having emanated from the remote, poor and endemically violent Russian Pale of Settlement and experienced a period as a local downtown Jew, Schiff could hardly fail to show a benevolence that quickly made its way to the press. Everybody knew how Schiff, would stop and chat with the common people, while riding in his carriage in Central Park on Sunday afternoon.¹⁷ If he wanted to preserve his

¹⁵ *JDF*, November 21, 1917, 4.

¹⁶ This is the common knowledge concerning the *JDF*. See: *Encyclopedia of The American Left*, eds., Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, Dan Georgakas, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1992), 118, 865-866. Moses Rischin, *The Promised City – New York’s Jews 1870-1914* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1970), 123-126.

¹⁷ Adler Cyrus, *Jacob H. Schiff- His Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928). Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff – A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hannover – London:

own popularity, it was reasonable for Cahan not to challenge Schiff, even though, via his involvement with the *JDF*, he set himself fervently against conservatism and capitalism. In other words, Cahan was going against the very “system” that created the lowest poverty on the one hand, yet gave rise to incalculable wealth, on the other.

A different take on Schiff’s special status in the *JDF* might claim that for modernizers such as Cahan, Schiff’s capitalism and political conservatism were probably inferior to his function as a role model for the modern Jew. Well respected by gentiles, Schiff was a symbol both of the Jews ability to become an American – even a prominent one – whilst concomitantly pledging allegiance to Jewish identity. Unlike the Jewish Orthodox or Zionist practices, as conceived by the *JDF*, this did not imply neo-self-segregation, confining Jews within a New York ghetto or a Palestinian one (in what was then Palestine) for that matter. The ideology of Jewish universalism, or non-ghetto Judaism, was exactly what Yiddish-speaking socialists had in mind and tried to inculcate in the public mind via the offices of the *JDF*.

In the following chapters a different, more fact-based perspective will be propounded. The relevant issues will relate solely to the 1st World War era, not only because this era constituted a dramatic era per-se, but also because at that time, president Wilson was applying his own identity politics, known as “hyphenated politics.” Despite its applicability, placing our story within the context of the 1916 presidential campaign would stretch beyond the scope of this article. Furthermore, the *JDF*’s identity politics stand on their own merit, without recourse to any specific political event such as the 1916 campaign.

V.

As the war to end all wars lingered on, delegations from warring countries tried to obtain U.S financial credit to finance the war effort. Jacob Schiff, one of the top six American financiers,¹⁸ did everything in his power to prevent any loans or extension of credit to England, France or Russia. The declared reason for this was that a Jew should

Brandeis University Press, 1999). See also Mathew M. Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

¹⁸ According to the Pujo Committee, nominated by The Congress in 1912, “In order to obtain full and complete information of the banking and currency conditions of the United States for the purpose of determining what legislation is needed.” See: Pujo, *Report of the Committee Appointed Pursuant To House Resolutions 429 And 504 To Investigate The Concentration of Control Of Money And Credit, 62D Congress 3d Session, House of Representatives, Report N. 1593* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 28 February 1913), Investigation, Part I, p. 3; Report, pp. 6, 34, 56, 90, 92-101. For a detailed financial description of Kuhn & Loeb Co., Schiff’s firm, see pp. 77-80.
<http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/publications/montru/>

not help his brethren's enemy.¹⁹ This position was cherished by the *JDF*, which described Schiff as "one of the best among capitalists."²⁰ Such a non-political, "moral" stand on the part of the *JDF* can be easily understood, and no doubt Cahan's endorsement of Schiff could be taken as reflecting "natural" Jewish feelings. However, as the War and the questions pertaining to it constituted part of real-world politics, and as we know that both Schiff and the *JDF*, among many others, were dealing with politics, this stand on the loan issue should be viewed from a political perspective. In short, by avoiding loans from the allies, using the anti-Russian pretext, Schiff assumed a de facto pro-axis stand. Thus, it is small wonder that other Jews, no less angry and frustrated with Czarist regime policies toward the Jews, saw things differently. Not only did prominent Jews, such as Louis Brandeis, support pro-ally American neutrality (namely supporting loans to England or France), but less prominent, though no less important ex-Russian Yiddish-speaking Jews, also adopted the pro-ally political cause. One such case was Louis Miller, who exploited the *Wahrheit* to publish pro-Russian messages in Yiddish, generating tens of thousands of copies a day. In other words, in both the aforementioned cases, "natural" emotions were the underlying motive for opposing politics; readers of the *Wahrheit*, Yiddish-speaking socialists, legitimized Russia's war effort, while the *JDF* readers, who were also Yiddish-speaking socialists, condemned it. In the latter case, finding refuge under Schiff's umbrella proved to be a matter of expediency, as in late 1917 Louis Marshall, Schiff's right hand man, saved the *JDF* from the wartime censors hook.²¹

Until then, the *JDF* had virtually been Schiff's only official spokesperson. Loan-seeking delegates came repeatedly. "Would Schiff block the one-billion loan?" asked a headline on the *JDF*'s front page, upon a visit of a French delegation, a year after the war broke out.²² The *JDF* mentioned the problems confronting the committee, such as protests from the German ambassador, the German governments intentions to apply for a loan and the reservations of some American bankers as to the soundness of the operation.²³ As negotiations advanced and the loan seemed inevitable, the *JDF* denounced the collaborators as hypocrites! The paper criticized the move as "patriotic," on the one hand yet potentially profit gaining, on the other. The one billion dollars would be transferred over a long period of time, and be used to purchase commodities on the American market. In the meantime, the bulk of the sum would be used for other

¹⁹ Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff [Vol.1]*, 213-215. Gary Dean Best, *Financing A Foreign War: Jacob H. Schiff and Japan, 1904-1905* (AJHQ Vol. LXI, 1971), 313-324.

²⁰ *JDF*, January 22, 1915, 4.

²¹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *Louis Marshall and The Jewish Daily Forward: an Episode in Wartime Censorship (1917-1918)*, in *For "Max Weinreich in his Seventeenth Birthday"- Studies in Jewish Languages, Literature and Society* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), 34-43.

²² *JDF*, September 15, 1915, 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

interest-generating activities.²⁴ Some days later, the *JDF* quoted Schiff's clarifications, in which he acknowledged what the benefits this loan could bring to American industry, while stressing that the chances that the Russians might also benefit, obliged him to oppose it.²⁵ Two months later a Russian delegation arrived, only to receive the same attention from Schiff and the *JDF*, which pointedly quoted the financiers reservations as to the Russian intentions, to arrange a modest sum of sixty million dollars only on the private market.

"As long as there is no commercial treaty between the United States and Russia,²⁶ it is risky to make any loan to Russian representatives, even from the private sector. Banks in Russia are in the hands of the government, and if the private banks are not able to return the loans, the government will do no better. Such was the case with credit extended to French banks. It ended with the French government taking on more loans to pay back the previous ones. You see, my arguments are not emotional even though emotions do affect them. A regime that destroys its citizens' homes and kills them by the thousands does not deserve financial support from any American financial institution."²⁷

This Russian delegation apparently did not do well. Negotiations dragged on for weeks, and Schiff's campaign certainly made an impact. However, when some financiers considered undertaking the loan, Schiff harnessed "emotions" more than ever. "Shame on America" quoted Schiff by the *JDF*, "if such a loan were given."²⁸ Cahan decided to cheer him up a little. "Jews all over the world should thank Schiff," proclaimed an editorial in the early spring of 1916, some four months after the Russian delegation arrived.

"Schiff should be praised for his brave, sharp and sentimental statement against the Russian loan. Today it is no longer a secret that the Russian government is slaughtering Jews. Schiff is well respected on Wall Street, but his stands on issues other than finance are also heard and respected. His last statement will hamper Nicolay's chances of obtaining American credit and will also thwart the love that some so-called Native Americans have been showering on Russia of late. The Czar is doing his best to manipulate American public opinion, including promises concerning the Jews that he

²⁴ *JDF*, September 21, 1915, 1.

²⁵ *JDF*, October 2, 1915, 1.

²⁶ The Russian-American Commercial Treaty signed in early 19th century, had been abrogated in 1911, under heavy pressures generated by Schiff and Marshall. See: Naomi Cohen, "The Abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832," *JSS*, 25/1 (1963): 3-41. Gary D. Best, *Ibid*, 166-205.

²⁷ *JDF*, November 25, 1915, 1.

²⁸ *JDF*, February 29, 1916, 1.

will fulfill when the war ends. Therefore, it is extremely important for the Jews that the world knows what is actually happening in Russia [...].”²⁹

In late November 1916, the *JDF* reported Schiff’s peace efforts. These efforts were not as far-reaching as similar efforts made a year earlier by Henry Ford had been. Schiff did not hire a ship or make promises “to try to get the boys out of their trenches and back home by Christmas.”³⁰ Nevertheless, the press in Europe did heed Schiff’s efforts. Yet, while some critics condemned these de-facto pro-German peace moves, Cahan wrote:

“As opposed to Fords naïve idealism, this peace movement includes serious figures such as Schiff, ex-president Taft, important bankers, financiers and great capitalists [...] people in France and in England are watching this movement anxiously, accusing it of being pro-German. However, its goal is to bring peace.”³¹

A few days later, yet another editorial expanded on Britain’s rejection of Schiff’s endeavors. The *JDF* referred to British allegations that Schiff was a German agent as “savage,” and went on to detail the roots of the affair. To begin with, they repudiated the pro-German claim by pointing out that many of those involved were not of German extraction. The *JDF* was right, of course. The motives of “Schiff, ex-president Taft, important bankers, financiers and great capitalists” were not cultural but politico-economic. Either way, after using the cultural argument to refute the cultural interpretation of Schiff’s peace movement, the editorial resorted to political abstractions and theology:

“The Allies are afraid of Schiff’s movement, because they admit he is one of the wisest individuals in America, and he understands that it is time for peace. When we say “it is time for peace,” we mean that the people want peace. The ruling classes in England do not want peace now, as they did not want it earlier. Their goal is to destroy Germany [...]. At first, people were ready to swallow any lie, so they supported the ruling classes, but not anymore. Schiff’s plan to advance peace throughout the neutral countries will encourage people to present their own peace plans. When each side knows exactly what his rival is up to, neutral countries, headed by the United States, will strive for a compromise among the parties. This kind of peace propaganda will make its way to England as well, and the English people will therefore learn about the true, dreadful nature of the war. Schiff has taken a noble and grand burden upon himself. Let us hope that the savage attacks on him in the English press do not discourage him. If, oh if, the war is shortened even by a day, he will be despised again by the English ruling classes, while he will be admired by the English working class, the English masses and the

²⁹ *JDF*, March 2, 1916, 4.

³⁰ *The New York Times*, November 25, 1915, 1.

³¹ *JDF*, November 29, 1916, 4.

English petit-bourgeoisie. These are the classes whose blood is being sapped by the war.”³²

One can only guess as to the extent the average *JDF* reader comprehended these arguments. Who were “Schiff, ex-president Taft, important bankers, financiers and great capitalists,” if not “the ruling classes”? By what method would “the people” devise their “peace plans”? Were “the working class,” “the masses” and “the petit-bourgeoisie” in America so united as to have one sole political plan, apart from admiring Jacob Schiff? In short, where were Cahan’s political convictions leading?

This politics of praise did not restrict itself to war politics. One of the most striking practices was the constant, veneration reports in the *JDF* of Schiff’s astronomical contributions. Money certainly does make the world go round; however from a progressive, not to mention socialist newspaper, one might expect some reservations about philanthropy. Nevertheless, just the opposite was true. The *JDF* tried not to miss even one occasion when Schiff opened his wallet and made one of his famous six-digit contributions. The sub-text was quite clear: we socialists are the harbingers of the world to come. In the meantime, let things be as they always have been.

In January 1917, Schiff turned seventy. For his birthday, he made two one-hundred-thousand dollar contributions: one to East European Jewish victims; the other to the Red Cross.³³ A few days later, “the millionaire and philanthropist,” in case someone had somehow managed to forget, made yet another one-hundred-thousand dollar donation, this time to the Orthodox movement.³⁴ The message was clear: no social problem should be neglected, there would be no discrimination between local or foreign co-religionists, or between Jews and Christians, or between Reform and Orthodox Jews. The underlying message was clearly evident. Each contribution equaled about 130 years of sweatshop workers toil, sometimes even more, as in the case of a party organized this time by Schiff, where the *JDF* reported separate contributions of “five hundred and fifty thousand dollars.”³⁵ Deeds are deeds, and words, which describe deeds, are also deeds. Writing a check or writing a hallowing editorial about the one who wrote the check, are sometimes “two sides of the same coin,” so to speak.

Schiff’s reputation within Jewish-socialist circles headed by the *JDF* grew even larger after the multi-millionaire testified to a Congress Committee on labor relations, that he rejected child-labor and supported the workers’ right to unionize.³⁶ Schiff also gained the *JDF*’s approval for his year-long involvement in labor grievances, such as a strike

³² *JDF*, December 1, 1916, 4.

³³ *JDF*, January 11, 1917, 1.

³⁴ *JDF*, January 20, 1917, 3.

³⁵ *JDF*, April 16, 1917, 1.

³⁶ *JDF*, January 22, 1915, 4.

that was held by “the needle trades” on January 1915. Schiff headed a group of “worried citizens” that urged both sides – workers and employees – to get over their differences. The *JDF* quoted Schiff as saying that while “a terrible war is going on in Europe, a war within the textile industry cannot be justified [...]. In the name of the people, please settle.”³⁷

VI.

Schiff may have been viewed as “the champion of the people,” but so also was the *JDF*. However, many Zionists also tried to be, along with other public figures who leaned much ideologically speaking more naturally towards what today is known as “Jewish peoplehood,” a movement known then in Hebrew, though in Yiddishist pronunciation, as “Klal-yisruel.”³⁸ While for Schiff, a devoted Jew, Judaism was nothing but an apology or a religion, he nevertheless catered to the sufferings of his “co-religionists.” As far as the *JDF* was concerned, Jews were for the most part, hard-working people, laborers, an oppressed class within a “capitalist” framework. Once capitalism was abolished, the Jews would live happily ever after. For Zionists of all sorts, as for those who had no problem with Jewish “peoplehood,” a combined Jewish endeavor for the betterment of the Jewish lot did not require justification. Jews were an ethnic group, a people, and a nation, inclusive of religious, class and even gender aspects. From the “identity” point of view, the affinities between the knights of “socialism” led by the *JDF*, and the far-out “capitalists” incarnated in the figure of Jacob Schiff, were more plausible, as long as their views did not focus solely on “pure and simple” ideologies, but rather on the actions of this or that factor, within the specific public arena. Considering all the fore-mentioned factors –the *JDF*, Schiff, Zionists, “Klal-Yisruel’niks” etc. – the most important arena was clearly the Jewish one.

Shalom Ash [1880-1957], the once celebrated Jewish writer, is an excellent example of “Klal-yisruel’nik.” Committed to no particular “ism,” Ash was accepted in many Jewish circles, including the *JDF*. However, when Ash wrote articles in the *Zukunft*, through which he questioned Schiff’s commitment to the Jewish cause, the *JDF* was forced to take sides, and take sides it did. The *Zukunft*, the intellectual review founded in 1892, was yet another branch of Yiddish speaking socialism, even though it was less “radical” than the *JDF*. Ash’s arguments bordered on “nationalist,” since he compared Schiff to the late Baron Moritz Hirsch or the venerable Baron Edmund de Rothschild. As opposed to these two prominent European Jews, Schiff – according to Ash – paid too much attention to “non-Jewish causes.” Hence Schiff should not be surprised if “the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Yosef Gorni, “Klal Yisrael: from halakha to history,” in *Contemporary Jewries: Convergence and Divergence*, eds. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Yosef Gorny, Yaacov Ro’I, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003), 13-22.

Jewish street” did not show the gratitude it expected.³⁹ There is no easy way to measure “gratitude,” but Cahan made his contribution by allotting considerable space in the *JDF* to Schiff’s answer to Ash’s reservations. Schiff’s arguments acted like oil in the bones of the *JDF*, which printed them on the first page:

“Jews must be Jews only by religion. In all other aspects of life they should be Americans and they must not regard themselves as a separate group. If they had stuck to this policy in Russia as well, maybe their destiny there would have been different [...] the attack on me came from a man that does not even hold American citizenship. He’s been here for only 18 months now, and yet he takes the liberty of criticizing my 54 years of service here [...] Judaism is only a religion, and if Jews in America, like those in Poland or Russia, adhere to their language and customs, they will suffer greatly for it. Yiddish, if used at all should be restricted to the intimacy of the home only. We are Americans and our children should be Americans. We must strive to make sure they cherish our religion while speaking English and taking part in the American life. Be good Americans. Be good Jews. Those who seek to segregate themselves cannot be good Americans.”⁴⁰

Before exploring these arguments, a contextual note should be made. At the same time Schiff was pronouncing his Jewish and American credo, two political moves – a Jewish one and an American one – were gaining strength and heading straight forward. Both were not “the cup of tea” either of Schiff or Cahan. At the Jewish front, “klal-yisruelniks” and Zionists were joining forces within the “American-Jewish congress movement,”⁴¹ a body to be built on “American” grounds, namely democratic process which included all American-Jews, in order to make the post-war world safer for the Jews. At the American front, incumbent president Wilson was running a hyphenated campaign, in order to improve his standing at the upcoming presidential elections. Not “per-se” of course. Wilson wanted a second term in order to go on applying his quasi-socialism (the American term back then was “progressivism”) in the United States, giving back America to the Americans, making by this even America safer for democracy.⁴² On both fronts – Jewish and American – Cahan and Schiff practically on the same opposing sides. Of course they pronounced their opposition to the democratization of American-Jewry and the amelioration of a more-just American economic redistribution, from totally different “identities.” Cahan was “socialist” hence he opposed any “capitalist” president, especially if he was a Democrat, namely one that

³⁹ Shalom Ash, “Jacob Schiff – a karakteristish,” *Zukunft*, March 1916, 288-289. See also: Shalom Ash, “dos yiddishe lebben in yor 1915,” *Zukunft*, January 1915, 9-13.

⁴⁰ *JDF*, May 22, 1916, 1.

⁴¹ Hence AJCM.

⁴² On Wilson’s economic policy: William Diamond, *The Economic thought of Woodrow Wilson* (New York, AMS Press, 1982). See also: Louis Brandeis, *Other People’s Money and How the Bankers Use it* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1914). <http://www.law.louisville.edu/library/collections/brandeis/node/191>

tends to use – more precisely: abuse - the divine purity of “the revolution.” Schiff was simply a finance capitalist and a veteran Republican supporter. While Cahan was pushing his crowd to vote for “the Socialist Party,” in fact he was helping Schiff making America safer for the G.O.P. Similarly, while Schiff opposed the “American-Jewish congress movement” on a conservative-elite basis, claiming that democracy should be kept for American and not for Jewish politics, Cahan adopted the same position toward this “Klal-yisruel” initiative, though on the grounds that inter-class cooperation was both impossible and wrong.

As for Schiff’s attack on Ash, even writers of the *JDF* could not refrain from attacking his assertion that eastern-European Jews are to be blame for their own sufferings. Many writers and readers of the *JDF* were no less angry at Schiff’s harsh words against their “mome-lushen.”⁴³ Moses Olgin, who within two years would become a devoted communist, even went as far as to attack Schiff’s premise that Judaism was a “religion” to be confined to “a synagogue.” Having said that, no wonder Olgin ventured a surprisingly non-forvertist notion, according to which Judaism represented “feelings, a sense of uniqueness, based on national historic development, common destiny and a specific national essence.” This real “klal-yisruel” position, if not early pro-Zionist stand in anti-Zionist guise was being promulgated by a devoted Jewish communist. Olgin knew he was perhaps going too far! He, therefore, specified that:

“We, socialists, do not idolize either the language or any other national symbol .. Yet we think that the strength of the people’s spirit is engraved in the Jewish language [...] Schiff cannot understand that it is possible to be both a good Jew and a good American simultaneously. For him it is a question of “either ...or,” while for us it is a question of “both... and” [...] our kids can learn English and also Yiddish [...] to be an American is to take part in the struggle for a better society, to be involved in politics, to improve the laws. All of these are being carried out by us, socialists, with vigor.”⁴⁴

Indeed, Olgin certainly had a point. Yiddish-speaking socialists were politically active within the American scene, and they certainly managed to express themselves perfectly well both in English and Yiddish. What for Schiff were acts of “segregation,” for them (Yiddish-speaking socialists) was an affirmation of their loyalty to America. However, this was the case for “Klal-yisruelniks” as well as for outspoken Zionists. Neither saw any contradiction between good Americanism and good Jewishness. Perhaps the most extreme example of this attitude is seen in the all-American Louis Brandeis, Wilsons right hand and fierce opponent to capitalism as it developed back then, and who in June 1916 became the first Jew to reach on of the symbols of the acme of “Americanism”: the Supreme Court. Two years earlier Brandeis had asserted: that be “good Americans”

⁴³ *JDF*, May 23, 1916, 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

meant that Jews had to be Zionists.”⁴⁵ Brandeis” declarations carried political aims and objectives, just as Schiff *et al.* did. There is no such thing as an “identity per-se.” All declared identities had their hidden – or less hidden – agendas. When Ash attacked Schiff, what he had in mind was not so much to what extent non-Jewish institutions would benefit from Schiff’s money, but rather the fact that “the king of the Jews” in America opposed the AJCM. So it is more probable that Schiff was well aware that using the Yiddish platform did not indicate isolationism. He must have realized that Yiddish-speaking socialists, not to mention their renowned figure-head, were affording him de facto total political backup in some 150,000 daily copies.

Since Schiff was being severely attacked by the more pronounced “Klal-yisrael” Yiddish press, and mainly by the outspoken pro-Wilson and pro-AJCM *Wahrheit*,⁴⁶ Cahan decided that enough was enough. After two weeks of public debate, the *JDF* announced Schiff’s retirement from “Jewish politics” on its front page. Schiff made this declaration in a meeting of the Kehillah of New York, a sort of “klal yisrael” organization established in 1909. The *JDF* quoted Schiff’s speech extensively, while bitterly accusing “parts of the Jewish press” of propagating erroneous criticism. No doubt Schiff did not include the *JDF* in that “part.” Either way, this criticism forced Schiff to conclude that he must resign, although he promised to “maintain his philanthropic efforts on behalf of the Jews of Russia and Poland.” As Schiff’s words touched the hearts of most of the Kehillah members, a motion to endorse his statement gained a majority vote, albeit with some opposition from the Zionist delegate.⁴⁷ Under the title of “Jacob Schiff,” Cahan dedicated a full-length editorial to this “warm-hearted Jew.”

“Schiff belongs to the capitalist side. He is even one of its leaders. He stands for the structure the *JDF* rejects. Politically we stand at opposing poles. However, we socialists can do justice and can tell the difference between bigotry and the enlightened. Schiff is a capitalist but as an individual he holds lots of the fine and shine. He is a conservative yet has a warm heart. He strives for the common good. At this moment, we socialists must think of him as the good-hearted Jewish “macher” [...] in his public deeds he represents a capitalist with “neshama-yetera” [sic] [...] he loves the Jewish people a great deal [...] we socialists can see that even in the deepest parts of the capitalist side there are signs of spiritual uplifting. Millions of Schiff’s, Fords or people like the late Peter Cooper, demonstrate it. And when such a Schiff stands and talks with tears in his eyes, one feels none but the deepest sorrow and sympathy. We already stated that most attacks on Schiff emanate from personalities with double-standard. This fact also creates the gulf between Schiff and his criticizers, since Schiff is honest and pure [...] respect and dignity

⁴⁵ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Brandeis.html>; see also: Philippa Strum, *Brandeis: Beyond Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 114-115.

⁴⁶ *Wahrheit*, June 2, 1916, 3.

⁴⁷ *JDF*, June 5, 1916, 1.

are his most important values, simple values long forgotten in many circles. If Schiff were younger, we would tell him that assaults and slanders are part of public life, but Schiff is close to 70 years old now [...] he deserves better than that. His words in the Kehillah meeting sparked profound affection toward him, both from socialists and anarchists, as well as from confirmed conservatives.”⁴⁸

These words could have made a strong case for Wilson and the Democratic Party in the approaching elections. Was not Wilson’s [and Brandeis’] party, namely the Democratic Party, based upon “millions” of good capitalists? If one follows the progressive heritage [at least until 1916!] of Ford or Cooper, Cahan was in fact endorsing an industrial America which counteracted the heavy hand and burden of Wall Street finance magnates such as Schiff. Either way, the moderate tone Cahan used in this editorial can be understood as an excellent evolutionist-pragmatic-political approach. Such pragmatic progressivism characterizes most modern political parties, including the democrats of 1916, who were basing their political plans on the Wilson-Brandeis progressive platform. However, Cahan was not aiming at pragmatic-politics of the sort that might have improved the lots of the Yiddish-speaking lower classes. He was aiming at identity-politics of the sort that, no doubt, enhanced the self-esteem of most of the Yiddish-speaking lower classes.

* * *

This article has made the assertion that identity-politics rather than real-politics were the main concern of Cahan and the *JDF*, and, from that point of view, it would be sound to conclude that Cahan was not only a harbinger of “neo-journalism,” as Moses Rischin put it,⁴⁹ but also the harbinger of “identity-politics,” and if not an harbinger, at least a promoter, an early and quite a successful one, If to judge by the fame he enjoyed and keeps on enjoying to the date, making even scholars hard to revised the common knowledge concerning that great person.⁵⁰

In 1920, Jacob Schiff died. The twenties marked a deep shift in both Jewish and non-Jewish politics. In retrospective, 1917 was a clear watershed for it hailed the proclamation of the “Balfour Declaration.” and opened a new chapter in the history of Zionism. In that year also, the U.S declared war on Germany, making the “poor” world safer for

⁴⁸ *JDF*, June 6, 1916, 4.

⁴⁹ Rischin, *The Promised City*, 123. Moses Rischin, *Grandma Never Lived in America: The New Journalism of Abraham Cahan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

⁵⁰ Hasia R. Diner, “Book Review of: Ehud Manor, *Forward: The Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts) Newspaper: Immigrants, Socialism and Jewish Politics in New York, 1890–1917*, Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009” *Urban History*, 38/ 1 (2011): 195-196. As the reader of this book review could see, Prof. Diner would not offer even a shred of a counter evidence to refute the thesis of my book.

democracy, shortly before closing the doors of the strongest democracy to the poorest countries of the world. In 1917, two Russian revolutions also took place; one would overthrow the Czar and the other would extinguish human hope for many years to come. The era of identity-politics ended, at least for two generations. As free immigration came to a halt, not only into the United States but also throughout the world, Cahan was one of the earliest to realize that the Jewish *Altersheim* should and would become the most comprehensive solution for the Jewish people in modern times.

In 1925, Cahan paid a visit to Palestine, where he established political ties with his local comrades, the leaders of the emerging Zionist labor movement. Within the next four years, he would return there again. While die-hard “Yiddish-speaking-socialists” would stick to their clichés, describing the anti-Jewish violence of 1929 as “the outcome of Jewish-capitalist exploitation of the Arab proletariat,” Cahan would lead the *JDF* towards a better understanding of the “*Yiddische-Frage*” in *Eretz Yisroel* and elsewhere. From the twenties on, Cahan and the *JDF* would become a sort of a bridge between the future leaders of the State of Israel and its quintessential ally, American Jewry.⁵¹

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⁵¹ Goldstein Yaacov, *Jewish Socialists in the United States – The Cahan Debate, 1925-1926* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998). Ehud Manor, “They are just like the Bund – How did the JDF became pro-zionist,” *Yiunim Bitkumat Israel*, 16 (2006): 499-538 [Hebrew; English abstract].

**“He’ll become an antisemite here anyway.”
Israel as Seen by Karl Hartl, the First Austrian Diplomat
in Tel Aviv (1950–55)**

by *Rolf Steininger*

Abstract

The Austrian government recognized the state of Israel de facto on March 15, 1949. A year later Austria’s first diplomatic representative arrives in Tel Aviv: Consul First Class Karl Hartl, born in 1909 in Vienna and married to Franziska Grünhut, a Jewish physician. He was a socialist and during the war had been active in the French resistance. In his reports he describes and analyzes nearly all aspects of the political, social, and economic life in Israel and the relations with Austria. The longer he is in Israel the sharper is his criticism of the young state, in his opinion an “artificial state,” which has a border “that sweats blood.” He is convinced that Israel has to be content with “what it really is – a small, very poor country. And only peace with the Arabs will lead to this meager halfway-secure existence.” With respect to the Arabs, Israel has reformulated the old law of the desert: “No longer a tooth for a tooth, but a whole set of teeth for a tooth.” By the time Hartl left Israel in 1955 he called himself an antisemite.

- Introduction
- Karl Hartl and the Consulate General
- Israel and “the Israelis”
- Relations between Austria and Israel
- “The Victim Thesis” and Reparations
- Conclusion

Introduction

On May 18, 1948, four days after the founding of Israel, the Austrian legation in Cairo reported about the reaction to the recognition of the new state by the United States. The fact that this recognition “took place just eleven minutes after the proclamation of the Jewish state and without the prior notification of the Arab states” and that they learned of it, so to speak, “from the newspaper” then “gave rise to great astonishment and broad reaching disapproval” and would be seen as extremely unfriendly conduct by the USA

toward the Arab states.”¹ At that time, the opinion existed in some military circles of the UN that Israel would not be a match for the Arab pressure and that the Arab states would be able to take control of all of Palestine.² Even the British foreign minister, Ernest Bevin, was convinced “that the Jewish state could not hold out and that the Zionist dream would be over.” For him, the American policy toward Israel was “pure domestic fodder for the elections.”³

In the Vatican, Israel was viewed as a fundamental problem. A “solution of the Jewish question” through the new creation of a Jewish state in Palestine “with Jews who were transplanted there” was viewed as a flawed in its fundamental principles:

“...since in view of the circumstance that there is not an autochthonous Jewish population in Palestine, what is dealt with here is the formation of a new state on a purely racial basis which, after the defeat of Hitlerism, was already believed to have been overcome. With this solution, unfavorable repercussions are also foreseen for world Jewry which, as a result of the new founding that was fomented by it, would end up in a divided position that could lead to the fact that Jews who remained in their native countries could be perceived in them more or less as foreigners who could no longer be relied upon under all circumstances.”⁴

Additional reports from the Vatican painted a depressing picture of the situation in Israel and the future of the holy places in Jerusalem.⁵ According to the Austrian Foreign Ministry on May 4, 1948, in view of the events and the necessity for the protection of Austrian interests and Austrian citizens, the appointment of an Austrian representative in Palestine could indeed “appear urgent” but, as it went on to state, that would “hardly be implementable under the current unclear relations.”⁶

In the meeting of the Council of Ministers on May 18, Austrian Chancellor Leopold Figl informed his cabinet colleagues in a terse sentence that “the new State of Israel has been founded” and that furthermore, “You have of course been informed about the state of war there through the newspapers.” There was nothing to be discerned regarding the recognition of this new state. Two days later, the word was that the “new Jewish postal system” accepted and delivered Austrian letters. Although a recognition of this action

¹ May 18, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 44.

² May 16, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 42.

³ May 27, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 50.

⁴ May 20, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 48.

⁵ See in particular December 6, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 78. January 7, 1949; Doc. 85. And May 14, 1949, Doc. 102.

⁶ May 4, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 37.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

was only classified as a matter of secondary significance, Austria would, as was stated, “in any case be committed to a certain extent.” But that was precisely what was not wanted under any circumstances. As was also stated, Israel would have to apply for recognition. Such an application had not yet been presented, and Austria “had no interest in acting prematurely on its own on such a request in any form.”⁷

In the meantime, the course of the war led the Arabs to the painful conclusion, as was formulated by an Arab diplomat to the Austrian representative Clemens Wildner in Ankara, that the Jews “(could) militarily do whatever they wanted.” There was no one who could stop the Israeli army “from marching as far as Cairo, Beirut, or Damascus.” The only remaining problem, though, was Israel. In August 1948, the Iraqi envoy had already told Wildner that he could not imagine any solution to the problem. The establishment of a Jewish state would never be recognized by the Arabs. There would just be a latent state of war in this region, comparable with the era of the Crusades.⁸

For some diplomatic observers, Israel continued to be regarded as a trouble spot. A hundred thousand Jews had emigrated from the Eastern Bloc, “trained Communists,” in Clemens Wildner’s opinion. They would seize the leadership, and Palestine would then “sooner or later [become] a communist state.” Again and again, the fear of a “Bolshevization of the Jewish state” was expressed. It would no doubt turn into a “state with communist leanings.” In the Vatican, it was stressed that the positive outcome of the war had “triggered a wave of nationalism and racial hatred” among the Jews.⁹ The events themselves “were reminiscent of the expulsion of the Armenians in the last World War and of the atrocities carried out during and after the Second World War.”¹⁰ In the situation report from Cairo on January 25, 1949, the Austrian diplomat Ludwig Blaas concluded:

“The situation in the Middle East continues to be muddled and murky. However, two elements characterize the situation: the fear of penetration by Russia into the Middle East along with the increase in the power struggle associated with it, and the struggle for the petroleum.”¹¹

With a view toward Austria, it was already suggested at that time which topics were to be determined the following years. On July 29, 1948, a representative of the Vöslau Worsted Wool Mill by the name of Reuter who had left Tel Aviv on May 14 reported on

⁷ May 20, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 47.

⁸ August 16, 1948 and December 27, 1948, Doc. 63 and 84.

⁹ May 14, 1949, Volume 1, Doc. 102.

¹⁰ December 6, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 78.

¹¹ January 25, 1949, Volume 1, Doc. 90.

the “extraordinarily poor opinion of Austria with the Jews of Palestine.” The view had circulated that “at the time of the Nazi occupation, the Austrians had behaved the worst against Jews” and “the return of Jewish assets was being thwarted in Austria.” A shop in Jerusalem that had displayed goods with the mark “Made in Austria” had been set ablaze overnight.¹² The Austrian government did not act; for the time being the further course of events was awaited.

Israel, though, began to act. In early September of 1948, Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok dispatched Daniel Kurt Lewin, who had emigrated from Germany to Palestine, as an *agent consulaire* to Austria where, in the Foreign Ministry, it was immediately made clear to him that he could not be recognized in this office, “since such an agent would be appointed by a consul general of his state, but the State of Israel has not yet been recognized by Austria.” Levin then carried out his duties in an unofficial capacity on the Getreidegasse in Salzburg. He was officially recognized by the US occupation power and authorized to issue visas to Jewish DPs.¹³

It was only on March 15, 1949 that the Council of Ministers decided to grant Israel de facto recognition and to authorize Chancellor Figl to inform Lewin of this decision. The minutes of that meeting are quite informative:

“The chancellor read a report about the recognition of Israel. The USA and the USSR have already granted recognition. I believe that we must grant Israel de facto recognition. Dr. Kurt Lewin, Israel’s representative, would be the first one to be informed of this. Diplomatic and consular relations may then be established, for which the groundwork must of course be laid. I believe that as the last state, we must grant recognition. We do not need the Allied Council to do so.¹⁴ After that comes the possible additional procedure for de jure recognition.”

Interior Minister Oskar Helmer¹⁵ stated:

“To my knowledge, Dr. Seidmann is the representative of the Austrian government in Tel Aviv. It is also necessary to comment upon this, particularly since he is even in possession of an official Austrian stamp and apparently holds a post as a representative. Dr. Lewin is also Israel’s representative to Switzerland and Prague. It is necessary to speak with him about the different demands, among which is a demand for 25 million

¹² July 29, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 61.

¹³ June 29, 1948 and September 7, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 59 and 65.

¹⁴ Article 7 of the 2nd Control Agreement of June 28, 1946 established the rights of the Allies such that “the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations with other governments [that is, those that did not belong to the UN] required the prior consent of the Allied Council.” The admission of Israel to the UN took place on May 11, 1949.

¹⁵ Born in Tattendorf, November 16, 1887; died in Oberwaltersdorf, February 13, 1963.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

schillings. We certainly need to know who really holds the post. A certain Bronislav Teichholz¹⁶ is also passing himself off as the official representative of Israel. There can, however, only be one official representative.”¹⁷

The minutes of the meeting (point 2) state:

“In its meeting of March 15, 1949, after a report by the chancellor on behalf of the foreign minister, Zl. 74.793-Prot./49, the Council of Ministers has decided to grant Israel *de facto* recognition and to authorize the chancellor to inform the unofficial representative of Israel in Salzburg, Kurt Lewin, of this decision and, upon obtaining Israel’s assent, to initiate the necessary steps in order to establish diplomatic and consular relations with Israel.”¹⁸

Foreign Minister Karl Gruber informed his Israeli colleague Moshe Sharett¹⁹ of the *de facto* recognition of the State of Israel by telegram on April 11, 1949 with the following words:

“I am pleased to be able to inform Your Excellency that the Austrian federal government has granted *de facto* recognition to the State of Israel. On this occasion, I would also like to express the hope that it will soon be possible to establish relations between our countries.”²⁰

Vienna took more time. Several more months were to pass until the confusion mentioned by Oskar Helmer in the meeting of the Council of Ministers on March 15, 1949 – as to who represented whom and where – would be cleared up. In early 1950, Foreign Minister Gruber finally began to act and brought to a close the interim status with regard to Israel. Outside of the agenda, the Council of Ministers agreed on January 10, 1950 to his request to establish a consulate general in Tel Aviv:

“...in view of the economic possibilities that appear to be present for Austria in Israel and of the sizable Austrian colony living there, as well as the need of Austrian citizens for

¹⁶ B. Teichholz-Werber, born in Rzeszow (Galicia) on February 10, 1904, had been director since October 1945 of the Displaced Persons camp that was housed in the half-destroyed Rothschild Hospital on Währinger Gürtel (the modern-day location of a branch of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce).

¹⁷ Minutes of the Council of Ministers, 149th meeting of the Council of Ministers, p. 2, point e).

¹⁸ Minutes of the Council of Ministers, transcript n. 149 on the meeting of the Council of Ministers on March 15, 1949.

¹⁹ Moshe Sharett was originally named Moshe Shertok (see also Volume 1, Facsimile no. 13). Shertok was a Polish name. In the wake of the Hebrewization of names after the founding of the State of Israel, Shertok – who was himself a convinced Hebrewist – changed his name to Moshe Sharett.

²⁰ See April 8, 1949 and April 18, 1949, Volume 1, Doc. 97, 98, and 99.

legal aid and legal protection in Israel, which has grown in recent years through increased emigration.”

The Council of Ministers also agreed that “the Austrian president would be approached with regard to the establishment of an Austrian consulate general in Tel Aviv and the entrusting of its leadership to the Consul First Class Karl Hartl.” Hartl had already “thoroughly proven himself as an official with the Austrian legations in Paris and Rome as well as his activity this year” and therefore appeared to be “best suited” for the post that was under consideration.²¹

Karl Hartl and the Consulate General

Consul First Class Karl Hartl, a business school graduate, arrived in Tel Aviv on January 31, 1950, and experienced what was claimed to be the first snowfall there since the founding of the city in 1909. Hartl was an extraordinary personality. He was born in Vienna on June 30, 1909, attended a letters and sciences high school, studied at the *Hochschule für Welthandel* (the College of World Trade) in Vienna, completed his diploma as a business graduate in 1933, and then went on to study law, philosophy, history, geography, and political science at the University of Vienna. Up until 1933 he was Roman Catholic; after that, he was unaffiliated. In 1936 he married Franziska Grünhut, a Jewish physician, and in 1937 their only child, a daughter named Anna Johanna, was born.

Hartl was a socialist and a member of the *Republikanischer Schutzbund* (the Republican Defense League). Because of participation in the February Uprising of 1934, he lost his job as the “director of propaganda” with the *Österreichische Soya-Vertriebsgesellschaft* (the Austrian Soy Marketing Company). He then went on to write several books (including *Wie, wann, wo? Technologie für Kinder* [*How, When, Where? Technology for Children*] in 1935 and *Warum, wozu? Nationalökonomie für Kinder* [*Why, What For? Economics for Children*] in 1936, the latter of which went through several printings and was translated into various other languages), and from 1936 to 1938 he was the Vienna contact person for the Spanish Republican embassy in Prague. After the Anschluss in 1938, he fled to Paris where he worked at the Spanish Republican diplomatic mission as economic adviser for Central Europe. After the war broke out, he was prominently active in the resistance and an employee of the *Office Autrichien* and the *Service National Autrichien* as well as of an action committee for the liberation of Austria. From September 1939 to May 1940, he was an employee of the French broadcasting service (“mobilized at the special order of the French prime minister; assigned to radio propaganda”) and the “Austrian Freedom Broadcaster” in Fécamb.

²¹ Minutes of the Council of Ministers, transcript n. 188 on the meeting of the Council of Ministers on January 10, 1950, Point 6), item 2 k outside the agenda.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

After France's capitulation, Hartl, along with his family and his Jewish in-laws, fled to the tiny village of Fons in the Département of Lot, where he was officially employed as a "lumberjack" but actually collaborated with the Résistance and was an armorer in the 3rd Regiment of the *Franc-Tireurs et Partisans Français*.

In early 1945, he returned to Paris and was, by his own account, "unemployed" until January 1, 1946. He then served as Commissioner for Prisoners of War at the Austrian political mission in Paris, which was headed by Norbert Bischoff from February to December 1946. Bischoff was also the one who, in his capacity as head of the political department in the Foreign Ministry, had suggested Hartl for this post in October 1945. It was thanks to Hartl that the return of Austrian prisoners from France was completed earlier than from all other countries. The French prisoner of war command was filled with praise about the method of Hartl's management that was as tactful as it was energetic and effective, winning their respect and even their friendship to the highest degree. In December 1946, it was stated in the Foreign Ministry that in his activity as Commissioner for Prisoners of War, Hartl had "rendered extraordinary service to Austrian affairs."

In an official note of December 19, 1946, Norbert Bischoff, who was only briefly active in the Foreign Ministry before he left in 1947 to become ambassador to Moscow, once characterized Hartl as follows:

"In personal terms, although he is a man who does not deny his origins from the masses, he has acquired an education of extraordinary broadness in the areas of literature, history, and philosophy. He has written several books with a popular-scientific content which reveal a brilliant style and extremely alluring and personal wit. He is of the most winning nature in his dealings. His most prominent characteristics are a never-failing readiness for help and action and a burning Austrian patriotism of a specifically Viennese tone."

His acceptance into the diplomatic service was considered by Bischoff to be a "clear gain for it, even if Hartl certainly does not personify the conventional diplomatic type." On July 1, 1947, Hartl entered the Upper Level Foreign Service and was assigned to be the legation secretary for the political representation in Rome where, as he later complained, he "had to negotiate above all with the tiresome South Tyrolean's."²² He remained in Rome until the end of May 1949 and was then employed for six months in the central office in Vienna before, at the age of 41, being appointed as Consul First Class in January 1950 to be the head of the Austrian Consulate General in Tel Aviv with a monthly salary of 900 US dollars. On January 1, 1952, he was promoted to Consul General Second Class. He left Israel in March 1955.

²² August 14, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 48.

Bischoff was correct in all points with his characterization of Hartl, as the latter's reports and letters show again and again. Hartl wrote the reports with the aforementioned clear intent that in the year 2000, some doctoral student could use them to sufficiently describe the development of Israel and the Middle East. With a critical view that is practically surgical, Hartl describes and analyzes nearly all aspects of political, social, and economic life in Israel, and not just that which concerns relations with Austria. A view of the index of documents shows with what he occupied himself. His reports are critical, at times extremely so, witty in their formulation, filled with irony, and never boring – a great pleasure to read. The man could write! It must, however, be noted here that in so doing, he sometimes used the wrong tone or choice of words and made use of formulations that were indeed rather irritating. The most interesting, informative, and knowledgeable are Hartl's numerous private letters, on one hand to Israelis, on the other hand to the envoys Markus Leitmaier, Erich Bielka, Clemens Wildner, and Adolf Schärf ("Most Honorable Mr. Vice Chancellor, Dear comrade") in Vienna. He wrote these letters, as he once phrased it in May 1952, in "somewhat difficult situations," and the explanation is interesting:

"Perhaps it is to be ascribed to the circumstance that I have been an official for only a relatively short period of time and thus imponderables that weigh very heavily can be phrased more easily in private than in a report. But perhaps it is also the fear that I do not wish to mislead a doctoral student in the year 2000 who is assembling his sources about Israel in the middle of the twentieth century from the State Archives."²³

But in actuality, he did not do that!

For the first two months of his stay in Israel, Hartl lived provisionally in the Park Hotel on Hayarkon Street. The hotel lobby was used as a reception room for visitors who came to call, and a bathroom served as the file storage area. After that, he moved into a house on the same street. In a letter from the Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of Finance on January 13, 1950, reference was made to the serious housing shortage in Tel Aviv: 280 US dollars rent for a three room apartment, 350 US dollars for a four room apartment. "Living conditions," it went on to state, "are very poor and correspondingly expensive." The international salary of 900 US dollars per month that had been earmarked was authorized. Hartl's workload amounted to an average of ten to twelve hours per day. By April 1950, he had already processed 1,938 files. In the autumn of 1950, he once complained that the Foreign Office apparently was geared "toward putting [him] in the ground as soon as possible." He had the "turnover" of a "medium-sized legation but with only one employee, no automobile in a land that did not know any other means of transportation, no reasonable prospects for a vacation, a difficult climate. But somehow,

²³ May 26, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 27.

with all the trouble, knocking around with the Jews is fun for me, and in the end, I am in fact getting them to respect both Austria and me.”²⁴

Hartl went on to say that in the meantime, he was “the most popular foreign representative, only sometimes feared because of my ‘loud trap.’”²⁵ At the end of 1950, he identified his “most preferred tasks” to be the enlightenment of the, as he called them, “*Israelen*” [equivalent to “Israelis” in English] in matters of restitution for political-propagandistic reasons. Hartl spoke excellent French and English and some Italian, three languages which at that time in Israel were actually not at all necessary to be understood – German was spoken.

Hartl kept a low profile with the economic negotiations that were going on in Vienna between Austria and Israel and limited himself to “possible interventions with government offices” in Jerusalem. Because of the given circumstances, he “like it or not played the role of a political representative, and his intervening in purely economic negotiations” would happen because the confidentiality of negotiations in Israel “has an uncommon porosity, if the situation arises, a possibly undesirable political publicity.”²⁶

In April 1951, an edict from the Foreign Office reached Hartl according to which every employee of the Upper Level Foreign Service would have to undergo a professional examination if he had not already passed it and had not expressly been exempted from doing so. The examination consisted of one essay in each of the French and English languages in the area of diplomatic world history, international law, or economic policy and four oral examinations in world history after 1815, international law and international civil law, economic policy, and the structure and leadership of the Foreign Service. The oral examinations were given by a commission that was headed by either the foreign minister or the secretary general of the Foreign Office.

It was not the first time that Hartl had received this edict but, as he wrote to Socialist Vice-chancellor Adolf Schärff in Vienna [“Dear comrade Schärff”], his constant service had prevented an examination of that sort up to that point in time. “I also did not know how, with the constant, really one hundred percent demands upon my time, I could achieve any additional studying.” At any rate, it was to be deduced from the edict that there also had to be people who had been excused from this procedure: “I do not know what criteria are required for it, but I have to view it as somewhat grotesque that I am not among that circle of people. I may surely assume that in practical terms, I have produced my certificate of qualifications.” He then referred to his work with the prisoners of war which “not only earned 70,000 Austrians their freedom, but also earned me letters of commendation from Figl and Gruber, both of whom referred to my

²⁴ September 18, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 50.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ November 23, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 59.

particular diplomatic skill.” He did not want to mention this, since it dated from his “pre-diplomatic” time. “But it does appear strange, if this examination is demanded of a man who has already been working for fourteen months as the head of an office in a country with which Austria is not exactly friendly and whose running of the office has up until now not been the subject of one single complaint.” He did not request immediate intervention from Schärf, but merely that “you take note of this curiosity.” He did not demand an exception for himself, but “if there are exceptions, then I must be among them.” Hartl did not have to take any examination for the time being (he did so in May 1955 after his return from Israel [grade: “very good,” equivalent to an A]).

As Hartl once expressed to Schärf, Tel Aviv was the only Austrian diplomatic mission that was “without exception ‘red’”: clerk, chauffeur, secretary, and he himself. In fine self-irony, he described the office and its employees in this way: “We are without a doubt the ‘proles’ among the foreign missions. We have little time and we have not turned into fine people – but perhaps we thus match the country that we are in.” A little later on, he once complained that the detail work was suffocating him, “Legalizations, interventions, and consultations.” He hardly had any time for serious political analysis. “It is no wonder that close contact with Vienna is lost through dealing with daily odds and ends, because whom does Israel really interest when it is not just screaming that the Austrians are Nazis?”²⁷ That certainly also had something to do with the fact that he was often informed too late about decisions in Vienna to be able to provide clear answers to questions in Tel Aviv. For him, the “idiocy of the courier department” in Vienna was responsible for this; the most important matters were assigned to the slowest couriers. For Hartl it was clear: “There must be one person in the place who is a teetotaler and only drinks iodine-free water.” Through “horrific tortuous maneuvers he attempted to conceal his lack of knowledge from his colleagues and the Israeli authorities, as he confided to Vice Chancellor Schärf, but

“In the long run, it is rather unpleasant to play the fool here – even though I am sufficiently used to it – and to constantly be declaring that I do not know anything.”²⁸

In the summer of 1952, he applied for a vacation for the first time in two and a half years. He received from Vienna what he described as a “very puritanical response.” It was agreed that he could begin his vacation, but it was restricted by his being required to be reachable every day, that is, there would be no European vacation in 1952. Hartl did not consider that to be hard, since, as he expressed to the envoy Clemens Wildner on August 14, 1952, “My rather solid farmer physique makes this circumstance bearable. But if my

²⁷ January 31, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 6.

²⁸ April 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 101.

service in the Near East is to last much longer, then I am not completely sure about my 'genetics.'²⁹

A little while later, he requested an urgent vacation in Europe for his "most loyal soul" in the office: his secretary, Hedwig Blankenberg who, like his wife, was Jewish. For himself, he could "consume the hereditary stockpiling of an entire generation of farmers. But you may not demand of normal humans that they spend their vacation here, if this vacation is really supposed to provide the energy for renewed work." In Vienna, Cairo was regarded as overseas; Tel Aviv, on the other hand, was regarded as Europe. For Hartl, that was a "truly screaming injustice." For him, the only difference, aside from the "180 kilometer distance between Tel Aviv and Cairo" – with which he really meant 180 miles – was "that the freight rates from Israel are approximately one third higher than from Egypt." But there was something else, too: those who were assigned to the office where paid in Israeli local currency. According to Hartl, "There is nothing left for the poor dogs to do except to accept the local currency." But since the "Israelis" did not accept the local currency for a vacation outside of Israel, such a trip was not possible. "And a vacation taken within the narrow borders of this country is no vacation for Europeans."³⁰

Hartl was no "normal" official. He sometimes flirted with this attitude, but was then reminded by Vienna that he was indeed an official. Such as in April 1953, when he pronounced an Easter greeting to the Austrian listeners of the Israeli radio broadcaster "Kol Israel." In so doing, it meant that he had the uncertain feeling of perhaps nevertheless violating some official regulation, since his profession ought to be one of silence or, better yet, of speaking only when ordered to do so. But there was in fact not to be any prohibition against the Easter wishes. It was an independent act, so to speak. He notified the office in Vienna, but he could not obtain any approval because of the shortness of the time. He received a reply from the secretary general posthaste: Hartl's remarks would not be overly beneficial to the appearance of the Austrian civil service in general and that of the Foreign Office in particular. Without certain bureaucratic rules, a well-ordered operation of the office would not be possible, "and specifically not only with us, but in every country in the world."³¹

Even though there was a UN resolution that provided for the internationalization of Jerusalem, the Knesset declared Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel on January 23, 1950. In dealings with the Israeli Foreign Office, this at first did not cause any problems for the diplomatic representatives, since the Israeli Foreign Ministry continued to remain in Tel

²⁹ August 14, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 47.

³⁰ August 20, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 49.

³¹ April 25, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 113.

Aviv. There were only difficulties with the presentation of credentials. This was sometimes carried out in Tiberias when the Israeli president was staying there.

Things changed in 1953. On July 14, it was announced that the Foreign Office would move within forty-eight hours. Barracks were provided for this in Jerusalem, but they had not yet been totally completed. For those diplomatic representatives whose countries abided by the UN resolutions, Jerusalem was the “forbidden city” from then on.³² The Foreign Office in Jerusalem was boycotted. If the Israelis made an invitation to Jerusalem, it was replied to with an excuse; if diplomatic representatives made an invitation to Tel Aviv, an excuse immediately arrived from Jerusalem. In order to carry on a serious discussion at all, diplomatic “flopouses” had to be created, as Hartl phrased it. For him, the Austrian trade delegate Heinrich C. Katz sometimes took on the role of “providential house father.” His apartment in Tel Aviv was recognized by the “Israelis” as “neutral ground.”³³ In any case, during his period in office, Hartl did not once cross the threshold of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.³⁴ Conversely, the Israelis carried out “deliberate tactics of attrition” against him. His meetings in Jerusalem with officials of the Foreign Ministry always took place around midday, and so Hartl had the repeated honor of inviting them to lunch. Since he almost always had to speak with four or five officials and these discussions almost always took place in the King David Hotel, “every visit to Jerusalem meant an outlay for me of fifty to sixty Israeli pounds.”³⁵

Hartl was appealed to numerous times by the highest officials of the Austrian Foreign Office to not call upon the Israeli Foreign Office in Jerusalem. One of these unexpected visits took place in early July 1954, a few days after the Jordanians had fired shots at buildings in the western part of the city that were situated not far from the buildings of the Foreign Office. Hartl’s contact, in this case the deputy director of the Western European Department, Yehiel Iksar, had been speaking completely “privately,” and this circumstance of the shooting incident also then made it possible for Hartl to likewise respond “privately” and to deflect with a joke that perhaps would have been somewhat embarrassing for his contact. It was not just that he would put Hartl in conflict with the United Nations. He was also requiring an act of heroism from him “which, out of consideration for my age, I must decline.”³⁶ Not entering the Foreign Office in Jerusalem was more than just a symbolic gesture. It had to do with the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. And Vienna was not prepared to give in to that as long as the “Israelis on their part do not appear inclined to promise a concession – even only in

³² July 23, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 39.

³³ December 23, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 191.

³⁴ April 26, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 51.

³⁵ July 7, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 90.

³⁶ July 7, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 90.

passing for the case of the accommodation that is striven for – such as a better handling of Austrian assets in Israel.”³⁷

On numerous occasions, Hartl also wrote letters to the editor to those newspapers that reported especially critically on Austria. And wonderful plays on words are to be found in them, such as in the letter to the editor of *Haboker* on April 18, 1954: “The popular saying goes, ‘It’s hard to be a Jew.’ As a sensible extension of this sensible observation, I would add, ‘It’s hard to be an Austrian among Jews.’”³⁸ Five years in Israel were also not easy for Hartl. In a letter to Vienna in August 1954, he said with resignation, “I hope that you bring me home by the end of the year.”³⁹ And in October 1954, he wrote, “It would be high time that they took me away from here.”⁴⁰ That was to occur a few months later.

Israel and “the Israelis”

The longer that Hartl was in Israel, the sharper was his criticism of the young state and its inhabitants, those 1.5 million Jews who, as Hartl stated in October 1954, “as the result of an historic accident and indisputable personal courage, are today called Israelis.”⁴¹ Above all else, though, his criticism was directed at the “official” Israel and its leading politicians. In the beginning, the State of Israel was for him “a state of unilateral confidence, and somehow the Israeli air lightly carries the refrain that was once sung in other parts, ‘What is right is that which is of use to the people.’”⁴² He believed that he already recognized signs early on “that the Jew who turns into an Israeli deintellectualizes himself.” People like himself – with his irreproachable biography, being married to a Jewish woman – were “actually very disturbing figures” in Israel. “A blatant antisemite fits much better into the calculation and is somehow a positive for the Israeli balance sheet.” His description of the Israeli official returns to oft-cited prejudices and could not have been sarcastic: he distinguishes himself through “Jewish modesty, Prussian charm, and Polish order.”⁴³ In 1952, Hartl considered the irregularity of the payment of state officials to be an important move in the direction of the “Levantization and corrupting of the bureaucracy.” At the assumption of his post in 1950, he had hardly

³⁷ July 19, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 101.

³⁸ April 18, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 49.

³⁹ April 28, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 120.

⁴⁰ October 11, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 129.

⁴¹ October 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁴² April 25, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 23.

⁴³ June 27, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 31.

noticed any corruption. In June 1952, “circumstances had sunk to the level of the usual circumstances in the eastern Mediterranean.”⁴⁴

Then there is furthermore the discussion of the “ghetto nationalism of the State of Israel,”⁴⁵ that the country “lives off of the money of American Jews,”⁴⁶ and that the government is conducting a policy of “frenetic immigration and a utopian economic policy.”⁴⁷ It appeared “that the environment of the lasting Middle Ages with the Arabs and a ghetto of oversized proportions with the Israelis diminishes to a large degree the eye’s ability to see decisions affecting world politics.”⁴⁸ Hartl speaks of the “spectacular but pernicious immigration.”⁴⁹ It was the “observant Jews from Yemen, Morocco, and Iraq;” to these “primitives,” Ben Gurion appeared to be “a messiah who made the prophets a reality and who had brought the scattered ones back to the land of their fathers.”⁵⁰ Hartl’s opinion of Ben Gurion turned out to be rather negative. The Israeli prime minister was a “personality”⁵¹ but a “very emotive man”⁵² to whom “Mosaic wrath and the rage of the prophets and a thirst for blood are not foreign,”⁵³ one who conducted “risky politics,”⁵⁴ and, as he stated to Foreign Minister Karl Gruber on December 12, 1952, merely a man of the state – “I do not dare to say ‘statesman.’”⁵⁵ For Hartl, Menachem Begin was simply a “fascist,”⁵⁶ Finance Minister Levi Eschkol, later to be prime minister, was “the treasurer of the Jewish Agency,”⁵⁷ he considered Israel on the whole to be an “unimportant but also very unpleasant spot.”⁵⁸ In the country,

“anti-antisemitism completely takes the place that antisemitism functionally takes in non-Jewish countries, and Germany and Austria provide the way out for government

⁴⁴ June 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 31.

⁴⁵ December 12, 1952, Volume 2, Doc. 3.

⁴⁶ August 12, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 94.

⁴⁷ May 6, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 116.

⁴⁸ April 20, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 77.

⁴⁹ October 22, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 103.

⁵⁰ July 18, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 88.

⁵¹ December 12, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 69.

⁵² May 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 22.

⁵³ October 28, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 169.

⁵⁴ May 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 22.

⁵⁵ December 12, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 69.

⁵⁶ January 24, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 5.

⁵⁷ June 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 31.

⁵⁸ November 4, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 61.

propaganda and journalism that is to be chosen when there are internal difficulties. In cases of difficulties with domestic policy, aggression in foreign policy is prescribed to dictatorships by the sociological systematist. Israel reacts to domestic political pressure with complaints to and demands on other countries. It counts on the undeniable guilt of the world. Not only on that of Germany and that of the areas occupied by it, but on the guilt of everyone – the entire world and all countries in which the murder of fleeing Jews slipped through the cracks of the order of everyday life, with one solitary but, in practicality, not insignificant difference from the events of everyday life: those who stayed behind were murdered. Thus, in addition to its small but powerful army, Israel has available a larger one: that of the dead Jews.”

Israel’s strongest divisions were the “dead of the mass graves, of the concentration camps, and of the gas chambers.”⁵⁹ It was a land that “allowed blood to be compensated for with money.”⁶⁰ The “Israelis” were “a peculiar people”⁶¹ but, “with all their unpleasant characteristics, a very logical people.”⁶²

The criticism by the trained economist Hartl of the government’s economic policy turned out to be withering: “A megalomaniacal policy and idiotic miscalculations in available funds” led to such financial problems that “everything that somehow seems attainable has to be recklessly grasped at.”⁶³ As an old Austrian who was an expert on Karl Kraus, he said, “Damned if it doesn’t sometimes appear that a little branch of *The Last Days of Mankind* was opened here, where Privy Councilor Schwarzwelber [“Yellowandblack,” the colors of the Imperial Austrian flag] is satisfactorily replaced by Comrade Blueandwhite.”⁶⁴ As the “winner of the wartime boom,” Israel had lived beyond its means.⁶⁵

At the end of 1951, Israel’s financial situation had become so precarious that Heinrich C. Katz had also “never before experienced [it] in any other country.”⁶⁶ In Hartl’s opinion, the situation was catastrophic. “It can hardly be covered up that the country is threatened by hunger.” And furthermore, “Israel has been cleaned out of its own capital. It has seeped away into the storerooms of the new immigrants, into the cracks of the unproductivity of the local economy, and above all else into the hole of the economic

⁵⁹ November 25, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 65.

⁶⁰ October 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁶¹ April 16, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 106.

⁶² August 2, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 108.

⁶³ November 4, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 61.

⁶⁴ November 16, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 62.

⁶⁵ January 2, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 78.

⁶⁶ October 21, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 102.

incompetence of the pseudo socialist monopoly companies.”⁶⁷ After the granting of a 65 US million dollar loan, what was faced at the time was the “receivership of an otherwise bankrupt state.” In the face of the “drought of the present,” the “spring-abundant past” was invoked. According to Hartl,

“The entire country seems to be built over Ali Baba’s cave. No sooner have our eyes that were blinded by the sparkle and shimmer gotten used to the normal blackness then we are most intensely reliving the deeds of Maccabee I... and Maccabee II; measured against these deeds, Xenophon and Beowulf, Jan Ziska and Zriny could only do one reasonable thing – fade away quickly and with as little sensation as possible!”⁶⁸

The new immigrants from the East came from countries “where living parliamentarianism is perhaps rarer than soap.”⁶⁹ In his opinion, the Levant had always had its

“solid guild of professional criminals. As far as Israel is concerned, the gangs from Jaffa, Haifa, Akko, and Jerusalem were driven across the border by the political and military events of 1948. But Israel imported its criminals, actually emeritus experts, from the slums of Casablanca, Algiers, Tunis, and Baghdad. The poor ‘refugees’ in Jordan and the poor ‘immigrants’ from North Africa and Iraq were standing on virgin territory without having a real field of work and without being organized horizontally or vertically. Both groups are at approximately the same stage of civilization, have the same interests, and speak a common language: Arabic.”⁷⁰

In the country itself, there were incidents of corruption and smuggling in which important figures were involved. In 1954, one thing was for certain for Hartl:

“Public morals, which were very high during the first years of the state, are in constant decline. The legacy of the ghetto and Levantism punch serious holes into a society that has been able to maintain a remarkable moral level by living off of idealistic reserves for a lengthy period of time.”⁷¹

The longer Hartl was in the country, the more critical his judgment turned out to be. During a trip to Eilat – incidentally, a wonderful travelogue – the people in the Negev made a deep impression upon Hartl. “What we have here is the genuine pioneer type

⁶⁷ October 22, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 103.

⁶⁸ October 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁶⁹ January 6, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 4.

⁷⁰ January 28, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 83.

⁷¹ May 26, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 69.

that has created something great in the most varied places on earth.” But he immediately expressed his doubts. The only question, which he could barely answer, was “whether the ‘morals of the hinterlands’ would correspond to the impetus of this advanced group.”⁷²

Again and again, he referred to the consequences of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49 “which led to the premature birth and perhaps miscarriage of the thing that had been given the name ‘Israel.’”⁷³ Israel was, “whether it wanted to be or not, nevertheless a splash of the Europe that had been smashed up by Hitler and which remained stuck to the coast of Asia Minor.” In his opinion, in April 1954 it had to be “considered as proven that the grafting of Europe onto the ancient Near Eastern branch was unsuccessful – this scion never got the sap from the roots and, without outside aid, will wither.”⁷⁴

The “calling into question of Israel” would “no doubt cause severe disturbances, but would probably not bring about any world conflict.”⁷⁵ Hartl was convinced that Israel had to be content with “what it really is – a small, very poor country. And only peace with the Arabs will lead to this meager but halfway-secure existence.”⁷⁶ However, it had an army which, even if it were small when measured against world armament, “was more than sufficient in local deployment for a ‘bouleversement’ of the territorial balance of power as well as the balance of power in the Middle East.” This weapon with regional weight made it possible for Israel to play “the role of the violent beggar.”

In Israel, it was not easy to bring a policy of the subdued word “compromise” to a people which, for understandable reasons, did not love “the nations” very much and which had climbed “out of the miraculously won war” with very weighty nationalism that “lacked any refinement of civilization and any charm.”⁷⁷ And then came a harsh judgment: “Israeli nationalism differed little from German nationalism.” In Israel, there was “the ugliest and most primitive limitation of believing one’s own nation to be better, and heavens above – first and foremost, toward the Arabs – that instead of one and a half million Israelis, there were 80 or 200 million. The Jews are also really not so kosher if they believe that they have the possibility to do so.”⁷⁸

⁷² March 20, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 12.

⁷³ August 4, 1954; Volume 4, Doc. 110.

⁷⁴ April 28, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 53.

⁷⁵ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

⁷⁶ April 12, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 105.

⁷⁷ May 26, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 69.

⁷⁸ August 7, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. III.

And with respect to the Arabs, they have by their own statement reformulated the old “law of the desert,” so to speak, “No longer a tooth for a tooth, but a whole set of teeth for a tooth,” as Hartl interpreted without contradiction the reflections of a high-ranking official of the Israeli Foreign Ministry after a border clash.⁷⁹ And after the attack on the Arab village of Kibye in Jordan, in which sixty-nine people were killed, half of whom were women and children, he noted, filled with disappointment:

“At the time, Israel’s power seemed to me to be moral, a credit for the guilty conscience of the world, of the whole world that more or less shared the blame for the murder of millions. With Kibye, the whole world will be freed of a good part of its guilty conscience, since the example shows that the victim murders just as well and just as gladly as the former murderer. This moral leveling off – a downward leveling – has excused the rest of the world; and thus hereafter, Israel will be weighed at its unladen weight and has become much lighter.”⁸⁰

In Hartl’s opinion, the attitude of the Israelis toward the Arabs corresponded to that of the American settlers at the beginning of the nineteenth century toward the Indians or the Australian farmers at the same time toward the “Australoids.”⁸¹ Hartl speaks of the “undeniable chauvinism of the people who view the Arabs as people of a second and third grade.”⁸² The Israeli policy basically tended

“to make life unpleasant for the Arabs in their land, and experience has shown that there is no better regime to achieve this unpleasantness than that of the military.”⁸³

As a conqueror, Israel occupied a purely Arab area, had seized Arab property, and had a minority – specifically, a minority of 175,000 Arabs that was physically nearly enclosed – and any concession that Israel could offer had to appear insufficient to the Arabs.⁸⁴ And with regard to the future of the Palestinian refugees, Hartl also did not see any simple solution, since “the Palestinian refugee is not the historically honored exile for whom the homeland is convertible into banknotes.”⁸⁵ And with regard to the protection of minorities and their rights, in Israel these were “empty words.”⁸⁶ Israel’s religious policy

⁷⁹ August 16, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 112.

⁸⁰ October 21, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 165.

⁸¹ June 5, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 78.

⁸² August 12, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 94.

⁸³ May 1, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 16.

⁸⁴ November 25, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 174.

⁸⁵ October 4 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁸⁶ May 31, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 27.

was “trickish and, above all else, disapproving and sly to the Christian denominations.”⁸⁷ In his estimation, there would be no conference and no peace: “... and the ceasefire will thus continue to rot in its own muck – and sometimes send up bloody bubbles.” In 1952, it was clear to him that Israel “undoubtedly [has] expansionist designs,” but “not the material possibilities to give in to these desires for expansion.”⁸⁸ Two years later, he at least saw no danger for the coming days, but the possibility of it and the worry for the future remained. Or else Israel would carry out a brutal strike, a preventative strike, in order to achieve gains and a new basis for negotiations: “In short – today, Israel belongs to us; tomorrow.”⁸⁹ In his opinion, Israel was an “artificial state” which had a border “that sweats blood;” and in March 1954, he added – almost prophetically – that atrocity would be answered with atrocity, “senseless murder on both sides, bestiality as a means to a political solution in a hopeless situation”⁹⁰ in a “sphere of political disorganization.”⁹¹

The Austrian envoy in Cairo, Robert Friedinger-Pranter, had described the situation in May 1951 correctly, even if it was in his own particular way, namely, “The latent state of war between Israel and the Arab states [is] one of the most dangerous portals of entry for the bacillus of a global conflagration to the body of human civilization.”⁹² His successor in Cairo, Clemens Wildner, added in November 1954, after a conversation with the Egyptian foreign minister and Arab colleagues, that nothing had changed in the attitude of the Arab states with regard to this matter. Israel’s Arab neighbors believed “that in the view of the Arab world, the existence of the Israeli state would always be a festering wound. As long as the injustice inflicted upon the Arabs (expulsion from Israel, confiscation of their property, etc.) was not compensated down to the last dollar and cent, the current state of affairs would continue and would signify a perpetual threat of war. Time was on the side of the Arab states, which were becoming stronger and stronger militarily.”

In a friendly discussion, it had been made clear to him that in such a case, if the Arab states had really armed and a combination would result that was favorable to world politics, then “the chances for the continued existence of the Jewish state cannot be the best.”⁹³

⁸⁷ February 16, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 22.

⁸⁸ June 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 31.

⁸⁹ August 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 110.

⁹⁰ March 22, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 38.

⁹¹ November 25, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 64.

⁹² May 28, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 83.

⁹³ November 24, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 148.

That matched the estimation of the Arab states that Karl Hartl had already provided in November 1951, namely, “In the Middle East... the word remains trump; the intoxication of the phrase is suffered by the lands of the lowest alcohol consumption.”⁹⁴ But in 1954, it was also clear to him that “in no way [does there exist] an Arab need for genuine peace.”⁹⁵

Relations between Austria and Israel

On February 2, 1950, Karl Hartl presented his credentials to the director of the consular department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Zwi Avnon, a former Dutch career diplomat. Contrary to expectations, the presentation occurred in conjunction with a lengthy conversation in which the problems were discussed that resulted from the fact that Israel did not have codified body of law whatsoever, which above all else made difficult the recognition of Israeli or Austrian citizenship. “Obviously with the intention of emphasizing the desire for friendly relations,” Avnon explained that his government wanted to treat Hartl as a consul general according to the *Présence*, even though Hartl had been designated in a diplomatic note only as a consul first class. In the end, Avnon expressed the hope that the presence of an Austrian consul in Israel could be useful in reducing the opposition against Austria that was present in the country and to finally make it disappear.

It was clear to Hartl, as he reported to Vienna, that Israel’s government undoubtedly intended to bring an end to the isolation of the country that it perceived, but the emotional stance of significant segments of the population stood in the way of this. The difficulties that posed opposition to the path to a rational friendship would, however, be valid not just for Austria, but to much greater degree also for England and, recently, for the Soviet Union, as well, since it had spoken out for the internationalization of Jerusalem. In any case, Hartl concluded, “even with the most cautious evaluation, there can be no doubt that the Israeli government has the intention of reducing the hatred against Austria that exists in the population, a hatred which is so often rooted in a very schematic identification of Austria with Germany.”

However, he still momentarily awaited attacks by the press against which to protest but which, with the reigning press freedom, would hardly make sense and the answer to which would only be found in a “clarifying action” to be issued from the consulate general.⁹⁶ And just a little later, he was visited by a go-getting journalist, Imanuel Unger,

⁹⁴ November 21, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 110.

⁹⁵ September 23, 1954; Volume 4, Doc. 125.

⁹⁶ February 12, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 3.

who subsequently published an article that was filled with praise for Hartl,⁹⁷ which for him was almost somewhat embarrassing.⁹⁸

The longer Hartl was in the country, the more critical he became. In April 1953, he once wrote to one of his Israeli colleagues in Vienna, Eshel,

“I am modest and tired. I went to your land in search of friendship for my people. I had set my sights too high – well beyond my life. I soon recognized that and confined myself. What matters to me now is to reduce the friction so much that it disappears without any bang or sensation.”

But even that would “probably [be] a goal that was set too high.”⁹⁹ Hartl and Eshel corresponded with each other further. On August 4, 1954, Hartl privately called him his “active opponent in Vienna.” “He is almost like an Israeli-made watch: sometimes he runs ahead, sometimes he runs behind. Which distinguishes him from Israeli timepieces: as a result of his restlessness, he always runs.” And Unger, who in the meantime had been employed by Eshel in Vienna, had completely fallen out of favor with him. He would speak of Austria only in his “weekly unpleasant remarks” whereby he first and foremost would press the Jewish demands against Austria. In March 1954, Hartl wrote to Foreign minister Leopold Figl, “It is indeed somewhat aggravating when a journalist who has now been sitting in Vienna for a year and a day, who is not lacking in a certain primary intelligence, who has sufficient time and opportunity to inform himself correctly, lies with stubborn hatred and narrow animosity.”¹⁰⁰ Unger, “that poor hack of a writer,” actually feared only one thing, “but he fears it like the devil fears holy water: to have to go back to Israel. If we were to give him the few “Groschen” that he needs in order to stay in Austria, he would even write for us.”¹⁰¹ And another journalist, the owner and publisher of the tabloid *Maariv* – who, in connection with the problems involved with compensation, wrote commentaries that were extremely critical of Austria – was for him a “revolver journalist.”¹⁰²

First and foremost in his private letters, Hartl made no secret of his disappointment about official Israel. Thus, to him, the establishment of relations between the two states was “exclusively a calculation by the Israeli side which was simply collecting the greatest possible number of states that would recognize the status that emerged through the outcome of the Jewish-Arab war.” Thus, relations had “been unconditionally accepted

⁹⁷ August 25, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 43.

⁹⁸ August 26, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 44.

⁹⁹ April 22, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. III.

¹⁰⁰ March 22, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 37.

¹⁰¹ January 6, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 4.

¹⁰² December 12, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 69.

on the part of Israel while, viewed purely in terms of national law, Austria [was] the half to give.” He would be the last to deny that in late 1949-early 1950, the establishment of relations with Israel had been without advantages for Austria:

“I myself have endeavored within the framework of my office and to the extent of my energies to build and maintain a good relationship with Israel that for us was above all else important in appearance. To the extent that I had them at all, I gave up my illusions about the possibility of an actual friendship between the two countries and only endeavored to prevent anything from ‘happening.’” And then came the admission in his letter to Adolf Schärf on December 7, 1953, “As to the reason why I could not do anything at all – the official Israel hated Austria and basically will hate it for the foreseeable future.”¹⁰³

What led Hartl to this assessment? At first, Hartl looked upon the policy of the Israeli government primarily from the point of view of an economist. And thus he viewed it as his duty to give early warning against possible agreements with this government. On May 14, 1951, when the topic was an initial loan from the Austrian Länderbank to the Jewish Agency, he made it clear that the sole guarantee from the former Anglo-Palestine Bank was “thoroughly insufficient.”¹⁰⁴ He was only informed right at the end about the negotiations that were going on in Vienna on the 100 million schilling credit. However, he then expressed his most severe misgivings. In view of its difficult financial situation, Israel would be able to sell the Austrian goods to third countries, even if it were at a loss.

“I have to fear that quality goods imported from Austria... will suddenly appear on American and South American markets 20% cheaper than the Austrian export price and will shatter our market. For Israel, that is acceptable business because Israel has the necessary breathing room and the price reduction still brings a profit in terms of interest.” He went on to write on October 10, 1952 that he was endeavoring “to see things as black like a pessimist, and you will all be satisfied if in the end, a gray remains to be seen for persons with normal vision. If I may express any wish and a hope, then it is that we somehow emerge unhurt from this damn credit agreement.”¹⁰⁵

It became clear as early as late 1951 that the Israeli Foreign Office was very interested in the establishment of diplomatic relations with Austria. The first Israeli initiative came in November 1951. According to Gershon Avner, head of the Western Europe Department in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, it was high time to normalize Austrian-Israeli relations and to transform them into diplomatic relations.¹⁰⁶ But it soon became clear that this

¹⁰³ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

¹⁰⁴ May 14, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 79.

¹⁰⁵ October 10, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 57.

¹⁰⁶ November 3, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 106.

was not so simple. In February 1952, Avner told Hartl that with the establishment of diplomatic relations, it would be “desirable” that “at the beginning of the establishment” of these relations, there would be “the granting of the credit and an exchange of addresses of friendship associated with it”. This was “not a condition,” it would merely “make infinitely easier” the psychological preparation of the Israeli public.¹⁰⁷ Consul Eshel phrased it differently in April: it just had to do with a “*representation*.” This was only to represent a temporary stage in the transformation of consular relations. Foreign Minister Gruber made it clear that the “suggestion by Tel Aviv that was made in unworldly doctrinarism to allow the consulate generals to exist and to only grant the heads of the offices diplomatic immunity was out of the question. If necessary, then things would have to remain at their current state of affairs.”¹⁰⁸ “Any hybrid [would be] rejected.”

Ears sharpened in Vienna when Eshel made it clear that Israel desired a declaration of friendship on the part of Austria, more or less to the effect that

“the Federal Republic of Austria was to be viewed as the successor to the earlier Democratic Austria, that it had nothing to do with Hitler Germany and the Austrian Jews, and that it unconditionally condemned the atrocities and acts of inhumanity carried out against the Austrian Jews by the Austrian Nazis.”

With the envoy Wildner, Eshel was even more clear. Wildner must not forget “that a portion of the Austrian population that was not inconsequential had sinned against the Jews.”¹⁰⁹ Wildner informed Hartl and indignantly stressed, “Austria has nothing to do with these things, and it is not the occasion for us to especially emphasize this in a declaration of friendship.”¹¹⁰

Hartl viewed this exactly the same way without any qualification. The objection by the Israeli Foreign Office that in its relations with Austria, Israel had to “control” public opinion was, in his view, “only correct to a limited degree,” as he gave Wildner to understand in a private letter:

“When viewed with precision, the Israeli public today has worries that are very different than that of a greater or lesser friendship with Austria. It may well be that the spectacular treatment of the Austrian issue at the moment in which Israeli-German negotiations are more and more in the forefront can be not necessarily desirable. In this

¹⁰⁷ February 2, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 8.

¹⁰⁸ April 21, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 14.

¹⁰⁹ May 24, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 24.

¹¹⁰ June 17, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 30.

case, however, it is practically immaterial whether Austria has half or full diplomatic representation in Israel.”

The possibility to differentiate between a political representative *ad persona* and an envoy would no doubt be over the head of “the Israeli in the street.” If Israel suggested the hybrid solution, that occurred with the intention “to impose upon us a ‘time-related’ punishment of sins, and to do so while fully factoring in the fact that on several occasions, the Israeli press could also criticize the establishment of these relations.”

Hartl then suggested, though, to moderate the categorical form of the rejection and to resort to delay tactics:

“For the most varied of reasons that are certainly historically understandable, the Israeli state and its government by its very essence are the friend of no one. To a far greater extent than is typical with other states, in the Jewish state the degree of friendship is assessed according to the opportunity. The physical and spiritual traumas of the Jewish people as a whole must not cause every non-Jew and every non-Jewish community to be considered in the old, Biblical sense as strangers in the essentially inimical sense.”

It would be futile – and not just for Austria, which was starting from a particularly unfavorable point of departure – to court the friendship of Israel and the “Israelis.” “Genuine friendship with this people is only to be expected in the second or third generation of future Israelis.” And he even provided a foundation for this attitude: “The dead of this people live on, and there is no argument against the dead, especially when they were murdered.” The shadow of these dead lay over not only Austria and Germany, but over all nations, “nations” understood in the biblical sense. Hartl therefore believed that in the relations with Israel – and in this case, it was of no importance that he spoke as an Austrian – this exceptional situation was to be taken into consideration: “Nothing is more legitimate than that the antisemitism that historically has been so effective has begotten a Jewish chauvinism, an active anti-antisemitism which in its practical form is very similar to antisemitism.” And there were no rational arguments against “isms.” For that reason, Hartl went on to say, “I believe it must be underscored that even though in the future, we will hopefully have to use the word ‘friendship’ on several occasions, in our lifetime a friendship of Israel either with Austria or with any other non-Jewish state is not to be counted upon.”¹¹¹

All the same, Austria went on to guarantee the 100 million schilling credit – and Israel in turn officially renounced demands for reparations from Austria. At the same time, negotiations were going on with the Federal Republic of Germany and resulted in the Luxembourg Agreement under which Germany was obligated to pay a total of 3.45 billion deutschmarks. In Hartl’s view, this was “blood money.” In his opinion, the

¹¹¹ May 26, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 27.

Germans had to “be made socially acceptable for five million American Jews.”¹¹² The fact that within this context, it was also thought to include Austrian shipments in the West German reparations payments to Israel – as “a costly new impetus for additional export shipments to Israel”¹¹³ – was only one consideration, although rather a noteworthy one. When a bomb attack was then carried out on the office of the Israeli foreign minister as a protest against the agreement with Germany, it was also clear to Hartl that for a Jew whose mother and father had been killed in an extermination camp, it indeed had to appear difficult and degrading to receive the compensation for his murdered parents “in the form of a toilet from Düsseldorf.” Hartl doubted that the Germans would keep the agreement. There would then basically not be very much left of this treaty in view of the fact “that the Jews who were murdered by the Nazis are rotting at a faster and faster pace and will disappear as admonishing ghosts. Wine gets better with age; corpses get worse.”¹¹⁴

After the allocation of the credit, Hartl definitely believed that with skillful action and attentive exploitation of the opportunities that were being offered, relations with Israel could be definitively normalized. “Not because the Israelis will be so fond of us as a result of my winning nature, but rather because objective circumstances will compel them to do so.” And if so, then he would gladly see its completion through, because... “For three years, I have been slaving away like someone pushing a brick around, and it would be very unpleasant for me if someone else were to bring things to a close.” And then, somewhat resignedly, “But I do believe that no one else wants to come here!” although he went on to consider:

“However, it must in any case be avoided that some fool from Vorarlberg takes the job and they really end up doing all the things they want: sending a banished Catholic who is necessarily from the Franciscans – with whom I incidentally get along most excellently – and who could know more Vatican policy than would be beneficial to Austria; appointing a Jew as an Austrian representative who would be regarded by the Zionists of the most varied varieties as a traitor to his people – and finally and understandably no one who had anything to do with the Nazis. He should never have been an officer in the Wehrmacht, in order to not give the particularly unpleasant ‘press hacks’ in this country a genuine target.”

And then there was the piece of advice to Adolf Schärf: “It would be best if you were to find a younger comrade to whom I could pass on my legacy” who should be “as little of an antisemite as possible” since “he will become one here anyway.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² January 24, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 5.

¹¹³ September 16, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 52.

¹¹⁴ October 10, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 57.

¹¹⁵ January 13, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 80.

“The Victim Thesis” and Reparations

The 100 million schilling credit had a price for Israel: it officially accepted the Austrian “victim thesis” and renounced Austrian “reparation payments”. Foreign Minister Sharett made the following declaration in Paris in 1952:

“Israel will not demand reparations from Austria... Israel accepts the supposition that Germany is responsible for acts committed against Austrian Jews since they took place only after the Anschluss.”¹¹⁶

Official Israel thus perforce and against its better judgment also accepted the official position of Austria in this matter. In the Israeli public, on the other hand, the Austrian victim thesis was not accepted. As Hartl reported in 1953, when in Vienna the reparation talks were beginning with representatives of world Jewry, the “Jewish press” reacted “aggressively almost without exception”¹¹⁷ – and that also remained the case in the subsequent period.

In Moscow in the autumn of 1943, the Allies had described Austria as the “first victim of Hitlerite aggression.” In April 1945, this “Moscow Declaration” had become something of a founding charter of the Second Republic; and that, in turn, was the moment of the birth of the myth of the Austria as a victim. The new Austria was a single land of victims; the Jews were consequently only victims among victims. The series of raids against them after the Anschluss in March 1938 was simply officially cut out, even if the political decision-makers were fully conscious of the moral doubtfulness of it. For miles around, there were no culprits – and therefore no reason for compensation. Only the legal successor to the German Reich was responsible for reparations, that is, the Federal Republic of Germany, “which [is regarded] as the originator of the injustices that were committed,” as was officially stated. When, however, representatives of World Jewish Congress announced claims in Vienna in the summer of 1953 and the government declared that it was prepared to hold talks, it at the same time – that is, on August 6, 1953 – once again made its own position clear. In a so-called “*Regelung der Sprache*” (“Language Regulation”) to the foreign representatives, it stated:

“In Austria, all measures of persecution [were] only perpetrated after the occupation by the German Reich. Under international law, Austria was incapable of acting at that time. It therefore cannot be held responsible for the actions and decrees of the National Socialist rulers which occurred against its will and which it was not in a position to prevent. Reparations from Austria are also not being demanded by any side. Israel has expressly endorsed this viewpoint. As already mentioned, the talks with the Committee

¹¹⁶ As quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* on August 18, 1952. See Volume 3, Doc. 88.

¹¹⁷ August 4, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 149.

for Jewish Claims on Austria therefore do not concern the provision of reparations to Israel or to World Jewish Congress, but rather are aimed at various measures for the improvement of the individual lot of the victims of National Socialism who are of the Jewish faith.”

Hartl was among the most vehement advocates of the Austrian victim thesis, and he thus lined up especially with the socialist politicians who supported this thesis particularly energetically – including Schärf, with whom Hartl expressly agreed. Thus, as he affirmed in December 1953, it was “a great relief” for him “that at the time, you did not follow the inflation of concessions and promises by others out of the undoubtedly correct assessment of the unladen weight.”¹¹⁸ If Hartl’s numerous statements on this topic are read, one has to wonder what brought him to this attitude. At a minimum, his position is astounding. Hartl was himself an immigrant. He had left the country after the Anschluss with his Jewish wife and Jewish in-laws and devoted himself to resistance against the Nazi regime.

In that context, Hartl was surely not aware of the following: that Austrians were disproportionately represented in the Nazi terror apparatus and had decisively contributed to the implementation of the mass murder of Jews; that 40% of the personnel and three quarters of the commandants of the extermination camps came from Austria, such as Irmfried Eberl, the first commandant of the Treblinka extermination camp, and his successor, Franz Stangl, who had previously already been the commandant of the Sobibor extermination camp; that all three commandants of the Theresienstadt ghetto came from Austria; that Austrians also organized the deportations from all over Europe; that 80% of the “Eichmann men” had been Austrians; that a conspicuously large number of Austrians had participated as members of the SS taskforces in mass shootings of Jews and non-Jewish civilians behind the front; that nearly 14% of all SS members had been Austrians, even though the Austrian portion of the Reich’s population amounted to only 8%; that according to the assessment by Simon Wiesenthal, Austrians had been directly responsible for the murder of at least three million Jews. But he would have had to have known that after 1938, Austrians had been the beneficiaries and perpetrators in the exclusion, robbing, and expulsion of Jews and that not a few of them had materially profited from this: that apart from “Aryanized” companies and shops, there were, for example, 60,000 apartments in Vienna alone that had been made available to be allocated to non-Jews and that after 1945, no one thought of returning them; and that a similar situation had occurred with entertainment concerns, media, pharmacies, etc. etc.

Now it is surely true that leading Austrian politicians after 1945 acted as “children of their times;” that is, on one hand they were steeped in the tradition of an ambivalence

¹¹⁸ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

toward antisemitism that also continued to be in effect after 1945, and on the other hand, they were also the products of and participants in a political postwar climate that was specifically Austrian, one in which interests of realpolitik had the highest priority (and making antisemitism taboo did not yet function to the extent that would later be the case). First and foremost, however, they massively lent their support to the victim thesis, according to which Austria had been the first victim of Hitlerian aggression and was not responsible for that which occurred from 1938 on.

The republic did indeed adopt several so-called “*Rückstellungsgesetze*” (“restitution laws”), “compensation” had been made, but these measures had been taken hesitantly, scattered over a plethora of confusing measures that were often too late and continually characterized by the denial of Austrians having a share of the responsibility in Nazi crimes and therefore devoid of honest generosity. Every new measure first had to be squeezed out of Austria. And with the laws on restitution, welfare, and compensation, it was emphasized again and again that they applied to all of the victims of National Socialism and did not permit different treatment for reasons of faith, race, or nationality. In a so-called “Language Regulation” from the Austrian Foreign Ministry to the diplomatic representation authorities, it expressly stated that this would also remain so in the future. The preferred treatment of victims of persecution of the Jewish faith thus could never be taken into consideration. Therefore, every appropriate measure that was still to be taken up at the suggestion of Jewish organizations would encompass all categories of victims of persecution and would be applied equally. When Chancellor Julius Raab, Foreign Minister Karl Gruber, and Finance Minister Reinhard Kamitz expressed their willingness for talks with representatives of World Jewish Congress, Hartl was outraged:

“What made a Raab, a Gruber, a Kamitz take their stance? If we imitate the Germans – but good heavens! – we simply are not the Germans and do not have to imitate them. We are not obligated to this righting of wrongs the way the Germans are, since we do not have an ‘illegal successor.’”¹¹⁹ And he warned, “There could be people who could use prejudices against us.”¹²⁰

When in one of his letters, Hartl spoke of “reparations to be provided” to Israel, he was immediately corrected by Vienna. That was an unsuitable expression, “the proper expression is Jewish claims.” For Hartl, the representatives of the World Jewish Congress who were carrying on talks in Vienna were “agents of the Israeli Treasury... nothing more;”¹²¹ in any case, it was clear that Israel “urgently needs cash.” Hartl went on to add that the negotiators and collectors of the Jewish Agency were employed full-time with

¹¹⁹ June 14, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 130.

¹²⁰ November 29, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 175.

¹²¹ July 1, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 137.

raising money for Israel and were not so fussy in their methods;¹²² the negotiations that were beginning in Vienna had aroused considerable excitement among the circles of former Austrians in Israel. If Austria were to pay and money were to go to Israel, even if in a roundabout way, then in Hartl's opinion, attention should and must be paid that it would be to the benefit of the former Austrians.

With regard to the actual victims – “and I am saying this with hundreds” – not one single person would be interested that the State of Israel would be indirectly financed. Apart from that, in his opinion there was also another weighty reason why the benefits from Austria should not go toward the State of Israel, namely, the Arabs. It could indeed be made understandable to them that in Austria, restitution and perhaps even compensation would be made, it could also be made understandable to them that restitution and compensation were going to Israel if it could be proven that all of this would go not to the benefit of the enemy state, but rather to private persons or private organizations that could prove a claim with respect to Austria: “Never ever will anyone make the Arabs recognize why the State of Israel is the legal successor to the Jews who perished in Austria,” and on June 14, 1953, Hartl told Schärf:

“I frankly confess to you – the arguments here are lacking even to me. And so we are running the risk of getting the whole pot – which the Arabs wanted to set up for the Germans on the occasion of the reparations agreement and then did not dare – dumped on our heads as ones who are weaker and smaller.”¹²³

And a few weeks later, he made it clear to Schärf:

“Certainly, I am for justice, but charity should attend to the unemployed in Austria before it goes to the Israeli mortars that are pounding the Arab villages to pieces. And that is what the balance represents – at least 45% of the balance, because with the total outlays of the State of Israel, military spending in the most varied of forms takes up 45% – for these mortars or these airplanes, since all global compensation that we concede to the Jewish negotiators goes to Israel. And we owe Israel nothing – not one groschen!”¹²⁴

Hartl was really outraged at the end of 1953 when a regulation from the Israeli Ministry of Trade became known banning the sale of Austrian soap while, at the same time, German soap continued to be sold. For Hartl, as he clearly expressed in a letter to Foreign Minister Figl, this was “veiled, though still clear, reverse pogrom rabbleroising... the blood of Christians in the host has been replaced by the fat of Jews in the soap.”¹²⁵

¹²² December 16, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 187. Also see July 26, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 41.

¹²³ June 14, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 130.

¹²⁴ November 25, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 175.

¹²⁵ December 8, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 183.

In a letter to Schärf, he turned away from the official Israel appalled. This official Israel hated Austria and would always hate it for the foreseeable future:

“There was and is the possibility of neutralizing this aggressive impulse. Because of its daily difficulties, Israel will always make one last claim, and after its fulfillment it will want to be considered as satisfied. But will the sick soul of Israel, which sees in the ‘nations’ the former or potential murder of the Jews, be at all able to find the peace that it should, indeed must give to others in the interest of its own continued existence?”

And he provided the answer rather resignedly, “Probably scarcely in this generation, because Israel is compelled to market its hatred in order to protect the poor country that, in economic terms, is badly run from financial and political collapse.” And he went on to explain that by using the example of Austria. In 1949-50, the hatred against Austria had been neutralized and set aside since the newborn state of Israel needed the broadest political recognition. Israel then provisionally became stable and more or less discreetly gave Austria to understand – “in the end, markedly less” – that relations were indeed maintained but that scores had not been settled. In the end, the granting of the 100 million schilling credit had stood. Israel had declared that it did not want to make any claims on Austria, a promise that had formally been kept until then, because after the granting of the credit, calm had reigned for the time being. Attention was then directed at Germany. Pressing economic woes had compelled Israel “to haggle with the Germany of the murderers, to ‘realize’ moral condemnation and bitter hatred. Everyone knows and feels that it is blood money from which Israel lives today.”¹²⁶ And from that results the paradox “that in their complete isolation, the Israelis actually see their best friend to be – the Germans.”¹²⁷ However, with a view toward Austria, Israel had given its word that the state would make no claims on Austria, “certainly not, but nothing is more legitimate than the fact that the representatives of international Jewry are presenting the bill to Austria against which the “mess of potage” accepted by Israel cannot suffice. But the fact that Israel is following these representatives’ negotiations with Austria with the greatest interest, that through its consul it is cautiously and in the most friendly manner informing the Austrian government how damaging it would be for Austria if it were to have a falling out with these powerful international Jews – nothing is more legitimate, since nothing can be foreign to the State of Israel anywhere, anytime, and for anything that Jews are concerned. But Israel has not broken its word and thus for a long period of time, the blackmail may wear the mantle of a good deed.”

Israel had still not gone back on its word, “that word that is to cost us 100 million schillings.” But the interruption of negotiations in Vienna had already once again “unleashed the murmurings of hatred in the press.” When Raab and Kamitz had

¹²⁶ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

¹²⁷ October 21, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 165.

declared that it would not work with the payments in that way, “then reciprocal ritual murder was applied; in order to calm the seething populace, the sale of Austrian soap was banned.” In support of the arithmetic, Hartl called this the “reciprocal pogrom.”¹²⁸

At any rate, he had a reason for the worry on the Israeli side of not reaching a settlement with Austria in “questions of reparations.” It was not about not being able to collect five, twelve, fifty million dollars; it was the “fear that the successful resistance by Austria to pay ‘reparations’ to Jewish organizations or, in a roundabout way, to Israel could give Germany ‘bad ideas.’”¹²⁹ For that reason, the “Austrian reparations” had become a test case, a “reagent to the value of German obligations. Between the Oder-Neiße line and the German tractor that is supposed to plow in the Negev, there appear to be more intimate correlations than I may reasonably assume,” he said in January 1954.

Hartl was correct with his supposition that the World Jewish Congress and the State of Israel had a common cause with regard to Austria. That was also demonstrated by the meeting on January 1, 1954 in the Israeli Foreign Ministry in which the additional measures against Austria were decided upon. In the words of a participant from the Israeli Consulate General in Vienna, Arie Eshel, the meeting was concerned with “determining whether and how the organizations and the State of Israel would proceed in order to break the ice as well as to ensure the coordination of steps.” He suggested several actions at the same time, specifically:

- “a) concentrated efforts in the world press;
- b) the preparation of disruptive actions during Raab’s visit to London;
- c) the urgent organization of support from socialist parties in the form of pressure on the Social Democratic Party of Austria;
- d) the publication of a blacklist on the anniversary of the Anschluss;
- e) the preparation of a memorandum to the four Great Powers.”

The president of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann, spoke of American pressure on Austria and the intention to prepare large-scale public actions at various locations, including in London where a “warm reception” was to be prepared for Chancellor Julius Raab. In the words of the general director in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Walter Eytan, it was agreed to leak a report to the press according to which the Jewish organizations intended to provide the Great Powers with a memorandum and that this memorandum was to be drafted immediately in the Israeli Foreign Ministry. The Israeli envoys abroad were to receive instructions to speak with their Austrian counterparts at every opportunity about the failed negotiations and to explain to them the Israeli attitude on that matter: “It goes without saying that directives on that are to

¹²⁸ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

¹²⁹ January 10, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 6.

be drawn up.” Action centers were to be set up in London or New York or in both cities and, at the same time, a blacklist was to be prepared.¹³⁰

Conclusion

What are we left with when we look at Hartl’s more than five years of service? Hartl was correct:

1. In the assessment in 1954 that France had become “the new good, big friend of Israel.” He was also correct that France would “not follow the same path for long.”¹³¹ (At any rate, things went along until 1967).¹³²

2. A similar situation held true with the assessment of Israel’s highly ambivalent attitude toward the USA. At the end of 1954, Hartl got a fix on a “desperate isolation” of Israel that viewed “just at this point the Jews of the Diaspora as allies,” but they were “very insecure allies” as was shown by “the abstentionist attitude of the most powerful group, the American Jews, with the change in American foreign policy that was so unfavorable for Israel.” In Israel’s view, the US had “clearly opted for the Arabs.”¹³³ “Israel would now gladly become a satellite of America; it is just that the path to do so is arduous – so arduous that even an Egyptian detour would probably be accepted.”¹³⁴

It then happened without the Egyptian detour.

Previously, Israel had sought “shelter” with its old enemy, Great Britain. There were already jokes circulating in Israel about it, such as, “When the English come to Haifa to build a naval base there, why do their feet have to be cut off immediately? So that they can’t leave again!”¹³⁵

1. At one point, Hartl once wrote that Israel had a border “that sweats blood,” that atrocity would be answered with atrocity, “senseless murder on both sides, bestiality as a means to a political solution in a hopeless situation” in a “sphere of political disorganization.”¹³⁶ That was almost prophetic; he was more than correct with it: Israel’s border also “bled” for the next fifty years; almost nothing has changed. If the date of

¹³⁰ January 1, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 1.

¹³¹ August 25, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 119.

¹³² See Rolf Steininger, *Der Nahostkonflikt* (Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 2003), 92.

¹³³ August 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 110.

¹³⁴ September 8, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 123.

¹³⁵ August 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 110.

¹³⁶ See notes 90 and 91.

QUEST N. 7 - FOCUS

some of Hartl's documents were changed from 1953-54 to 2004, it would hardly be noticed. In many cases, the problems have remained the same, as if time had stood still. The Israelis had and have developed a attitude that is somehow typical for them: on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the state, Israeli television produced a relevant documentary. The title: "Never A Dull Moment." It can also be viewed that way – or perhaps it can only be viewed that way.

In several points, however, Hartl was incorrect with his assessments, fears, hopes, and analyses.

1. The Israelis did not use the 100 million schilling credit in order to sell the Austrian goods acquired on credit on other markets below cost – in competition with Austrian exports – in order to receive hard currency. They did not even completely use up the credit.

2. Not only did the Federal Republic of Germany fulfill the financial obligations that it assumed in the "Luxembourg Agreement" (Hart said that "basically, not very much [would] be left" of them),¹³⁷ it in addition paid even more to Israel (the weapon shipments were not even mentioned).

3. The young State of Israel proved itself to be more capable of surviving than so many had hoped or feared.

4. Hartl's conviction that "the Jews who were murdered by the Nazis are rotting at a faster and faster pace and will disappear as admonishing ghosts" turned out to be completely wrong.

5. Contrary to Hartl's conviction, relations between Austria and Israel in subsequent years became better and better, almost friendly, with the high point coming in 1972 when Rudolf Kirchschläger became the first Austrian foreign minister to visit the country. The fact that relations then once again became more difficult is another matter.

6. The question of the establishment of official relations between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany which, in late 1954, seemed to Hartl "to be about to receive its positive answer rather soon"¹³⁸ was only answered eleven years later.

After five years, Hartl left Israel on March 1, 1955. His successor was Dr. Kurt Enderl, likewise a former emigrant. Hartl became office manager in the central office in Vienna for Under Secretary of State Bruno Kreisky. Hartl, the "consummate Viennese," plump,

¹³⁷ January 13, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 80.

¹³⁸ November 9, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 140.

humorous, erudite, cosmopolitan, and able to hold his liquor,¹³⁹ had turned into a popular figure in Israel, both in Jewish circles and with the diplomatic corps, and an honest friend of the former Austrians in Israel. They had organized themselves into the *Hitachduth Olej Austria*, (the “Society of Austrian Immigrants in Israel”). Its chairperson, Anitta Müller-Cohen, one of the best-known Zionists from Austria who had emigrated to Palestine in 1936, wrote the following about Karl Hartl in late 1950 in the Viennese Zionist journal *Neue Welt und Judenstaat* under the headline “Unser Konsul” [“ ‘Our Consul’ ”]:

“Our’ consul (we did not yet call him that at the time, that only came later when we got to know him and came to love him) acted as cleverly as he could. A man of his stature of course has his own views, but he does not perceive his task to be the provocative pronouncement of his personal ideas; rather, he keeps his private opinion to himself. He listened calmly and kindly to our reports that were filled with boundless enthusiasm for the newly arisen state, he patiently heard the complaints of returned emigrants who, like sick birds fouling their own nest, make the land of Israel responsible for their failures or for the adversity of their personal destiny. Whoever spoke with the consul had the impression that he *wants* to understand us. And this will, combined with a very particular human charm, won our sympathy. The inner security of a person who was conscious of his skill protected Hartl from arrogance

In the Austrian Consulate General in Tel Aviv, customer service was reshaped into service for people... Karl Hartl and his wife won many friends for the Austrian state. The past lectures, promotional films, and propaganda brochures could not have achieved anywhere near the same effect. Everyone who, in spite of everything, still has a soft spot in the heart for the land of their birth – and who doesn’t? – is happy that the Second Austrian Republic sent a representative to the Jewish land of which it could certainly be said, ‘He is a person who can serve as a model; perhaps also to some of Israel’s foreign representatives.’”¹⁴⁰

When he left the country, he received an unusual going away gift as an extraordinary honor: the planting of trees. For his, as it stated, “blessed activity in Israel,” the aforementioned Society, of which Müller-Cohen was still the chairperson, dedicated 20 trees to him in March of the year 5715, corresponding to March 1955, (in addition, the animal lover and circus devotee Hartl received three lion cubs from the Tel Aviv Zoo which he then donated to the Schönbrunn Zoo).

¹³⁹ See Helga Embacher and Margit Reiter, *Gratwanderungen. Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und Israel im Schatten der Vergangenheit* (Picus Verlag: Vienna, 1998), 59.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Evelyn Adunka, *Exil in der Heimat. Über die Österreicher in Israel* (Studienverlag: Innsbruck–Wien–München–Bozen, 2002), 68.

In both of the works to date in which Karl Hartl is mentioned,¹⁴¹ reference is rightfully made to his internal reports to the Foreign Office in Vienna – and also to his letters, which provide a different picture. First and foremost, on Hartl himself. It is indisputable that the longer he was in Israel, the more critical he became toward the “official Israel” and its politicians and the less and less sympathy he felt for certain developments of the Jewish state. He had gone to Israel with the best of intentions, wanted to seek its friendship with Austria, and was then most deeply disappointed by the “official” Israel – by his own admission, he had set his sights too high. His letters sometimes read like those of a spurned lover – if one may endeavor to paint to such a picture in this context. In the end, according to his own statements, it took great efforts for him to preserve his distance as an observer.¹⁴²

Sometimes, one gets the impression that he almost also suffered under the rejections of young state which did not live up to his ideals; on the other hand, he also showed understanding for this development. At one point, he expressed to his Israeli colleague in Vienna, Arie Eshel, that the young state of Israel had to vary its goals through its dynamics “and irritate us old citizens of an old society;” or, in the same letter in April 1954, “that this vitality somewhat bewilders me and perhaps also my people, old people from an old land.”¹⁴³ Thus only he could designate himself as an antisemite. In August 1954, he once told Litigation Secretary Karl Wolf in the Austrian Foreign Ministry: “You don’t know anything at all about how healthy antisemitism is: that is what has kept me going here the last two years.”¹⁴⁴ That was not some muffled beer hall antisemitism, but rather something completely different. Only he with his spotless political biography – socialist, emigrant, married to a Jewish woman, active in the resistance against the Nazi regime – could use such wordings. Sometimes one had the impression that he was almost flirting with it and playing with the language. At one point, as early as November 1951, he even spoke of “ruminations of a lonely man.”¹⁴⁵ In the end, he just wanted to leave. In October 1954, he wrote to the envoy Freidinger-Pranter, “It would be high time that they took me away from here. I have the greatest trouble to set discrete limits on physical and spiritual decay.”¹⁴⁶

What irritates this author about Hartl is the fact that he was completely uncritical in his acceptance of the official “victim thesis” of the government in Vienna. Even in the most private of his letters, not one single time did he express doubts about this thesis. In full

¹⁴¹ Adunka, *Exil*, 68. Embacher and Reiter, *Gratwanderungen*, 55, 58-62, 232.

¹⁴² September 23, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 125.

¹⁴³ April 22, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. III.

¹⁴⁴ August 28, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 19.

¹⁴⁵ November 20, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 103.

¹⁴⁶ October 11, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 129.

understanding of the officially represented policy – back and forth with reasons of state – did he have to go so far as an Austrian official? Did he have to identify with this thesis so uncritically? Ernst Luegmayer, Hartl's successor in Tel Aviv from 1958 to 1962, who drew up rather unemotional reports, gave an example of how it could have been done and even should have been done: in a critical analysis in April 1961, he showed "what obstacles stand in the way of a favorable development of mutual relations." Those which Luegmayer listed were also known by Hartl – and this author would have wished them from him – namely:

"The greatest and most difficult problem to solve is represented by overcoming the memories of the persecution of the Jews in Austria during Nazi rule and the most broad reaching elimination possible of its consequences, that is, compensation which is recognized to be sufficient.

The events of the past naturally cannot be undone. All attempts to pass off or deny responsibility for them have only met with very limited success. Arguments under international law have caught on either not at all or only very little. The Jews who experienced the Anschluss in Austria know all too well how enthusiastically the Germans were received by a considerable portion of the Austrian population when they marched in and, what is even more regrettable, that numerous Austrians were substantially involved with the persecution of the Jews. Efforts to then declare only the Germans as guilty or the Austrians as not responsible therefore cannot be successful and even often give rise to opposite reactions, since reference is made to the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany at least recognizes its guilt and makes honest efforts to provide for reparations, while Austria attempts to dodge away with every possible flimsy pretext."¹⁴⁷

It actually was clear that this topic was also to weigh upon relations in subsequent years.

Outside of the framework of his daily work, Hartl helped the "Israelis," as he called them, in the most varied of areas. This activity did not always meet with the necessary recognition of certain Israeli circles, since Hartl did not shy away from also publicly criticizing a good many negative events of everyday life, such as religious questions, where he detected a high degree of intolerance with respect to other religions, in particular when members of the Jewish community admitted as much. He thus mentioned to an Israeli journalist that he knew of Christian church services in which Jews participated but that they had to keep it secret. He found this development to be very regrettable. His criticism was, as he himself expressed, the "criticism of a worried friend" and was viewed by some as thoroughly constructive criticism.

¹⁴⁷ April 19, 1961, Volume 6, Doc. 20.

At his departure at the end of February 1955, nearly all of the major Israeli newspapers reported about that diplomat “who felt himself to be completely one of us and in whose company one would forget that he was in the company of a foreigner and non-Jew,” as *Yedioth Hayom* wrote on March 4, 1955. Hartl’s love of the Yiddish language also contributed to this. Hartl loved this elemental and very flexible language and regretted that it was not sufficiently appreciated in Israel. And he critically said that the Israelis did not face their *gola* history – the history of the exile – with the necessary objectivity. Often enough, the *gola* was “held in contempt by you, but it was a great miracle, since it maintained the Jews throughout the millennia,” as he stated in the same newspaper. On February 18, 1955, the newspaper *Yedioth Chadashoth* wrote, “A friend takes his leave.” In the aforementioned *Yedioth Hayom*, he was called an “Israeli for five years.”

After three years of service in the central office in Vienna with Under Secretary of State Bruno Kreisky Hartl became ambassador to Ankara in 1958 and then ambassador to Belgrade in 1963, where he was also responsible for Albania. Finally, from March 1968 until his retirement in early 1975, he was once again employed in the central office in Vienna, this time as the director of the Cultural Department. Four years later, on May 19, 1979, Karl Hartl died in Wiener Neustadt.¹⁴⁸

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¹⁴⁸ Also see the personal account by Karl Hartl’s daughter, Annie Weich, “Karl Hartl,” in Heinz Kienzl and Susanne Kirchner (eds.), *Ein neuer Frühling wird in der Heimat blühen. Erinnerungen und Spurensuche. (Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte, 38)*, (Vienna, 2002), 63–77. Also see Helga Embacher and Margit Reiter, *Gratwanderungen*, 58-79.

**Did the Germans Do It All?
The Italian Shoah in International Historiography
(1946-1986)**

by *Michele Sarfatti*

Abstract

This essay examines how the main historical writings in languages other than Italian (mostly English) published in the first forty years after the end of the war addressed the role played in the arrests and the deportations of the Jews in Italy by Mussolini's Italian Social Republic (Repubblica Sociale Italiana) between the autumn of 1943 and the spring of 1945. It discusses what reconstruction of this single, salient aspect in the Italian chapter of the Shoah has been advanced or accepted by foreign historians.

To this end, I have selected the (few) existing texts on Italy and the works offering a reconstruction of the Shoah in its entirety, adding the most significant essays published in periodicals or collective volumes and a few of the many books devoted to specific aspects of that event.

As I see it, a complex contagion has taken place between the historical reconstruction of the "final solution," the ethical judgement on it, the containment policies towards post-war Germany, the quest by the successor states of the non-German collaborationist countries to pursue their own "moral absolution."

On May 11, 1961 Hulda Campagnano née Cassuto gave evidence at the trial against Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. She was the only Italian victim called as a witness, in accordance with a decision taken by the judges for most of the countries involved. Cassuto briefly touched on the anti-Jewish legislation of 1938-1943, explaining that it had been enacted by the Fascist regime and that those laws had not targeted people's lives and their personal freedom. Then she went on to describe the arrests carried out in November 1943 in Florence by the Nazi police, remarking that they had used lists which had been drawn up in previous years by Fascist authorities. She added that in many cases the population had helped the Jews: "Each of us, of the Jews of Italy, who was saved from this hell, owes his life to the Italian population"¹ (this statement, it should be said, would be just as true about any other European country). Hulda Cassuto, of course, was questioned in a trial against one individual, one of the most senior officers of the Nazi anti-Jewish police. The purpose of the hearings was to fully ascertain his responsibilities,

¹ The English translation of the testimony is in www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/Sessions/Session-036-05;06 (accessed on July 18, 2012).

but nothing beyond that. Therefore, when the witness stated that in Florence at least two Jewish women - mother and daughter - had been arrested when they went to have their ration cards renewed, no one wondered or questioned her about the municipal office that issued those cards (and I should add that other Jews in Florence have mentioned this odious and murderous activity).²

“The New York Times” reported the Cassuto hearing as: *Heroic Aid to Jews by Gentiles Recounted at Eichmann’s Trial*, dwelling on the fact that “many Italian Jews were warned of approaching Gestapo round-ups,” thus quoting Cassuto’s words on non-Jewish Italians as rescuers, rather than those about non-Jewish Italians as persecutors.³

* * * * *

In its chief features, the Shoah which took place in Europe from the mid-1930s to 1945 was a unitary event, in that it began with a modern and unexpected curtailment of rights, followed by a violent persecution culminating in the planning and implementation of systematic murder. There were however territorial differences and varying timelines, both between one country and another, and between areas ruled or occupied by the same government. Since it was Nazi Germany that initiated the modern persecution of Jews by law in 1933, and later contrived and put into execution a comprehensive plan for their extermination on a continental scale, scholars who attempt to reconstruct the history of that tragic event have obviously devoted their attention mainly to that country.

Consequently, the progress of studies about the vast and varied range of antisemitic regimes orbiting around the Third Reich, whether independent, semi-independent or puppet states, has long depended on the advancement of the general research on the Nazi anti-Jewish ideology and practice, as well as on the availability of relevant documents.⁴

² Marta Baiardi, *Persecuzioni antiebraiche a Firenze: razzie, arresti, delazioni*, in *Ebrei in Toscana tra occupazione tedesca e RSI. Persecuzione, depredazione, deportazione (1943-1945)*, ed. Enzo Collotti, (Rome: Carocci, 2007), 127-129.

³ Homer Bigart, *Heroic Aid to Jews by Gentiles Recounted at Eichmann’s Trial*, The New York Times, May 12, 1961.

⁴ Among the first books on anti-Jewish persecution in individual countries are: Henri Monneray, *La persécution des Juifs en France e dans les autres pays de l’Ouest, présentée par la France à Nuremberg* (Parigi: Editions du Centre [CDJC], 1947). Id., *La persécution des Juifs dans les pays de l’Est, présentée par la France à Nuremberg* (Paris: Editions du Centre [CDJC], 1949). *Les Juifs en Europe (1943-1945). Rapports présentés à la Première Conférence Européenne des Commissions Historiques et des Centres de Documentations Juifs* (Paris: Editions du Centre [CDJC], 1949). Jenő Lévai, *Zsidósors Magyarországon* (Budapest: Magyar Téka, 1948). *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry* (Wien: Central European Times Pub. Co., 1948). *In Memoriam. Hommage aux victimes juives des nazis en Grèce*, ed.

My present survey examines how the main historical writings in languages other than Italian (mostly English) have between 1946 and 1986 addressed the issue of the role played in the arrest and the deportation of the Jews in Italy by the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI), ruled by Benito Mussolini and operating in central and northern Italy, from autumn 1943 to spring 1945. To this end, I have selected the (few) existing texts on Italy and the works offering a reconstruction of the Shoah in its entirety, adding the most significant essays published in periodicals or collective volumes and a few of the many books devoted to specific aspects of that event.

This essay does not address the question of the reciprocal relationship and influence that existed, or did not exist, between foreign and Italian historiography. It is a very complex issue that would require a specific focus; for a long time, however, the first has neglected the second and has ignored the question of history and memory of the Shoah in Italy.⁵

In choosing a single topic (the RSI and the arrests) one inevitably leaves out important issues such as the process leading up to the persecutory legislation of 1938, the manner in which Italian authorities acted in the occupied territories in 1941-1943, the debate on the nature and the systematizing of “fascisms,” etc. This essay addresses one question: what reconstruction of this single, salient aspect in the Italian chapter of the extermination has been advanced or accepted by foreign historians.

And yet, the beginning of this work of historical reconstruction had been timely and sound. In 1946 Cecil Roth published a book devoted to the entire history of Jews in Italy, ending with an ample description of the final phase of what he already termed “the

Michael Molho, (Nicolaidis : Salonicco, 1948-1949 (vol. I – vol II) ; Buenos Aires, 1953 (vol. III)). *Zločini fašističkih okupatora i njihovih pomagača protiv Jevreja u Jugoslaviji*, ed. Zdenko Löwenthal, (Beograd: Savez jevrejskih opština FNR Jugoslavije, 1952). See also, Ilse R. Wolff, *Persecution and Resistance under the Nazis* (London: The Wiener Library, 1960). Later republished as *Part I* in Ilse R. Wolff, Helen Kehr, *Persecution and Resistance under the Nazis*, revised ed. (London: The Institute of Contemporary History, 1978). Philip Friedman, Jacob Robinson, *Guide to Jewish History under Nazi Impact* (New York: Yad Vashem Martyrs' and Heroes' Memorial Authority and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1960). Later: (New York: Ktav, 1973).

⁵ Some reflections on the parallel Italian historiography in those years are in Ilaria Pavan, “Gli storici e la Shoah in Italia,” in *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, eds. Marcello Flores, Simon Levis Sullam, Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, Enzo Traverso (Turin: Utet, 2010), vol. 1, 136-164. Michele Sarfatti, “La storia della persecuzione antiebraica di Renzo De Felice: contesto, dimensione cronologica e fonti,” *Qualestoria*, 32/2 (2004): 11-27. Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini. Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 155-173. Mario Toscano, *Fascismo, razzismo, antisemitismo. Osservazioni per un bilancio storiografico*, in *Ebraismo e antisemitismo in Italia. Dal 1848 alla guerra dei sei giorni*, ed. Mario Toscano (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003), 208-243.

catastrophe.” Although very little time had elapsed since the events, Roth managed to grasp their import of the events and to describe them in considerable detail, thanks also to Italian friends who supplied him with information or who, like Gino Luzzatto, checked the first draft of his book.⁶ His text gave an account of the rapidly accomplished German occupation, of the founding and the activity of the Republican Fascist Party and of the RSI, and described both the first phase of arrests carried out by the Nazi police and the subsequent decision by the Fascist “puppet government” to provide the arrests with a regular and official legal basis by issuing its own arrest, internment and despoliation order. This, by the way, caused an increase in the number of arrests, as Italian fascists “could often recognize the Jews, and arrested indiscriminately those whom they happened to encounter in the streets.” Roth was also aware that arrests had been carried out in the “food offices.” According to him, although Italian authorities had declared that internees would not be deported, Germans deported them just like the Jews they had arrested themselves.⁷ If we take into account that at the time it would have been as yet impossible for him to delimit and impute responsibilities and actions to Mussolini’s and Hitler’s forces, his description is indeed very good. And yet, although he taught at Oxford, wrote in English, and his book was published by an important Jewish publisher, his narrative was not taken up by those of his colleagues who in later years undertook the task of writing comprehensive histories of the Shoah. Roth had written that paragraph together with some of the victims themselves; but both his reconstruction and the testimonies were to be disregarded by subsequent historiography, as this essay will show.

There was a second beginning, which unfortunately became the one true beginning. It was due to Leon Poliakov, cofounder of the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine (CDJC) in Paris. In 1951 he published in France the first comprehensive continental overview of the persecution. Events in Italy after September 8, 1943 were touched on in a short paragraph, which briefly mentioned the solidarity of other Italians and stated that approximately ten thousand Jews “furent arrêtés et déportés par les soins de Dannecker [*were arrested and deported under Dannecker’s direction*],” without as much as naming the RSI.⁸

⁶ Cecil Roth, “Gino Luzzatto and Jewish History,” *Nuova rivista storica*, 49/1-2 (1965): 166-169.

⁷ Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews in Italy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), 541-553.

⁸ Leon Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la haine. Le IIIe Reich et les Juifs* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1951), 192. English translation: *Harvest of Hate. The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1954). Theodor Dannecker was in charge of the anti-Jewish round-ups carried out by the German police in October-November 1943. See, Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall’Italia (1943-1945). Ricerca della Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*, 3rd ed. (Milan: Mursia, 2002), 881-889. It ought to be mentioned that Poliakov quoted the data on the number of victims from a short speech given at a CDJC conference by Massimo Adolfo Vitale, who was in charge of the Comitato Ricerche Deportati Ebrei [Search Committee for Deported Jews] in

In 1953 Gerald Reitlinger published in England a new, ample volume with a comprehensive reconstruction. He advanced the view that “Mussolini’s officials and perhaps Mussolini, too, still tried to substitute half-measures for deportation to the gas chambers, but after his captivity on the Gran Sasso Mussolini was a deflated balloon and the Verona Government [i.e. the RSI] had nothing to bargain with.”⁹ In 1962 the book was translated into Italian, with some minor updating of the parts about Italy by Massimo Adolfo Vitale, but the sentence just mentioned was not modified.¹⁰

In 1961 Raul Hilberg published his vast documentary narrative on the destruction of the European Jews, which has seven pages dedicated to Italian events in 1943-1945. After referring to the fact that Italy had become an occupied country and that Germany had promoted the creation of a “shadow government under Benito Mussolini,” Hilberg mentioned the order issued by the RSI on November 30, 1943, which decreed the arrest of all Jews,¹¹ and wrote that it was “a warning as well as a threat.” This was an ambivalent conclusion that avoided dealing with the question of the RSI’s true responsibilities. The historian then went on to relate a meeting that had taken place a few days later between the most senior Nazi officials from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and from the police. On that occasion, the Ministry’s anti-Jewish office, in response to the police’s proposal to request that the interned Jews be handed over in order to deport them to the East, had objected that it would be advisable, at first, to make it appear as if the internment were the “final solution” [“Endlösung” in the original document] and not just a “preparatory measure” [“Vorstufe” in the document].¹² Taking it for granted that the

Rome, but did not quote Vitale’s remarks on the activity of the Fascist police. Massimo Adolfo Vitale, *La persécution des Juifs en Italie (1938-1945)*, in *Les Juifs en Europe (1943-1945)*, 43-46.

⁹ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution. The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1953), 352.

¹⁰ Gerald Reitlinger, *La soluzione finale. Il tentativo di sterminio degli Ebrei d’Europa 1939-1945* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1962), 425; transl. by Quirino Maffi. As regards the updating, see, 15, 440. In 1968 Reitlinger published a new revised and enlarged English edition: the text confirmed without any changes the previous opinion on Mussolini and on the RSI, and took from Raul Hilberg’s 1961 essay the information concerning the arrest and internment order of November 30, 1943 by the Fascist republican government. Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution. The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, 2nd revised and augmented ed. (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1968), 378; 382.

¹¹ Interior Minister Guido Buffarini Guidi to Chiefs of Provinces, November 30, 1943. In Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: from Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 188; transl. by John e Anne C. Tedeschi. Valeria Galimi, Alessandra Minerbi, Liliana Picciotto, Michele Sarfatti, *Dalle leggi antiebraiche alla Shoah. Sette anni di storia italiana 1938-1945* (Milan: Skira, 2004), 192.

¹² Chief of Department Inland II of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs Horst Wagner to Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop (December 4, 1943). In *Judenverfolgung in Italien, den italienisch besetzten Gebieten und in Nordafrika* (Frankfurt am Main: United Restitution Organization, 1962), 201-

authorities of the RSI were unaware of Nazi plans or in any case intended to act as “protectors” of the Jews, Hilberg added that the internment had been carried out by the German police and their “Fascist helpers,” suggesting however that the former had had a greater share in the responsibility for and the carrying out of the arrests. Eventually, in spring 1944, Nazi police “sprang the trap” and deported the internees.¹³ Compared with Poliakov and Reitlinger, Hilberg showed the Italians as actors on the stage, but the role assigned to them was one of partial collaboration, motivated by their own agenda, and manipulated by the German occupier.

Two years later Hannah Arendt, who was not a historian but is too well-known and influential to be ignored here, wrote in her famous book on Eichmann, with regard to the events in 1943-1945: the Germans “agreed that Italian Jews [...] should not be subject to deportation but should merely be concentrated in Italian camps; this ‘solution’ should be ‘final’ enough for Italy. Approximately thirty-five thousand Jews in Northern Italy were caught and put into concentration camps. [...] In the spring of 1944 [...] the Germans broke their promise and began shipping Jews from Italy to Auschwitz.”¹⁴ It is apparent that Arendt took from Hilberg’s text the statements that most tended to absolve Italy and the Italians or to downplay their role.

In 1968 Nora Levin published a general history of the persecution, summarizing the Italian situation in a way that does not, after all, differ very much from Hilberg’s. According to her, Mussolini “obligingly provided for the S.S.” the decree about the “transfer” to the concentration camps, to furnish them with a “legal handle;” she, too, ignores the arrests carried out by the Italian police. For her, as for Hilberg, the concentration was the work of “the [German] Security Police and Fascist helpers.”¹⁵

As for historians who have dealt with specific issues or events, it may be noted that in a very brief passage in his 1964 text on Pius XII and Nazism, Saul Friedlander stated that, after the round-up of Rome’s Jews, “l’action allemande contre les juifs [*German action against the Jews*]” had extended to northern Italy, where however “les autorités italiennes locales, tant laïques qu’ecclésiastiques, aident les juifs à trouver refuge [*the*

202. *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945*, Serie E: 1941-1945, Bd. VII (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 218-219.

¹³ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 426-432. In 1967 the same publisher issued a reprint of the volume with a two-page *Post-scriptum*, which signalled, among other things, that more recent data on the number of deportations from Italy were then available.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 162.

¹⁵ Nora Levin, *The Holocaust. The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945* (New York: Crowell, 1968), 464-468.

local Italian authorities, both secular and religious, helped the Jews to find refuge];” the arrest order by the RSI also “*reste sans grand effet [failed to achieve much effect]*.”¹⁶

In 1975, a new comprehensive history of the Shoah by Lucy Dawidowicz came out. It had only a very short paragraph on Italy, but the author did nevertheless differentiate herself from previous historians, writing, with regard to the consequences of the November 30 order, that “the Italian police, in their hunt for Jews, managed to send more than seven thousand to camps at Fossoli di Carpi (near Modena) and Bolzano, which served as assembly centers for deportation.”¹⁷

In George Mosse’s 1978 book about racism in Europe, on the other hand, the extremely brief narrative provided no details about the arrests and only stated that after the German occupation “the active persecution of the Jews also increased in the shadow republic which Mussolini retained, the Republic of Salò [RSI]; here the small anti-Semitic wing of the Fascist Party got the upper hand. However, the Germans were the real rulers of that republic, and enforced their Jewish policy.”¹⁸

A more in-depth assessment of Italian responsibilities is to be found in the 1976 work of the Italian-born Israeli historian Daniel Carpi. On the German round-ups in October-November 1943 he pointed out that they had been carried out “on the basis of lists put at the disposal of the Germans by the Italian prefectures” and that they had “generally” taken place without the involvement of the Italian police, although occasionally with that of “the armed bands of Fascists whom the Germans had begun to enlist.” He then stressed the role of Fascists in individual arrests. When describing the November 30 order, however, his interpretation did not diverge much from Hilberg’s: “It is possible to interpret these directives to mean that the government of the Social Republic did not as yet mean to adopt its ally’s extermination policy in full, preferring to postpone the issue until the end of the war.” This stance, however, was of no avail: “S.S. headquarters rapidly took over direct control, overrode the Fascist authorities, and employed local police auxiliaries merely to supervise the transport of captive Jews and guard the internment camps.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Saul Friedlander, *Pie XII et le IIIe Reich. Documents* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 194. English translation: *Pius XII and the Third Reich. A Documentation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 209; transl. by Charles Fullman.

¹⁷ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 370-371.

¹⁸ George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution. A History of European Racism* (New York: Fertig, 1978), 230.

¹⁹ Daniel Carpi, *The Origins and Development of Fascist Anti-Semitism in Italy (1922-1945)*, in *The Catastrophe of European Jewry. Antecedents, History, Reflection*, eds. Yisrael Gutman. Livia Rothkirchen

At last, 1978 saw the publication of the first essay on the Jews during the entire Fascist era by a non-Italian scholar, namely Meir Michaelis's long and detailed study on Mussolini and the Jews, in the context of German-Italian relationships. In it, the author cited all the main essays mentioned above, including Roth's. His narrative was based on a truly vast bibliographic and documentary research, which led him to conclude, among other things, that between 1943 and 1945 many Jews were captured by "(willing or unwilling) Italian collaborators. Thousands of Jews were arrested and interned by the Fascist police to be deported and killed by Himmler's myrmidons." He described the order to arrest all Jews, issued by the RSI's Interior Minister Guido Buffarini Guidi, and the implementation rulings by the Chief of Police Tullio Tamburini. His interpretation, however, did not hinge on the responsibility for the arrests. In his view, on one side were the Nazis, who intended to exterminate the Jews, on the other the Fascist authorities, who issued a series of "moderate" antisemitic decrees, which aimed at "taking the wind out of the sails of the Germans and restoring a measure of Italian sovereignty," meaning that they were "Fascist laws designed to save the Jews from the death camps." His conclusion read: "Mussolini's attempts to remove the Jewish question from German hands were therefore doomed to failure from the start. His internment order, though designed to protect the Jews, had the effect of facilitating the task of Eichmann's emissaries. [...] A good deal has been written about the Duce's efforts to save the Jews from the gas chambers. But while it is true that Mussolini was too much of an Italian to approve of the 'final solution', it is no less true that he and his henchmen helped to create the conditions in which the Holocaust became possible."²⁰

Michaelis, in other words, while attesting to the collaborationism of the RSI and of the dictator, nevertheless maintained that this did not mean they had espoused extermination, and that on the contrary they acted with the aim of saving the Jews from it. It was a truly original interpretation, but not, after all, so very dissimilar from those put forward by Reitlinger and Hilberg.

Yehuda Bauer's 1981 work on the US aid organization Joint had a brief chapter on Italy, and is therefore another example of how the event we are here dealing with has been summarised in an essay devoted to one specific aspect of the Shoah. The author summed up the situation by stating that the RSI "was too weak to exert any influence, and a direct SS terror regime began;" that arrests and deportations began in April 1944; that this delay and "the ineffectiveness of the Italian law of December, 1943, providing for the

(Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), 283-298. Revised translation of "Hitpathutah u-Mahalakheha shel ha-Antishemiyut ha-Fashistit be-Italya," in *Yalkut Moreshet*, 10 (April, 1969): 79-88.

²⁰ Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews. German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 342-406, 413-414 (quotes from pages 351, 352, 389, 413-414).

arrest of all Jews, enabled the majority of Jews to escape, despite intensive German and Italian search operations.”²¹

In 1982 an important international conference on the Third Reich and the genocide of Jews was held in Paris. Michel M. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton were invited to speak on “Nazis and Jews in occupied Western Europe;” they had just published a groundbreaking study on the Vichy government’s antisemitic zeal in legislative persecution and in arresting people for deportation.²² And yet, in the few sentences of their Paris paper devoted to Italy after September 8, 1943, the two authors claimed that, even after the re-establishment of a phantom of Fascist regime, “the renewed persecution and the deportation [...] was entirely a German operation.” Further on they asserted that the limited number of victims was due to the difficult war situation and to the “widespread opposition” of the Italian population and also of some German authorities.²³ Marrus and Paxton named the recent volume by Michaelis as their source. This interpretation was again put forward in 1987, in a volume written by Marrus alone: after September 8, in Italy “manhunts against Jews began. Yet even then it was obvious that if the Germans really wanted to move against Jews still nominally under Italian Fascist authority, they had to do so on their own.”²⁴

In 1985 Raul Hilberg published a revised edition (which he at the time considered “definitive”) of his great narrative. In fact, many pages and whole chapters had been extensively rewritten. In dealing with Italy in 1943-1945, the renowned scholar now described, among other things, the roles played by Guido Buffarini Guidi and Tullio Tamburini, and also wrote that there were name lists of Jews, drawn up since 1938 by the Fascist regime, and that they were made available to the Germans. Even so, he held on to the definition of the arrest order by the republican Fascists he had given in 1961 (“a warning as well as a threat”), and again quoted the subsequent German document about letting Italian authorities believe that concentration in Italy would be the final measure. The new version no longer mentioned the “trap” in spring 1944 [which anyway had never existed], nor the “Fascist helpers,” that vague formula he had used in 1961 when referring to Fascist collaborationism. It claimed instead that “frequently the Security Police did not rely on the Italian dragnet, but proceeded with its own personnel,” and that “in May [1944] the Security Police combed through hospitals, asylums, and

²¹ Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1939-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), 290.

²² Michel M. Marrus, Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

²³ Michel M. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *The Nazis and the Jews in Occupied Western Europe, 1940-1944*, “Journal of Modern History,” 54 (December 1982), 687-714. cf. 688, 709. French ed.: *Nazis et Juifs en Europe occidentale occupée (1940-1944)*, in *L’Allemagne nazie et le génocide juif* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 287-315.

²⁴ Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hannover: University Press of New England, 1987), 75.

convents, looking for Jews.”²⁵ These changes affected the entire narrative, in that they further augmented the role and as a result the dominance of the Nazi police in handling the arrests.

The following year saw the publication of a short essay in English on the anti-Jewish policy of the RSI by Italian historian Liliana Picciotto in the *Yad Vashem* journal.²⁶ It was the first writing on this topic published in English by an Italian historian. With it we come to the end of this survey on international historiography, spanning the years 1946 to 1986. Picciotto’s essay was entirely devoted, as its title indicates, to the anti-Jewish policy of the RSI. To begin with, it ought to be noted that this was the very first essay on this subject, so that writing and publishing it were in themselves a contribution to the debate. In its 33 pages the author documented how the RSI’s anti-Jewish policy evolved from November 1943 on, and published with due relevance the translation of the arrest order issued at the end of that month. She then went on to outline a brief critical appraisal of the respective roles of the RSI and the Third Reich: “Even though the RSI did not bear direct responsibility for the deportation and murder of its Jews, it was involved, from November 30, 1943 on, in all the preliminary steps of tracking them down, arresting them, and turning them over to the Germans,” and stated that “the search for Jews, which proceeded in parallel with the confiscation of their property, was both constant and meticulous. We found several Prefects’ letters urging their personnel and police stations to work with the greatest zeal.” After detailing the main moments in the unfolding of the event, Picciotto remarked that no proof had emerged of a “direct German pressure” on the RSI that had caused the Fascist government to decree the arrest of the Jews, and that the entire anti-Jewish policy of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* “seems to have been a voluntary Italian adaptation to the ideology of the dominant ally” and “should be considered as an act asserting independence rather than as a surrender to German demands.” Likewise, no documents had surfaced concerning an agreement about the handing over of the people arrested, but in the author’s opinion that agreement had “undoubtedly” existed.

The essay concluded that “the explanation that the *Salò* Republic served as a buffer zone between the Nazis and the Jews, and the widespread view according to which Fascism employed preventive strategy and certain oppressive measures so as to prevent the Germans from resorting to other, more severe measures, are not acceptable. We are convinced that German atrocities could have been much more limited had the Italian administration not extended its assistance.” In a nutshell: there was no direct pressure, it

²⁵ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* revised ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 668-679.

²⁶ Liliana Picciotto Fargion, “The Anti-Jewish Policy of the Italian Social Republic (1943-1945)”, *Yad Vashem Studies*, XVII (1986), 17-49 (quot. 23; 33; 45-47; 49).

was a case of competition and not of surrender, many of the arrests were carried out by the Italian police.

It can also be said that Picciotto's reconstruction gives back the Italian persecutors their individuality, analysing and detailing the context in which they operated and the motives behind their actions. Her narrative questions and goes beyond almost all interpretations of the previous forty years, except perhaps Dawidowicz's very concise one, and actually brings to mind and further develops Roth's groundbreaking text.

Picciotto's analysis was based mainly on the vast amount of documents stored in the offices of Italian *Prefetti* [i.e. the chief government officials at the provincial level] and *Questori* [police commissioners] which she had examined in the course of her research aimed at drawing up the full list and the biographies of the Jews who fell victim to the Italian chapter of the Shoah. The outcome of her research was in 1991 the first edition of the *Libro della memoria*.²⁷

It is hard to understand the motives that have led many eminent historians to embrace instead opposite or markedly diverging reconstructions. Clearly, the relative smallness of the Italian Jewish population rendered it marginal to Pan-European scholars; moreover, a certain weight must be attached to the fact that the first round-ups, notably the one in Rome on October 16, 1943, which was the vastest ever to take place in Italy, were decided in Berlin and carried out directly by Nazi police. It should also be mentioned that Italy's stance in the French and Balkan territories in 1942-1943, where it did not espouse Nazi, Croat and Vichy deportation policy,²⁸ - and which we find depicted in every one of the essays examined here -, appears to have heavily influenced descriptions of the subsequent Fascist policy in Italy in 1943-1945.

Apart from all that, however, I suspect that for many of these historians Mussolini mattered not so much for Fascism's own brand of antisemitic notions and actions, but rather because they might use him as a yardstick by which to measure Hitler, with only one end in mind: to paint the latter even blacker. As I see it, a complex contagion has taken place between the historical reconstruction of the "final solution," the ethical judgement on it, the containment policies towards postwar Germany, the quest by the successor states of the non-German collaborationist countries of their own "moral

²⁷ Picciotto, *Il libro della Memoria*.

²⁸ On two episodes that cannot be considered as instances of "not espousing," see, Michele Sarfatti, "Fascist Italy and German Jews in South-Eastern France in July 1943," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 3/3 (1998): 318-328; transl. by Loredana Melissari. Michele Sarfatti, "Tra uccisione e protezione. I rifugiati ebrei in Kosovo nel marzo 1942 e le autorità tedesche, italiane e albanesi," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel*, 76/3 (2010): 223-242.

absolution.” Ever-changing combinations of these factors have at times given rise to some actual “pro-Italian” prejudices and to some odd oversights by worthy scholars.

As an example of the latter, I would like to cite the recurring lack of study of Italian documents on Italy, as if the truth of the RSI’s actions could be documented only through the Third Reich’s records. As if only they were honest, correct, accurate, panoptic, complete.²⁹

My survey ends with the second half of the 1980’s, years that saw a new advancement in documentary research and historiographical interpretation, both in Italy and among scholars writing in other European languages. Those years also, most importantly, saw an increased interest in the antisemitic persecution carried out by Benito Mussolini (both during the RSI and in earlier years), its originality and autonomy, and in his degree of collaboration and of independence.³⁰

(Translation: Loredana Melissari)

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²⁹ For two diverging accounts on a meeting between officers of the German and the Italian police see Sarfatti, *Fascist Italy*.

³⁰ Among the essays by foreign scholars that have been published after 1986 and have dealt with anti-Jewish persecution in the RSI, one should mention those by Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), [*L’Olocausto in Italia*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1988); transl. Vittoria Lo Faro]. Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933-1945*, 2 voll. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989-1993), [*Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, 2 voll., (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1993-96); transl., Loredana Melissari]. Carlo Moos, *Ausgrenzung, Internierung, Deportationen, Antisemitismus und Gewalt im späten italienischen Faschismus (1938-1945)* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2004). *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *L’Italie fasciste et la persecution des juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), [*L’Italia fascista e la persecuzione degli ebrei* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); transl. Andrea De Ritis]. For Italian historiography see note 5.

Primo Levi and the Italian Memory of the Shoah

by Anna Baldini

Abstract

By drawing on the literary and intellectual trajectory of the writer Primo Levi, the essay underlines the most relevant turning points in the shaping of an Italian memory of the Shoah. A contextualization of Levi's work puts into evidence the intermingling of national and international factors in this process, as well as the role a single individual can play in the shaping of a collective memory.

- Introduction

- 1947: *Se questo è un uomo* rejected

- From 1955 to the Eichmann Trial

- At the Theatre

- The “voice of the deportation”

- Stereotypes

- NBC's Holocaust: The Witness and the Fiction

- Bearing Witness after Levi's Death

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, memorializing the Nazi persecution and extermination of Jews and other minority groups has become in many countries a civic duty supported by governmental institutions.¹ In parallel, historians have begun to interrogate the conditions that made possible the consolidation of so peculiar a cultural formation, namely a “collective memory.” The Israeli data analyzed by Tom Segev, the French data analyzed by Annette Wieviorka, and the United States data analyzed by Peter Novick²—to cite only the seminal works of this historical trend—have shown how, in each of the

¹ This process of institutionalization results in the proclamation of the “Holocaust memorial days,” whose chronology varies from country to country: for example, in Israel (1953), the United States (1980), Germany (1996), France and Italy (2000), Great Britain (2001), and the UN and EU (2005).

² See Tom Segev, *Ha-Milyon ha-shevi'i: ha-Yisre'elim veba-Sho'ah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1991). Annette Wieviorka, *L'Ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon 1998). Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). The British edition of the book is identical to the American one, but bears a different title: *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: the American Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).

different case studies, this process has evolved along two parallel trajectories. On the one side, the memory of the Shoah focuses on some “objects” or global cultural “events,” which spread out contemporaneously in diverse national backgrounds and whose success alternated or was integrated according to common patterns; on the other hand, the modalities of importation or exportation of these same objects varies according to national frameworks, while their meanings are connoted with specific details.³ The national particularities depend on many factors: the refashioning of World War Two memories, which vary from country to country, woven within the international ideological conflicts and their local manifestations; the relationship that each national context builds with its Jewish community, and both their relationships with the State of Israel; public, especially legislative and educational, initiatives, and the contributions of mass media, which perform a variety of roles in forging public opinion in different countries and periods.

The same object — cultural product or historical event — thus occasions distinct resonances, depending on the field of political, social, and cultural forces containing it. The television miniseries *Holocaust* is not the same when moving American audiences in 1978 and disturbing the Germans in 1979 – just as obvious are the differences, starting with their very names, between the museums constructed in the USA and German capitals: the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, opened in 1993, and the exhibition on the bottom level of the Jüdisches Museum in Berlin, opened in 2001. Likewise, the presence of Giorgio Perlasca in the Garden of the Just in Yad Vashem has a function that does not coincide with that of the same figure when he is “discovered” in Italy; reading *Se questo è un uomo* in a high school in the 1970s is different from reading the same book in a university classroom in the 21st century; and its author, Primo Levi, did not receive in the 1980s the same unconditional approval in Italy and in the United States, where the dominant interpretation of the survivor-witness was the mystical-theological one given by Elie Wiesel.

Actually, although within complex social dynamics, the imprint of the choices, culture and personalities of some individuals can be decisive for the specific characteristics of a national memory. “What would talk of the Holocaust be like in America,” Peter Novick asked, “if a skeptical rationalist like Primo Levi, rather than a religious mystic like Wiesel, had been its principal interpreter?”⁴ History, as we well known, is not made from this

³ To designate this field of globalized objects, the most common “label” employed in an international context is *Holocaust Field* or *Holocaust Discourse*, “Holocaust” being the term most widely used in the English speaking area to designate the Nazi racial exterminations. In Italy, instead, the term “Shoah” has predominated over the last two decades: Robert Gordon analyses the reasons for this distinction in *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 176-180. The use of one or the other terms constitutes an important chapter in the history of memory: see Anna-Vera Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001).

⁴ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, 351. Novick does not make too much of an effort to hide his own predilection for this counterfactual hypothesis. About the success of Levi’s work among the liberal

kind of hypotheses; what a historical investigation can do, instead, is reverse the question: what cultural traits characterize the memory of the Shoah in Italy, where the figure and work of Levi have indeed been so crucial? The first person who has tried to respond to this question is a British scholar, Robert Gordon, in a 2006 essay, now followed by a detailed and exhaustive book, which joins the already cited case studies by Segev, Wieviorka, and Novick: *The Holocaust in Italian Culture (1944-2010)*.⁵ I certainly cannot, in the brief space of this essay, give an account of the entire panorama reconstructed by Gordon. I will instead aim to go over the most important focal points of this history, using as an underlying theme the intellectual trajectory of Primo Levi, who has been, for 40 years, both filter and litmus test for the Italian memory of the Shoah.⁶

1947: *Se questo è un uomo* rejected

Let us start from the beginning, that is the first edition of *Se questo è un uomo*, published in 1947 by De Silva, a small Turinese publishing house, run by Franco Antonicelli. Before ending up at Antonicelli's desk, the book had been declined by various publishers, among which certainly Einaudi.⁷

This episode is doubly significant. On the one hand, it is an example of a larger spectrum of editorial trajectories: stories of failure and hostility met by similar testimonies in the first decade after the end of the Second World War. This phenomenon does not characterize exclusively the Italian panorama, and draws attention to the turbulence of the journey that transformed the narration of the Shoah from an individual into a public memory. From another point of view, the case of *Se questo è un uomo* is an example of what happens to a cultural "object" (in this case, to the relationship between a book and

American *elite*, often used in explicit juxtaposition to the testimonial pedagogy of Wiesel, see Jonathan Druker, Michael Rothberg, "A Secular Alternative: Primo Levi's Place in American Holocaust Discourse," *Shofar. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 28/1 (2009): 104-126.

⁵ Robert Gordon, "Which Holocaust? Primo Levi and the Field of Holocaust Memory in Post-War Italy," *Italian Studies*, 61/1 (2006), 85-113. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*. The book has been recently translated in Italian: *Scolpitelo nei cuori. L'Olocausto nella cultura italiana (1944-2010)* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2013) and has been generally praised by the Italian academy.

⁶ In this essay I will draw on my recent bibliographic census, whose results are rendered in graphical form in Anna Baldini, "La memoria italiana della Shoah (1944-2009)," *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, III, *Dal Romanticismo a oggi*, eds. Sergio Luzzatto, Gabriele Pedullà, Domenico Scarpa (Turin: Einaudi, 2012), 758-763. The chronology of the texts and the criteria with which it was constructed are downloadable from the webpage <http://www.einaudi.it/speciali/Atlante-della-letteratura-italiana-Vol.III>: "Cronologia. Le testimonianze della persecuzione e dello sterminio pubblicate in Italia (1944-2009)." I chose to select my corpus with restrictive criteria, to offer a base of homogenous data for analysis. The material of my census therefore corresponds only partially to the one utilized by Gordon.

⁷ See Gian Carlo Ferretti, *Siamo spiacenti di* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2012).

the editorial field of its debut) when it becomes appropriated beyond its original context. Let us start from here.

In the second half of the 1980s, the “discovery” of Levi by the American cultural world introduced the work of the writer into the narrative canon of *Holocaust Discourse*, and in a preeminent position. His writings thus began to attract the interest of scholars who were not necessarily experts in Italian social and literary history. A significant example of the misunderstandings produced by this reception out of sync in time and space was the first biography of Levi, published in 1996 by a French journalist-writer, Myriam Anissimov.⁸ If the thoroughness of her research is undeniable, the material gathered is however interpreted on the basis of a crude and shallow knowledge of twentieth-century Italian history; above all, the particular topic of Italian Judaism, and its specific features, was badly understood.⁹

But it was another aspect of Anissimov’s reconstruction that provoked in Italy, between 1996 and 1997, a vivacious polemic (occasionally resumed afterwards).¹⁰ In Anissimov’s biography, the failed recognition in 1947 of the excellence of *Se questo è un uomo* by the publishing world – and, above all, by the editors of Einaudi, the writers Natalia Ginzburg and Cesare Pavese – became an accusation against the entire Italian culture, guilty of not being able for forty years to appreciate how great a writer Primo Levi was.

The relatively marginal position of Levi in the Italian literary field, at least during his lifetime, is a fact, which should however be explained with more refined instruments of analysis – those, for example, of a sociology of literature capable of avoiding the risk, implicit in every canonization, of forgetting the historical and literary context in which a

⁸ See Myriam Anissimov, *Primo Levi, ou la tragédie d’un optimiste* (Paris: Lattès, 1996).

⁹ Levi already had to deal with similar misunderstandings, owing to the effects of the transplant of his work in a different cultural *humus*. In 1985, a detailed essay-review, closing with an attack on the Jewish identity incarnated by Levi, appeared in *Commentary*, a conservative Jewish New York magazine. This attack was absurd, from the point of view of Levi, who wrote back explaining how his manner of being a Jew was the product of a history, his own and that of the Italian Jewry (see Fernanda Eberstadt, “Reading Primo Levi,” *Commentary* (October, 1985): 41-47. Levi responded with a letter to the editor, *Commentary* (February, 1986), 6-7. The misunderstanding was, however, inevitable: a cultural object of recent importation is always interpreted according to the criteria of perception, conflict, and judgment of the field in which it lands. Eberstadt’s article reveals an “implicit agenda [...] of Jewish particularism” (Rothberg, Druker, “A Secular Alternative,” 110), in other words, she uses Levi to take a position on a specific problem of the American Jewish world.

¹⁰ Among the book reviews that discuss Einaudi’s refusal to publish *Se questo è un uomo* are Ernesto Ferrero, “Primo Levi, l’ora dei veleni,” *La Stampa*, December 7, 1996. Ferdinando Camon, “Primo Levi, l’incubo del rifiuto,” *La Stampa*, December 23, 1996. Cesare Cases, “Ma gli italiani sanno biografare?,” *La Stampa*, January 17, 1997. Domenico Scarpa, “Un Levi improbabile,” *La rivista dei libri*, VII/4 (1997): 41-43. Tony Judt, “The Courage of the Elementary,” *The New York Review of Books*, May 20, 1999, 31-38. Marco Belpoliti, “Levi: il falso scandalo,” *La rivista dei libri*, X/1 (2000): 25-27.

particular text is created and circulated. Canons, however, are made precisely for this: in order to universalize works, that is to withdraw them from their original contexts. It is, however, historically and also ethically wrong to judge the behavior of writers, literary critics or editors, coming into contact with a specific text for the first time, on the basis of present-day criteria. Let us then try to reconstruct the significance a book like *Se questo è un uomo* could have had in 1947, beginning with its most striking trait, namely its content: the story of a Jew who survived his deportation to a Nazi concentration camp.

If Primo Levi is an author known today in the entire world, it is above all because in the last thirty years he has entered into the global canon of *Holocaust Discourse*. Now, not only in 1947 that canon, and the criteria that nowadays structure it, did not exist, but not even the concept of the Holocaust/Shoah existed. Between 1941 and 1945, Novick writes, “For the overwhelming majority of Americans,” and the same can be said of Europeans, “what we now call the Holocaust [...] was not “the Holocaust;” it was simply the (underestimated) Jewish fraction of the holocaust then engulfing the world.”¹¹ And, successively, after 1945, the figure of the deportee returning to his country, although so characteristic of post-war Europe, was almost exclusively perceived from a political perspective: if the *Lager* had been created to stamp out the opponents of Nazism, all of the internees were therefore “resistant.”¹² The reasons for this simplification are comprehensible: it was too early for the nature, the functions, and the internal distinctions of the Nazi concentrationary universe to be clear; besides, and above all, the greater part of returning deportees came from, and *pour cause*, concentration camps, not death camps.¹³ In the Italy of those years, the symbol of Nazi terror was the barbed wire of Mauthausen, not yet the cremation ovens of Auschwitz; immediately after the war, both the accounting of the victims and their division into categories were still too difficult operations.

¹¹ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, 29.

¹² This “resistance” interpretation of the deportation will have a long life, and some definitions of “resistance literature” in the 1970s include texts by political *and racial* internees: see Carlo Annoni, “La narrativa della resistenza: probabile catalogo,” *Vita e Pensiero*, June-July (1970): 27-42. Mario Saccenti, “Letteratura della Resistenza,” *Dizionario critico di letteratura italiana*, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Utet, 1973), 598-606. The literary anthology *Resistenza italiana e impegno letterario*, ed. Delmo Maestri (Turin: Paravia, 1975).

¹³ “Numbers are more important than interpretations. For one thing, if one thinks of the small Italian communities, the deported Jews are already few in comparison with the political deportees, and many fewer of them will return.” Anna Bravo and Daniele Jalla, “Una misura onesta,” Introduction to *Una misura onesta. Gli scritti di memoria della deportazione dall’Italia 1944-1993*, ed. Anna Bravo and Daniele Jalla (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1994), 61. A few pages before, Bravo and Jalla had quoted an analogous reflection by Pierre Vidal-Naquet: “If you take the first eyewitnesses of the post-war, you see that in France as in Italy, the symbol was not even Auschwitz, it was Buchenwald for the men and Ravensbrück for the women. And for a clear reason: because more men had returned from Buchenwald and women from Ravensbrück than had returned from Auschwitz” (“L’uso perverso della storia,” Pierre Vidal-Naquet interviewed by Gianni Saporetto and Sulamit Schneider, *Una città*, June 23, 1993, 10-11.

We must not forget that the deportees' stories, Jews and non-Jews, were also mingled in a chorus of other losses, tragedies and heroic deeds: a chorus that emerged after the war from that "obsession of telling" of which Calvino speaks in 1964, in the *Preface* to a new edition of his debut novel, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, published for the first time precisely in 1947. 17 years later, the writer mentioned that in those months, "we were [...] bursting with stories to tell: everyone had experienced their own drama, had lived a chaotic, exciting, adventurous existence; we took the words from each other's mouth."¹⁴ And these painful stories, set in the background of the recently ended war, accumulated on the desks of publishing houses.

Owing to this bitter competition, the stories of deportees met in general with little attention. And when they found it, namely when they achieved publication, it was thanks to small publishing houses, often heirs to the activities of clandestine printing set about during the Resistance, or in any case characterized by a strong political motivation. Only fifteen or twenty years later, with the original publisher dead or gone, and by now the first editions out of print, some of these books would be recuperated by more prestigious publishers. Playing a role in the initial refusals were the economic difficulties of the first post-war years, particularly felt by the publishing world, which certainly did not encourage the publication of unpleasant and painful memoirs, for which there was not anticipated a numerous public; certainly, as well, the very throng of proposals for memoirs played a role. At small publishers, instead, personal relationships were decisive, and the case of *Se questo è un uomo* is once more emblematic: the book arrived at De Silva, that is, at the doorstep of Franco Antonicelli, former president of the Piedmont Committee of National Liberation (CLN), thanks to Alessandro Galante Garrone, former partisan and representative of the Action Party in the regional CLN, who had in turn received the manuscript from Anna Maria Levi, Primo's sister, who herself had served as a courier in the Action Party's brigades.¹⁵

¹⁴ Italo Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nest*, transl. Archibald Colquhoun, revis. Martin McLaughlin (New York: Ecco Press, 2000). "Si era [...] carichi di storie da raccontare, ognuno aveva avuto la sua, ognuno aveva vissuto vite irregolari drammatiche avventurose, ci si strappava la parola di bocca:" Italo Calvino, "Prefazione 1964 al 'Sentiero dei nidi di ragno,'" *Romanzi e racconti*, eds. Mario Barenghi, Bruno Falchetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), vol. I, 1185-1186. The memories of many ex-deportees suggest that Calvino's phrase "we took the words from each other's mouth" should be interpreted literally: "And when I went to the cafe, the others told me immediately: 'When I was in Greece... When I was in Albania...'" "Maybe at a certain point they interrupted me, they preferred to speak of their own business" (testimonies by Rinaldo Botto and Angelo Travaglia, in *La vita offesa. Storia e memoria dei Lager nazisti nei racconti di duecento sopravvissuti* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1986), 340-341; 346).

¹⁵ The series in which *Se questo è un uomo* was published, the *Biblioteca Leone Ginzburg* is in fact remembered by Renzo Zorzi, then working at De Silva, as "the most directly political" of the publishing house: Renzo Zorzi, "Insieme alla De Silva e oltre," *Franco Antonicelli: dell'impegno culturale* (Pavia: Provincia di Pavia, 1995), 58.

Let us return therefore to the “false scandal” of Levi’s book, turned down by Einaudi: this refusal fits into a coherent editorial profile, because *Se questo è un uomo* was not the sole text dealing with the Nazi camps that Einaudi turned down – nor was it the only one rerouted to De Silva.¹⁶ Not even the insistence of Elio Vittorini, who after 1945 was one of the most important consultants for the publishing house, could convince Einaudi to have Robert Antelme’s *L’Espèce humaine* [*The Human Race*] translated. Moreover, another important French eyewitness account about the concentration camps, David Rousset’s *L’Univers concentrationnaire* [*The Other Kingdom*], published in France in 1946, was let go too, because the moment was not considered right for publication.¹⁷ The marketing estimation carried out by the Einaudi publishing house can be shown to be anything other than unfounded, as the destiny of *Se questo è un uomo* itself demonstrated: of the 2,500 published copies, more than a thousand went unsold. For other memoirs by deportees, we can imagine a similar fate, if not even less successful: “lacking data about the print runs, the difficulty of locating the texts [in libraries or on the remainders market] is a reliable indicator about their effective circulation.”¹⁸ In particular, of the eight memoirs published in Italy between 1945 and 1947 by Jews who survived death camps,¹⁹ only *Se questo è un uomo* and *Il fumo di Birkenau* [*Smoke over Birkenau*] by Liana Millu had a second chance as early as the 50s;²⁰ the other texts remain confined to their first, unique appearance, or else they needed to wait 35, 40, 50, or 60 years before returning to circulate in a new editorial

¹⁶ See Pavese’s letter (February 9, 1948) about a manuscript dealing with the camps by Egon Berger: “In general we turn down every book about this topic. The volume *Se questo è un uomo* by Primo Levi, published by De Silva Editore, had been refused by us. We advise you in fact to turn to De Silva” (the letter is quoted by Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri. La casa editrice Einaudi dagli anni trenta agli anni sessanta* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999), 319). See also Natalia Ginzburg’s letter to Sergio Antonielli on July 9, 1948, in which *Il campo 29* was turned down and the author encouraged to speak with De Silva (the letter is referred to in Walter Barberis, “Primo Levi e “un libro fatale,” *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, III, 754).

¹⁷ See Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, 319. About the publishing vicissitudes of Antelme’s book, see also Domenico Scarpa, “Storie di libri necessari. Antelme, Duras, Vittorini,” *Storie avventurose di libri necessari* (Rome: Alberto Gaffi, 2010), 165-202. Rousset’s book was published in Italian in 1947 by Leo Longanesi, a right-wing publisher who was interested in importing into Italy the book of an author who in France had launched a debate about the totalitarian aspects of communist regimes.

¹⁸ Bravo and Jalla, “Una misura onesta,” 52.

¹⁹ Lazzaro Levi, “Nei campi della morte. Diario di un giovane deportato,” *La Prora* (December 1945-January 1946). *I campi della morte in Germania nel racconto di una sopravvissuta*, ed. Alberto Cavaliere (Milan: Sonzogno, 1945) (Cavaliere publishes the memories of his sister-in-law Sofia Schafranov). Freda Misul, *Fra gli artigli del mostro nazista: la più romanzesca delle realtà, il più realistico dei romanzi* (Livorno: Stabilimento Poligrafico Belforte, 1946). [Luciana Nissim,] “Ricordi della casa dei morti,” *Donne contro il mostro* (Turin: Ramella, 1946) (Luciana Nissim’s testimony appears anonymously). Giuliana Tedeschi, *Questo povero corpo* (Milan: Editrice Italiana, 1946). Alba Valech Capozzi, *A 24029* (Siena: Poligrafica, 1946). Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (Turin: De Silva, 1947). Liana Millu, *Il fumo di Birkenau* (Milan: La Prora, 1947).

²⁰ Respectively in 1958 (Einaudi) and 1957 (Mondadori).

format.²¹ All of them, however, without exception, encountered a brief and scarce echo in the immediate post-war period, in accordance with a dynamic characterizing literature about concentration and death camps in every language and in every national context.

From 1955 to the Eichmann Trial

In 1955, on the occasion of the first decade of Liberation, in an article which appeared in *Torino. Rivista mensile della città*, the author of one of those forgotten books, the chemist Primo Levi, took stock of a desolate situation: “Ten years from the liberation of the concentration camps, it is both distressing and deeply indicative to note that in Italy at least, far from being an important part of our history, the subject of the extermination camps is in the process of being completely forgotten.”²² Whoever reads today this article in the collection of Levi’s *Opere* needs only to turn a few pages to jump ahead five years, coming upon a completely different *incipit* and cultural climate: “The Deportation Exhibition, which opened in Turin in a seemingly minor key, has been an unexpected success. Each and every day a close-packed crowd stood, deeply moved, before those terrible images; the closing date had to be postponed not once, but twice. Equally surprising was the welcome given by the Turin public to two talks aimed at young people, given in the Cultural Union in Palazzo Carignano to an attentive, thoughtful and packed public.”²³

Between the two texts—between 1955 and 1960—something changed. The nexus instituted between deportation and Resistance made the public celebrations of the first decade of the Liberation stimulate the survivors of the camps to exhume again their stories. It was right in 1955 that Primo Levi newly proposed his book to the Einaudi publishing house, and this time with success: the book was published in a new edition

²¹ Frida Misul, *Deportazione. Il mio diario* (Livorno: Ufficio Storico della Resistenza del Comune di Livorno, 1980). Giuliana Tedeschi, *C’è un punto della terra... Una donna nel lager di Birkenau* (Florence: La Giuntina, 1988). Alba Capozzi Valech, *A 24029* (Siena: Nuova Immagine, 1995). Luciana Nissim, *Ricordi dalla casa dei morti* (Florence: La Giuntina, 2008).

²² Primo Levi, “Deportees. Anniversary,” *The Black Hole of Auschwitz*, ed. Marco Belpoliti, transl. Sharon Wood (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 3. “A dieci anni dalla liberazione dei Lager, è triste e significativo dover constatare che, almeno in Italia, l’argomento dei campi di sterminio, lungi dall’essere diventato storia, si avvia alla più completa dimenticanza.” Primo Levi, “Deportati. Anniversario,” *Torino*, XXXI/4 (1955) Now, Primo Levi, *Opere*, ed. Marco Belpoliti (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), vol. I, 113.

²³ Primo Levi, “The Time of Swastikas,” *The Black Hole of Auschwitz*, 9. “La Mostra della deportazione, che era stata aperta a Torino (si può dire) in tono minore, ha conseguito un inaspettato successo. Per tutti i giorni di apertura, a tutte le ore, davanti a quelle terribili immagini ha sostato una folla serrata e commossa. la data della chiusura ha dovuto essere rinviata per ben due volte. Altrettanto sorprendente è stata l’accoglienza del pubblico torinese ai due successivi colloqui destinati ai giovani, che hanno avuto luogo nei locali dell’Unione Culturale a Palazzo Carignano: un pubblico fittissimo, attento, pensoso.” Primo Levi, “Il tempo delle svastiche,” *Il giornale dei genitori*, January 15, 1960. Now, *Opere*, vol. I, 112.

(amply revised by the author) in 1958. This is the same year, it is worth mentioning, when Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit* [*Night*] was published in French by Seuil (its longer Yiddish version having been published in Buenos Aires three years previously), a translation that marks the beginning of the successful international parabola of its author. The English translation of *La Nuit* would come two years later.

The new edition of *Se questo è un uomo* presented numerous variants.²⁴ The most conspicuous one is the addition of an entire chapter, *Iniziazione* [*Initiation*], where the encounter with sergeant Steinlauf is related. Steinlauf is the first character in the book to make an explicit connection between survival and testimony: “even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness.”²⁵ It is probably not coincidental that such a vibrant affirmation is found in a chapter added between 1955 and 1958: the past decade had most likely matured in Levi the awareness both of the meaning of what he had experienced as well as of how writing could be an instrument of communication and knowledge.

Again in 1955, and on the occasion of the ten-year celebration of Liberation, a national exhibition about the Nazi camps had gone on tour: it is the same exhibition mentioned by Levi in the 1960 article above cited.²⁶ The exhibition had been inaugurated December 8th at Carpi, near Fossoli, the location of the main Italian transit camp, where the greatest part of Jews rounded up were temporarily interned before being sent off to Auschwitz. Subsequently, the exhibition began a long trip through Italy: in five years it passed through Ferrara (January 22 – February 20, 1956), Bologna (March 17-31 1956), Verona (January 18-February 2, 1958), Rome (June 26-July 15, 1959), Turin (November 14-December 8, 1959) and Cuneo (December 1959). In Turin, at the Unione Culturale presided over by Franco Antonicelli, the National Association of Ex-Deportees (*ANED, Associazione Nazionale Ex Deportati*) organized two evenings where historians, illustrious figures of the Resistance and ex-deportees conversed with the public. On the first evening, 1,300 people attended; 1,500 attended the second meeting. Among others, Primo Levi spoke there in public for the first time.

²⁴ The first scholar to study this topic was Giovanni Tesio, “Su alcune giunte e varianti di “Se questo è un uomo,” *Studi piemontesi*, VI/2 (1977): 270-279. Now, *Piemonte letterario dell’Otto-Novecento (da G. Faldella a Levi)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991), 173-196. See also Alberto Cavaglion, *Primo Levi e “Se questo è un uomo”* (Turin: Loescher, 1993) and the commentary of Levi’s book by the same scholar: Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, ed. Alberto Cavaglion (Turin: Einaudi, 2012).

²⁵ Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, transl. Stuart Woolf (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 36. “Anche in questo luogo si può sopravvivere, e perciò si deve voler sopravvivere, per raccontare, per portare testimonianza:” Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, *Opere*, vol. I, 35.

²⁶ See *Immagini dal silenzio. La prima mostra nazionale dei lager nazisti attraverso l’Italia 1955-1960*, ed. Marzia Luppi, Elisabetta Ruffini and Alberto Cavaglion (Carpi: Nuovagrafica, 2005). Elisabetta Ruffini, *Un lapsus di Primo Levi. Il testimone e la ragazzina* (Bergamo: Assessorato alla Cultura del Comune di Bergamo, 2006).

The Primo Levi that spoke at the Unione Culturale in December, 1959, was no longer an unknown writer, but the author of a successful book: the second edition of *Se questo è un uomo*, under the aegis of Einaudi, had already gone out of print by the end of 1958, and the first reissue would be at the end of the following year. On the back cover, the book was compared to Antelme's *The Human Race*, which Einaudi had published in 1954. The following title of the series where *Se questo è un uomo* and *The Human Race* had appeared was *Ricordati che cosa ti ha fatto Amalek* [Remember what Amalek did to you], one of the first historical accounts which appeared in Italian about the events of the Warsaw ghetto; the author, Alberto Nirenstajn, was a Polish scholar who resided in Italy. The editorial line of Einaudi was once again consistent: beginning in 1954, the year of the translation of Antelme's book, but also of Anne Frank's diary, a book that had already achieved world fame, the publishing house began to explore the subject of Nazi camps, recovering (literally, since often they were dealing with book proposals declined less than a decade ago) diverse eyewitness accounts, as well as bringing into Italian the first historiographical works that made the "final solution" a specific object of analysis, distinct from other tragic events tied to the second world war. The book of Nirenstajn followed the translation in 1955 of Léon Poliakov's *Bréviaire de la haine. Le III^e Reich et les juifs* as *Il nazismo e lo sterminio degli ebrei*,²⁷ and preceded Renzo De Felice's *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* [*Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*]. Einaudi was not the only one exploring this new field of research. In 1962, Il Saggiatore, the publishing house founded by Alberto Mondadori in 1958 to compete with Einaudi and Laterza in the area of quality nonfiction, published *La soluzione finale. Il tentativo di sterminio degli ebrei d'Europa, 1939-1945* [*The Final Solution. The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945*] by the British historian Gerald Reitlinger. This text was originally published in English in 1953 and promptly discussed—in a long serialized review in the journal *Comunità*—by Luigi Meneghello, a scholar of Italian literature living in the UK, not yet a writer himself, and husband of a survivor of the death camps.²⁸ But it was above all Feltrinelli, the publishing house opened in 1955 and aiming to supersede Einaudi in its predominance in cultural publishing, which entered into competition with the Turin publishing house in this specific area. In 1955, Feltrinelli published *Il flagello della svastica* [*The Scourge of the Swastika*] by Lord Edward Russell (one of the legal counsellors of the Nuremberg trials); in 1956 the eyewitness account of an Italian Jew (Bruno Piazza's *Perché gli altri dimenticano* [Why the Others Forget]); in 1961 the translation of the winner of the 1959 *Premio Goncourt*, André Schwarz-Bart's *Le Dernier des justes* [*The Last of the Just*] as *L'ultimo dei giusti*; and in 1964, only one year after the original edition, the translation of a text that had provoked much

²⁷ The original edition (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1951) is prefaced by François Mauriac, who will also introduce the first French translation of Wiesel's *Night*.

²⁸ Meneghello's articles were republished forty years later: Luigi Meneghello, *Promemoria. Lo sterminio degli ebrei d'Europa, 1939-45* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1994).

argument in the United States, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the reportage written by Hannah Arendt for the *New Yorker* during the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which took place in Jerusalem between April and August of 1961.

The Eichmann trial was a key event in the history of the memory of the Shoah. Many elements contributed to make it an event that attracted the attention of global media: the adventurous matter of the Mossad's kidnapping of the defendant in Argentina, which raised a complex debate in international law; the transmission of the trial by United States television; the reflections drawn by an intellectual of international prestige such as Hannah Arendt, summed up in such an effective and overwhelming formula as "the banality of evil." But, as Annette Wieviorka has shown, the Eichmann trial marked above all the birth of the public figure of "witness."²⁹ The trial was cleverly orchestrated by Attorney General Gideon Hausner around aims remote to those more strictly juridical. What was most important for the Israeli ruling class, represented by the Attorney General, who called dozens and dozens of survivors of the ghettos and death camps to testify against the defendant, was not so much the ascertainment of Eichmann's guilt and individual responsibility as much as to create an opportunity to stage the story of the persecution and extermination of the Jewish people during Nazism. An event that, although playing a part in the foundation mythology of the State, had been in fact shrouded in a silence, also and perhaps above all in Israel, weighed down with reserve and shame.

The hanging of Eichmann thus turned out to be the least relevant of the results of the trial. After 1961, the perception of the "Shoah"—the term adopted by the Jewish state in its own documents from the 1940s onwards—was not transformed solely in Israel: the attention given to the trial by media of the entire world provoked much more widespread effects: "It was the first time that what we now call the Holocaust was presented [...] as an entity in its own right, distinct from Nazi barbarism in general," Novick summed up.³⁰ Hausner's use of eyewitness reports decontextualized from legal necessities transformed, moreover, the survivor-witness into a sort of guarantor of truth and historical authenticity: "[The witness] was not there to deliver any evidence of the guilt of the accused [...]. Instead, [the witness] told a story with a double aim: to recount [his] own survival, but, above all, to remember the dead and how they were murdered," commented Wieviorka.³¹ All western societies would end up granting the survivor this specific function of "bearer" and "pedagogue" of history.

²⁹ See Wieviorka, *L'Ère du témoin*, above all the chapter "L'avènement du témoin."

³⁰ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, 133.

³¹ Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 78. "Le témoin n'est pas là pour administrer une quelconque preuve de la culpabilité du prévenu [...], mais pour faire un récit dont la finalité est double: conter sa propre survie, mais surtout, évoquer ceux qui sont morts et comment ils ont été assassinés" (Wieviorka, *L'Ère du témoin*, 106-107).

At the Theatre

Eichmann's was not the only trial held in the 1960s against those responsible for the mass murders. In Frankfurt, between 1963 and 1965, the *Auschwitz Process* took place, a series of trials against *Kapos*, officers of the SS and the Gestapo who had worked at Auschwitz. The playwright Peter Weiss drew on trial records to construct a theatrical work, *Die Ermittlung. Oratorium in 11 Gesängen* [*The Investigation. Oratorio in 11 Cantos*], which debuted simultaneously on October 19, 1965 in fourteen German theatres (both West and East), and in the production by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre in London. In Italy, *L'istruttoria* was staged the next year, in the 1966-1967 season, by the most important experimental theatre, the Piccolo Teatro in Milan; the play was directed by Virginio Puecher. After a national *tournée*, the play was transmitted by RAI 2 on June 9, 1967, and a translation of the work was published the same year by Einaudi.

Two years before the *Ermittlung*, another German theatrical work had caused a sensation, not only in Germany, but in all the countries where it had exported: Rolf Hochhuth's *Der Stellvertreter. Ein christliches Trauerspiel* [*The Deputy. A Christian Tragedy*]. Differently from the *Ermittlung*, constructed around a montage of the most significant of the nearly 360 witnesses of the *Auschwitz Prozess*, Hochhuth's *Der Stellvertreter* is a drama with fictional characters. The author indicts the Church, and Pope Pius XII in particular, for having done little or nothing to obstruct the genocide. In Germany, *Der Stellvertreter* debuted on February 20, 1963, and immediately caused animated arguments. Already by 1964 Feltrinelli had published a translation of it; however, just as in the United States, the play could not be staged in Italy. A semiprivate production was attempted in Rome on February 13, 1965, but the following evening the police, on a mere pretext, closed the area where the drama had taken place. In the subsequent days, the Prefect of Rome forbade the performance as damaging to the principles of the Concordat between the State and the Church. The protests by Italian and foreign intellectuals and journalists were in vain.

Die Ermittlung and *Der Stellvertreter* are examples of documentary theatre, one of the means with which German intellectuals tried to come to terms with their nation's past. The social function and self-perception of those working in experimental Italian theatre were not very different, as the rapid translations and productions of both plays showed. Even if the first play was censored, the second was able to demonstrate, with an extraordinary success crowned by the passage to television, how the most problematic subjects of contemporary history attracted the Italian public in the 1960s.

Primo Levi was not foreign to this new shaping of the memory of the genocide in Italy, although in this case his role was marginal. In the same theatrical season when Il Piccolo

put on *L'istruttoria*, the Teatro Stabile in Turin produced a drama, edited by Levi himself and the actor Pieralberto Marché, based on *Se questo è un uomo*.³² This theatrical reduction was the result of a rather singular chain of events: Levi's book had been dramatized once before by the Canadian radio station CBC, which sent the script and a recording of the transmission to the author. Fascinated by the Canadian production, and above all by its multilingual fabric, deliberately alienating for the spectator, Levi proposed a similar operation to the RAI, which then transmitted the radio version of the book on April 24, 1964. One of the actors who had participated in this production, Pieralberto Marché, convinced the writer to newly rework his own book, this time for the stage.

The performance did not get off to an auspicious start: the writing of the screenplay and the staging by the Stabile were laborious, complicated by tardiness and incomprehension between Levi and the members of the theatrical company.³³ The first performance should have taken place in Prato on November 12, during an international festival in Florence, but the flood that paralyzed Tuscany caused the event to be cancelled. The debut was postponed to November 19, 1966, and moved to Teatro Carignano in Turin, but the performance had a mainly local, and brief, success: after a short *tournee* out of town, the show returned to Turin and ran a couple of months. The critical reception was rather tepid: theatrical experts, evidently, preferred Puecher's *Istruttoria*.

The “voice of the deportation”

As we have seen, Primo Levi's career as “witness” began before 1961, the year of the Eichmann trial, the event that for Annette Wieviorka inaugurated the “era of the witness.”³⁴ The beginning of Levi's “third vocation” – namely, as “presenter and commentator of *himself*”³⁵ – should be backdated to the two evenings organized in

³² In 1967 Einaudi published the text in its series *Collezione di teatro*.

³³ See Ian Thomson, *Primo Levi* (London: Hutchinson, 2002), 316-319. Carole Angier, *The Double Bond. Primo Levi. A Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 561-564.

³⁴ Levi was asked to publicly comment on the Eichmann trial in June 1961, when he was invited by the journal *Storia illustrata* to discuss the topic in a round table with the philosopher Remo Cantoni, the psychoanalyst Cesare Musatti, and the jurist Francesco Carnelutti: see *La vacanza morale del fascismo. Intorno a Primo Levi*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Pisa: ETS, 2009). We also possess a private testimony of Levi's emotions and reflections the day after the capture of the SS officer in the poem *Per Adolf Eichmann* (July 20, 1960). Now, *Opere*, vol. II, 540.

³⁵ See the *Appendix* added in 1976 to the scholastic edition of *Se questo è un uomo*: “ai miei due mestieri ne ho volentieri aggiunto un terzo, quello di presentatore e commentatore di me stesso, o meglio di quel lontano me stesso che aveva vissuto l'avventura di Auschwitz e l'aveva raccontata” (Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, *Opere*, vol. I, 174) [to my two vocations I have now gladly added a third, that of presenter and commentator of myself, or better of that remote self of mine who had lived the adventure of Auschwitz and had told it].

December, 1959, by ANED and Antonicelli, when Levi volunteered to satisfy the desire exhibited by many visitors that someone might illustrate in depth the exhibition on the camps, and maybe even help them overcome the shock provoked by those images.

The format of the event, which envisaged the simultaneous presence of historians and witnesses, was reoffered the following year by Antonicelli in a series of lectures on “Thirty years of Italian history (1915-1945),” which took place between April and June. Similar initiatives, centered on the history of fascism and antifascism, with experts and protagonists confronting the questions of the public, also took place in those years in Rome (May-June 1959), Milan (January-June 1961), and Bologna (1961; on this occasion, Primo Levi and Giorgio Bassani were invited to discuss the persecution of Jews).³⁶ The news articles published by papers of that epoch underlined how the public of these lecture-debates was composed principally by young people, who in those years seemed more than curious, indeed almost hungry for contemporary history. In July 1960, the exact center of this two year period, these “boys and girls with striped t-shirts,” as they would be called by the newspapers, although they were too young to have lived through the Second World War, filled up the squares of many Italian cities, along with former partisans, to protest against the entrance of the Neo-Fascists of the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) in the Tambroni government. Around July 1960, “antifascism” and “Resistance” became contemporary words once more, and the memory of the years of the regime and the war forcefully reappeared in public discourse.

We can read these events as the response to similar needs to those that had led the Israeli ruling class to design the Eichmann trial in a form that exceeded the most immediate legal objectives. Just like the trial in Jerusalem, the series of lectures on fascism and antifascism were motivated by a pedagogical fervor, and the desire to transmit and reformulate, in a moment of crisis or transition, the significance and memory of foundational historical events: on the one hand, of the State of Israel; on the other hand, of the Italian Republic. The witnesses (the survivors summoned by Hausner; the protagonists of the “thirty years of Italian history” called to assist the historians in their lectures in Turin, Rome, Milan, and Bologna) were the guarantors of the intergenerational transmission of memory, and contributed to making it more reliable and incisive. If in Israel the intention was to modify the perception that native Israelis had of their parents’ and grandparents’ pasts, in Italy the passing of the baton revitalized the idea of the “Republic born from the Resistance.”

³⁶ These series of lectures were subsequently published: *Lezioni sull'antifascismo*, ed. Piergiorgio Pericoli (Bari: Laterza, 1960) (Rome lectures). *Trent'anni di storia italiana (1915-1945)*, ed. Franco Antonicelli (Turin: Einaudi, 1961) (Turin lectures). *Fascismo e antifascismo (1918-36)*. *Lezioni e testimonianze* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962) (Milan lectures). *Storia dell'antifascismo italiano*, ed. Luigi Arbizzani and Alberto Caltabiano, vol. I, *Lezioni*, vol. II, *Testimonianze* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1964) (Bologna lectures).

It cannot be surprising that Primo Levi, “born” as a witness in this context, adopted the nexus of fascism/antifascism as a privileged frame of reference in his work as interlocutor for the collectivity.³⁷ The writer assumed this function in the course of the 1960s, and for almost thirty years his would be the “voice of deportation” in Italy, as another witness, the political deportee Lidia Rolfi, called him.³⁸ It was Levi that composed the words addressing the visitors to the Italian monument at Auschwitz, Block 21, which was inaugurated April 13, 1980, and to which some major protagonists of the shaping of the Italian memory of the Shoah also contributed. The ANED had managed the project, entrusting the architectural conception to the Milanese studio BBPR, which in 1946 had drafted the first Italian memorial of the Shoah, the *Monumento ai caduti dei campi di sterminio nazisti* [Monument to the victims of the Nazi death camps] in the Milanese *Cimitero Monumentale* [Monumental Cemetery]. The visit to Block 21 was accompanied by a reworking of *Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto ad Auschwitz* [Remember what they did to you in Auschwitz], the scenic music the composer Luigi Nono had created for the Berlin production, directed by Erwin Piscator, of Weiss’s *Die Ermittlung*; finally, the “script” of the visit to the Block 21 had been produced by the film director Nelo Risi, husband of another important writer-witness in Italian, Edith Bruck.³⁹

At the end of the 70s, thus, Levi’s role as public interlocutor was practically an official role. But how did the writer come to occupy such a position? It is worth calling on Lidia Rolfi again: “Almost automatically, Primo would be invited, because Primo in that moment was the voice of deportation. There were no other texts with the space, and quote unquote, the success of *Se questo è un uomo*. It had become almost the sole text of the deportation at that moment and it remains so still now.”⁴⁰ The presence of Levi in schools is certainly the factor that most contributed to making him the principal mediator of the memory of the genocide in Italy: both his presence in the flesh in front of students, and that of his first book, whose reading in the course of the academic year is still a widespread practice in Italian high schools.

³⁷ See the conclusions drawn by Gordon in *Which Holocaust? Primo Levi and the Field of Holocaust Memory in Post-War Italy*, then discussed again in the chapter “Primo Levi” of the 2012 book. Gordon takes into consideration not so much Levi’s writings as much as “a low-level, “public” Levi.” “To get a sense of Levi’s particular configuration of the Holocaust, as transmitted in schools and other public arenas, we need to set aside the nuanced detail and compelling power of his own testimonial writings per se and concentrate instead on his occasional and pedagogical writings” (Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 68).

³⁸ Lidia Rolfi interviewed by Federico Cereja, *Primo Levi: il presente del passato*, ed. Alberto Cavaglion (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), 224.

³⁹ Levi’s text is also published in *Opere*, vol. I, 1335-36 and translated in *The Black Hole of Auschwitz*, 71-73. About the events of Auschwitz Block 21, see Elisabetta Ruffini, Sandro Scarrocchia, “Il Blocco 21 di Auschwitz,” *Studi e ricerche di storia contemporanea*, 37/69 (2008): 9-29. Elisabetta Ruffini, “Lavoro di squadra, intelligenza e fantasia: storia del memoriale italiano,” *Quaderni d’Ananke*, 1 (2009): 13-23.

⁴⁰ Lidia Rolfi interviewed by Federico Cereja, *Primo Levi: il presente del passato*, 224.

Stereotypes

For generations of Italian students, *Se questo è un uomo* was, and still is, the first approach to the concentrationary universe. Einaudi had it republished in a scholastic edition in 1973, with footnotes composed by Levi himself, eight years after *La tregua* [*The Truce*], which already in 1965, a mere two years after its first edition, had entered the publisher's series *Lecture per la scuola media* [Readings for middle school]. In 1976, Levi decided to add an appendix to the scholastic edition of *Se questo è un uomo*, where he responded to the most frequent questions the students asked him.⁴¹ The same questions also recurred in the majority of interviews with Levi in newspapers, radio, or television: what feelings might he feel vis-à-vis the Germans, who knew of the project of extermination, why did the Jews not flee, what were the differences and analogies between the camps and the Gulag, what were the most recent and most distant origins of Nazi antisemitism?

These themes reemerged in *I Sommersi e i salvati* [*The Drowned and the Saved*], the book that Levi published in 1986 and which constitutes the *summa* of a forty-year reflection on the experience of himself and others in the camps. In particular, the seventh chapter, entitled *Stereotipi* [*Stereotypes*], was inspired by the questions which Levi answered with greatest frequency in lectures, debates, or interviews, just like ten years previously the *Appendix* above mentioned. About half way through the chapter, the writer stopped to analyze the significance of the insistent recurrence of the same questions; the reflection is marked by a touch of bitterness: "Within its limits, it seems to me that this episode"—the one Levi had just narrated, of a 5th grade boy showing him a "plan for escape from Auschwitz" to be used "the next time"—"illustrates well the gap that exists and grows wider every year between things as they were "down there" and things as they are represented by the current imagination fed by approximate books, films, and myths. It slides fatally toward simplification and stereotype, a trend against which I would like here to erect a dike."⁴² As is typical of his argumentative method, Levi immediately softens the affirmation ("At the same time, however, I would like to point out that this phenomenon is not confined to the perception of the near an historical tragedies"⁴³): there remains, however, the impression of a certain weariness of the "witness" towards his own "public." Above all the confrontation with the students

⁴¹ This *Appendix* is now reprinted in all of the editions, both scholastic and non-scholastic, as an integral part of the book.

⁴² Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, transl. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 157. "Nei suoi limiti, mi pare che l'episodio illustri bene la spaccatura che esiste, e che si va allargando di anno in anno, fra le cose com'erano "laggiù" e le cose quali vengono rappresentate dalla immaginazione corrente, alimentata da libri, film e miti approssimativi. Essa, fatalmente, slitta verso la semplificazione e lo stereotipo. vorrei porre qui un argine contro questa deriva" (Primo Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*, *Opere*, vol. II, 1116).

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

turned out to be quite taxing: the biographers Ian Thomson and Carole Angier have calculated that Levi visited about 150 schools in less than twenty years: a period during which, at least until 1976, the writer was working as the director of a paint factory in Settimo Torinese. At the end of the 1970s, Levi almost completely stopped accepting school invitations.

The years when Levi started to reduce his scholastic engagements until finally breaking them off completely are those in which he began the long process of drafting *I sommersi e i salvati*. We can find first sign of the book in the preface written to Jacob Presser's *Notte dei girondini* [*Night of the Girondists*], a Dutch novel translated by Levi and published by Adelphi in 1976. In these introductory pages, the writer alluded for the first time to what would be the philosophical core of his final book, the subject of his most innovative and complex reflection: the "gray zone." If the necessity of an ethical exploration of the "space that separates [...] the victims from the persecutors"⁴⁴ constituted the most probable origin of the interior urgency that generated this book, it was the emergence of diverse waves of Holocaust denial and historical revisionism, first in rudimentary versions and then more refined ones, that formed one of the external motivations. Levi found himself on the front line in this new battle: he was the most well-known Italian intellectual to arm his pen against revisionism, both with his work gathered in *I sommersi e i salvati*, and his continual statements to the press, in interviews, and articles, the last of which, *Black Hole of Auschwitz*, appeared in *La Stampa* a couple of months before the writer's death.

Revisionism was also evidence that, at the end of the 1970s, the public memory of the Shoah, even if still not official, existed in Italy, as in the Western world in general.⁴⁵ And, in fact, *I sommersi e i salvati* is no longer a book about individual memory, as much as about how a collective memory is shaped and works. The concomitance between the writing of the book and the end of Levi's activity in schools surely depends on a plurality of reasons, but it must also suggest the idea that a certain mode of interpreting the witness's function, at least for him, had broken down.

NBC's *Holocaust*: The Witness and the Fiction

Towards the end of the 1970s in Italy, not only did the debate about the theses of Faurisson, the least discredited among the so-called negationist "historians," arrive from France. Between May and June of 1979, the RAI showed another imported cultural

⁴⁴ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 40. "lo spazio che separa [...] le vittime dai persecutori:" Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*, *Opere*, vol. II, 1020.

⁴⁵ In Gordon's reconstruction, the 1970s are those in which "awareness of the Holocaust became a given across the Italian cultural sphere, part of the standard cultural baggage of everyone from intellectuals to schoolchildren" (Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 110).

product, this time coming from the United States: *Holocaust*, the television serial produced by NBC, which had been broadcast the previous year in the US, and ever since then had only achieved extraordinary success among the public, simultaneously raising intense debates in America as in Israel, France, and West Germany.

The Italian reception of the serial, which was followed by almost twenty million spectators, did not provoke a long term impact comparable to what happened in Germany, where the television event ended up marking a turning point in the tardy confrontation of German culture with Nazi genocide. The discussions in Italian newspapers and periodicals, when they did not divert the argument towards contemporary political interpretations (from terrorist violence to the situation in the Middle East), were limited to facing up to, but extremely superficially, the problem of the “trivialization of the Holocaust,” which had been brought up by Elie Wiesel in the United States.⁴⁶ The position taken by the author of the *Night* was surely extreme—the genocide was “a Holy Event that resisted profane representation”⁴⁷—but Wiesel was not the sole witness-survivor either in the United States or in France who repudiated the NBC production as incapable of rendering the reality of lived experience. For the majority of the intellectual commentators in Italy, the problem of the appropriation of the genocide by the mass entertainment companies was, as it were, resolved at the outset by the prejudice that united in the same disrepute any televised program and any work labelled “Hollywood.” *Holocaust* was thus seen as an “American melodrama,” good at best in educating the illiterate masses. The serial truly had the characteristics of the *feuilleton*, but it also placed, for the first time simultaneously in diverse national cultures, the question of the shaping of events whose “enormity” had been “such as to make them unbelievable”⁴⁸ into fictional form and not that of eyewitness testimony. These were events for which it seemed almost impossible to make them worthy of belief without the authentication of those who had directly lived them.

As was predictable, Levi was called to pass judgment on the *Holocaust* adaptation and the novel of Gerald Green from which it had been drawn.⁴⁹ The position that Levi

⁴⁶ See Emiliano Perra, “Narratives of Innocence and Victimhood: The Reception of the Miniseries Holocaust in Italy,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 22/3 (2008): 411-440.

⁴⁷ Elie Wiesel, “Trivializing the Holocaust: Semi-Fact and Semi-Fiction,” *The New Yorker*, April 16, 1978.

⁴⁸ “enormità [...] tale da renderli incredibili.” Primo Levi, “Un Olocausto che pesa ancora sulla coscienza del mondo,” *Tutto libri*, April 28, 1979. Now *Opere*, vol. I, 1266.

⁴⁹ Levi, “Un Olocausto che pesa ancora sulla coscienza del mondo.” Primo Levi, “Perché non ritornino gli Olocausti di ieri (le stragi naziste, le folle e la tv),” *La Stampa*, May 20, 1979. Now, *Opere*, vol. I, 1268-71. Primo Levi, “Le immagini di ‘Olocausto,’” *Le immagini di ‘Olocausto’—dalla realtà alla tv*, Special Issue of *Radio corriere Tv*, ed. Pier Giorgio Martinelli (Turin: Eri, 1979). Now, *Opere*, vol. I, 1272-80 (the last article has been translated in *The Black Hole of Auschwitz*, 59-66).

publicly assumed was equilibrated:⁵⁰ although not denying the imprecisions, simplifications or attenuation that united the novel and the televised story, he recognized that they guaranteed an at least perfunctory knowledge of what happened in Europe between 1933 and 1945. “It is in short an ally: we would have preferred a less loquacious one, with greater historical sensibility, better oriented towards the goal: but even as it is, it still remains an ally.”⁵¹ We are speaking of the months, it is good not to forget it, when the most authoritative leftwing French newspaper, *Le Monde*, was publishing articles about Faurisson’s Holocaust denial.

In his review of *Holocaust* which appeared in *La Stampa*, Levi also alluded to the fact that the “film was seen [...] not *although* it was a story, a novelized event, but *because* it is a story [...]. The two associated factors, the form of the novel and the medium of television, have fully shown their gigantic power of penetration.”⁵² The review ended on a note of fear towards this “power of penetration,” which however, on this occasion, was used in an exclusively political way.⁵³ Instead, in the chapter *Stereotipi of I sommersi e i salvati*, a different unease is felt, this time in relation to the capacity of the cultural industry of giving voice and consolidating in less discerning minds a generic and imprecise representation of the past. Probably *Holocaust* also formed part of those “approximate books, films, and myths” at the origin of the “stereotypes” whose obstinacy Levi laments.

⁵⁰ The opinions Levi expressed in private seem to have been less indulgent: “I heartily disliked the series [he told Hety Schmitt-Maas]. It is superficial and untruthful. It lacks any historical explanation [...]. On the other hand the film *has* achieved his goal, both here and in Germany. People on the buses are talking about it, and also in the schools, which is good: it is, however, sad to think that in order to reach the man on the street, history has to be simplified and digested to such an extent” (Thomson, *Primo Levi*, 404).

⁵¹ “È insomma un alleato: ne avremmo preferito uno meno loquace, di maggiore sensibilità storica, meglio commisurato allo scopo: ma, anche così com’è, rimane pur sempre un alleato.” Levi, “Un Olocausto che pesa ancora sulla coscienza del mondo,” 1267.

⁵² “Il filmato è stato visto [...] non *benché* fosse una *story*, una vicenda romanzata, ma *perché* è una *story*. [...] I due fattori associati, la forma romanzesca ed il veicolo televisivo, hanno mostrato appieno il loro gigantesco potere di penetrazione” (Levi, “Perché non ritornino gli Olocausti di ieri (le stragi naziste, le folle e la TV),” 1270).

⁵³ “Non si riesce a reprimere un brivido di allarme di fronte all’ipotesi di quanto potrebbe accadere, se il tema scelto fosse diverso od opposto, in un paese in cui la televisione fosse voce esclusiva dello Stato, non sottoposta a controlli democratici né accessibile alle critiche degli spettatori” (Levi, “Perché non ritornino gli Olocausti di ieri (le stragi naziste, le folle e la TV),” 1270-71) [One cannot hold back a shiver of alarm faced with the hypothesis of what could happen if the chosen had been different or the contrary, in a country in which television would be the exclusive voice of the state, not subject to democratic controls or accessible to the critiques of viewers].

Bearing Witness after Levi's Death

In the analysis conducted by Levi on *Holocaust* and in his reflection on “stereotypes” we can single out a precocious intuition of the features that characterize the memory of the genocide today. We live in a time in which the greatest danger is not so much forgetfulness, as much as simplification, if not even inurement to the memory of those past events. In the Western World, one can take for granted a widespread awareness of the systematic murder of millions of Jews carried out by the Nazi regime during the Second World War. This awareness often corresponds, however, to an ahistorical perception of events, attenuated and full of stereotypes, developed from stories that, like *Holocaust* as analyzed by Levi, function thanks to “characters from a textbook, with simplified mental mechanisms,” with plots fed by “the most harrowing episodes.”⁵⁴ Over the last twenty years, the mass media entertainment industry has been, in truth, the principal agent of the memorialization, in parallel with and often in alliance with a process of gradual institutionalization. It is not coincidental that scholars tend to single out a turning point in 1993, the year not only of the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, but also of the global success of Stephen Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*.

It would have been interesting to know Primo Levi's point of view of the “*Schindler's List* effect,”⁵⁵ but the writer did not have time to learn about this new phase of the global memory of the genocide. Levi died in 1987, a little less than a year after the appearance of his *I sommersi e i salvati*. The shadow of suicide, and the apparent circularity between his first and last book, greatly contributed to crystalize the image of the writer exclusively as the Auschwitz survivor. In fact, at least until December 1986, Levi was working on a new book, which seemed to have nothing to do with the concentrationary universe:⁵⁶ if *Il doppio legame* [The Double Bond] had been finished and published before his death, perhaps the recognition of the greatness of Levi as a writer *tout court*, and not only as a survivor-witness, would have been less late in coming.

Levi's death had a final effect on the history of the memory of the Shoah in Italy. In the 1990s, the publications of new memories became more frequent: memoirs often written by people who had kept silent about their camp experience, at least in public, for more

⁵⁴ Levi, “Un Olocausto che pesa ancora sulla coscienza del mondo,” 1265.

⁵⁵ See Michael André Bernstein, “The Schindler's List effect,” *The American Scholar*, 63, Summer (1997), 429-432.

⁵⁶ In her biography, Carole Angier speaks about this in detail.

than forty years.⁵⁷ Many factors contributed to this sudden taking up the pen—the investigations of oral history; the beginning of the process of the institutionalization of memory, which creates a social need to witness; the very shortening of the life of the survivors; the pressure of children or grandchildren—but some of these “tardy” witnesses declared that they felt themselves called upon by the death of Levi, “he who had spoken for everyone.”⁵⁸ These are the words of the psychoanalyst Luciana Nissim, who had been Levi’s friend and with him had gone through the brief partisan experience, the arrest, prison, and the deportation to Auschwitz; she too, after having refused for decades to speak publicly of the months spent in Auschwitz, began to do so after the death of her friend, almost as though gathering his inheritance.

Perhaps the most touching expression of feelings felt by many survivors upon the news of Levi’s death is the story *Mozzicone* [Pencil stub] by Liana Millu. The writer narrates here how, right before Christmas in 1986, she had sent Levi a gift: her pencil stub, conserved for more than forty years, with which she had written her memories.

I still had the pencil, reduced to a few centimeters, encrusted, gnawed on, the tip badly sharpened on both sides. Until I realized that I was lacking in my duties towards it: it would have to remain and carry on bearing witness also in the future. Primo Levi was several years younger than me. Thus, suddenly, I decided that I would entrust it to him [...] Briefly, I wrote him explaining the history of the pencil and the entire situation [...] This response came back to me: “Dear friend, I received the strange and precious gift, and I have appreciated it in all of its value. I will conserve it. The days are becoming short for me too, but I wish for you to conserve for a long time your serenity and the capacity of affection you have shown by sending me this “stub of Mecklenburg,” so full of memories for you (and for me). With affection, your Primo Levi.” “I will conserve it.” The date was January 7, 1987 [...] Primo Levi’s note had become his last one. As for the pencil I cared so much about, I never heard anything more about it.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ I refer the reader to the *Cronologia* published on the website of the *Atlante della letteratura italiana*: <http://www.einaudi.it/speciali/Atlante-della-letteratura-italiana-Vol.III>

⁵⁸ Anna Maria Guadagni, “La memoria del bene. Luciana Nissim,” *Diario*, February 8, 1997.

⁵⁹ “La matita, invece, la tenni ancora, ridotta a pochi centimetri, scrostata, mordicchiata, la punta maldestramente aguzzata da entrambi i lati. Finché mi resi conto che mancavo ai miei doveri nei suoi confronti: doveva rimanere e portare testimonianza anche nel futuro. Primo Levi aveva alcuni anni meno di me. Così, all’improvviso, decisi che gliel’avrei affidata. [...] Brevemente gli scrissi spiegandogli la storia della matita e tutta la situazione. [...] Mi giunse questa risposta: “Cara amica, ho ricevuto lo strano e prezioso dono e ne ho apprezzato tutto il valore. La conserverò. Anche per me i giorni si stanno facendo corti ma le auguro di conservare a lungo la Sua serenità e la capacità di affetto che ha testimoniato inviandomi quel “mozzicone del Mecklenburgo” così carico di ricordi per Lei (e per me). Con affetto. Suo Primo Levi.” “La conserverò.” La data era quella del sette gennaio 1987. [...] Il biglietto di Primo Levi è diventato l’ultimo. Quanto alla matita che mi stava tanto a cuore, non ne ho saputo più niente.” Liana Millu, “Quel mozzicone di matita del Mecklenburgo,” *Dopo il fumo. “Sono il n. A 5384 di Auschwitz Birkenau”* (Brescia:

The gift of the pencil is a recognition of the function of guardian, but also of midwife of other memories, which Levi had exercised for decades and which, in a certain sense, he has continued to exercise even after his death.

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Morcelliana, 1999), 75-78. Also reprinted in *Tagebuch. Il diario del ritorno dal Lager* (Florence: Giuntina, 2006), 23-26.

Berel Lang, **Primo Levi: The Matter of a Life**

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(printed edition)

Levi's Moral Imagination. On Berel Lang's *Primo Levi. The Matter of a Life*

by Robert S. C. Gordon

The first full-scale biography of Primo Levi appeared in France in 1996: Myriam Anissimov's *Primo Levi: La Tragédie d'un optimiste* (Paris: Lattès) was broadly criticized for a gamut of failings, inaccuracies, misreadings and loose misconceptions that did Levi a profound disservice. One thing it certainly underlined, however, was the set of deep challenges to the biographer that Levi represented and still represents: in a review of the 1998 English translation of Anissimov's book, I commented: "A biographer of Levi has several divergent worlds to convey to us with an impression of expertise - the Holocaust, Italian Jewry, Italian literary culture, Turin and Piedmontese culture and industry, chemistry - before even beginning to explain the man;" and, further, "a tricky problem faces any biographer of Levi, that of absorbing but not parroting the autobiography that makes up so much of his own work. In part, the solution must lie in teasing out the many small semi-fictions and narrative elaborations that necessarily make up the apparently exclusively documentary works."¹ And Marco Belpoliti glossed further, "E anche così non si arriva al centro del problema, l'«enigma Levi»: confrontarsi con la sua sottile psicologia, con una intelligenza tanto discreta da risultare impalpabile."²

Since Anissimov's somewhat abortive attempt, Anglophone biographers have taken centre-stage. Berel Lang's short, but acutely sensitive and engaging *Primo Levi. The Matter of a Life* is the third English-language biography of Levi, following two major and fundamentally important works that appeared together in 2002, in uneasy competition with each other: Carole Angier's *The Double Bond. Primo Levi, A Biography* (London, Viking, 2002) and Ian Thomson's *Primo Levi. A Life* (London: Hutchinson, 2002). This was in itself a remarkable event, which spoke volumes about a deep and mutual affinity between Levi and the Anglophone world, and of the long and rich tradition within the latter of biographical writing, as a positivist research practice, as a sophisticated interpretative tool, and, last but not least, as a widely read, commercially lucrative product.

¹ Robert S. C. Gordon, "The Centaur's Ghastly Tale," *Times Literary Supplement*, October 9, 1998.

² Marco Belpoliti, "Troppo complesso l'enigma di Primo Levi per la sua discussa biografia francese," *La stampa*, January 12, 2000.

Levi's own anglophilia can be traced back to some of his earliest readings. Like many of his generation, weighed down by the rhetoric and bombast of the Fascist education system, he found relief, clarity and even a form of freedom, in American and British literature (rather as he would find in his classroom encounters with chemistry). Melville's *Moby-Dick*, or more specifically Pavese's translation of it, was one of a handful of treasured possessions he took with him on his work travels during the war before 1943, described in the chapter "Fosforo" in *Il sistema periodico*. He had probably read Conrad by that time too, and had been introduced to Aldous Huxley by his eccentric English teacher in the 1930s. Indeed, strains of Levi's writing, several of its most characteristic stylistic and moral facets, find close analogies both in Conrad's narratives of work and struggle, and in Huxley's or Orwell's imagination of dystopian presents and futures, captured in the form of the modern parable. (Lang will pick up on this Orwellian Levi in a crucial moment in his book, as we shall see below). When Levi came to collate his anthology of favourite or most "intimate" books in *La ricerca delle radici* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), with all due acknowledgement for his declared omission of over-obvious entries in the Italian canon, it is nevertheless remarkable to note that English-language authors dominate his polyglot selection: 11 of the 30 texts extracts are from English sources, followed by 6 from Italian (and dialects), and then 4 or fewer from originals in French, German, Yiddish, Latin, Hebrew and Greek. The mix of English texts is telling too: Charles Darwin, William Bragg, Swift, Conrad, Melville, Bertrand Russell, F. Brown, the ASTM manual, Arthur C. Clarke, T. S. Eliot, K. Thorne. Reading in English in the 20th century, this list seems to declare, almost automatically gave Levi the eclectic mix of genres and of forms of both pleasure and knowledge – science, literature, philosophy, technical expertise, science-fiction, poetry – that would fully characterize his own hybrid and inventive voice as he built his own unclassifiable oeuvre. (How to classify Levi as a writer is a central preoccupation for Lang.)

Apart from his wide and eclectic readings in English (quite how wide is still hard to chart in detail: we await with fascination the unpredictable secrets of Levi's library), Levi also held onto a distinctly positive notion of the British or 'Anglo-Saxon' character. It is evident from his work that Levi was far from averse to indulging in the game of regional stereotypes and national characteristics as a lightly ironized window onto the spectrum of humanity he encountered, both during the war, in Auschwitz, or on his later work travels. *La tregua*, in particular, paints broadbrush portraits of 'typical' Germans, Russians, Americans, Greeks, Romans; *La chiave a stella* does the same for his fellow Piedmontese. And later, when writing about his passion for Piedmontese dialects and varieties, it came naturally to Levi to share a commonplace notion that the Piedmontese character has something of the British about it:

"Un mio amico in vena di paradossi, forse ricordandosi la tripartizione del 1984 di Orwell, aveva un tempo proposto di dividere il mondo abitato in tre sole regioni: la

Terronia ... la Plufonia ... e il Piemonte, collegato alle Isole Britanniche mediante un lungo istmo dai contorni incerti... . Il gemellaggio fra piemontesi e inglesi si fondava su dati storici e antropologici... Il comune spirito d'impresa. L'efficienza militare. L'amore per il lavoro ben fatto, per la legge e per l'ordine. Il rifiuto dell'esibizione, dell'astratto, del monumentale, della retorica e dell'apparenza ... Il rispetto dei diritti dell'uomo. La durezza della lotta di classe..."³

Several dispositions of mind and character in Levi - his rationalism, his pragmatism, his common sense, his measured restraint, his discretion, his wit - read rather like a catalogue of British-Piedmontese stereotypes, so that it is perhaps no surprise that many Anglo-Saxon readers of Levi have found him to be their greatest guide to the dark world of the genocide.

Although, as Levi acknowledges in *Racconti e saggi*, Britain and America, George Bernard Shaw's "two nations divided by a common language," are not classifiable as a single 'Anglo-Saxon' entity (indeed Thomson is British, Angier originally from Canada, Lang American), nevertheless Levi's English-language biographers reflect that deep bond between author and his English readers. And although it may be otiose to try to pinpoint the moment of clearest crystallization of Levi's success in English language and literature, and his human affinity with its culture, it would be hard to ignore the claims of the intimate, pellucid and deeply humane encounter between Levi and Philip Roth, described by Roth in a lengthy interview in 1986 and recently confirmed as of touching and surprising importance for both men by Roth's first biographer.⁴

Thomson and Angier each worked away for a decade or so before 2002, digging out paper trails and documents, reading, interviewing friends and relatives, chipping away at silences and (Piedmontese?) reticences, and they produced two vast, authoritative biographies of almost diametrically opposing styles and methods (although each aligned with powerful and competing traditions of modern life-writing in English). Schematically speaking, we might say that Thomson embodies the biographer as chronicler, detective and dogged researcher, the archive 'rat' who follows the document trail, who discovers pots of paper gold and charts in microcosmic detail the events, experiences, and webs of connection in Levi's life. As a point of method and principle, Thomson stands back and keeps a sober distance from the oeuvre, which he lets speak for itself: "From the start, I was determined to construct a life of Primo Levi not found in his books. It seemed to me dishonest, as well as dangerous, to recast Levi's printed words in a biography" (Thomson, p. xi). His book is sequential, descriptive, cumulative and gives us a mass of information on Levi we simply did not know before. Angier on

³ "Bella come una fiore" (*Racconti e saggi*), in P. Levi, *Opere*, (ed. Marco Belpoliti), (Turin: Einaudi, 1997): II, pp. 986-99 [986].

⁴ Philip Roth, "A Man Saved by His Skills," *New York Times Book Review*, October 12, 1986; Claudia Roth Pierpoint, *Roth Unbound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 163-5.

the other hand gives us the biographer as psychoanalyst and subject. Her book is less linear in structure, more elusive, speculative, metaphorical in its elaborations, including intimate narrations of her own experience as biographer, her own encounters and even fantasies. She reaches constantly for matrices of interpretation, for psychological and textual complexity, and for an intimate and intellectual engagement with her material, which could hardly be more alien to Thomson's mindset. If Thomson writes at times like the forensic pathologist, Angier wants to be the psychopathologist of Levi's life and work.⁵

Lang's *Primo Levi. The Matter of a Life* draws on Thomson and Angier (and others in the vast critical field on Levi), but his book has a strikingly different feel again from both. It offers us yet another model for the tasks biography can perform, based more on reflection than primary research. Lang sets to one side the aspiration to completeness, to a comprehensive account of the text and sources, in favour of careful thought: this is the biographer as essayist and reflective interlocutor.

His book is different first of all in sheer size (150 pages to Angier's 900 and Thomson's 600; Anissimov came in at nearly 800), in its format and the constraints of its publishing conditions; and also in the formation, critical temperament and intellectual make-up of its author. Angier and Thomson were published by generalist commercial publishers with a wide appeal to the general reader. Lang's book appears in series published by a prestigious American University Press, Yale, but in a cross-over series, intended for a broad, educated not exclusively academic readership, as the volume's elegant typeface (Janson), its rough-cut pages and nice illustrations suggest. The series is called "Jewish Lives" and the back-matter lists a strikingly eclectic range of good and great Jewish figures from all eras are to be included: Levi sits, somewhat anomalously, alongside Bernard Berenson, Sarah Bernhardt and Moshe Dayan, Solomon, Kafka and Tolstoy, among those published so far, with further volumes promised on Irving Berlin, Benjamin Disraeli, Bob Dylan, Proust, Wittgenstein and many more. In such a varied list, indeed, perhaps every single entry sits uneasily. Here is the broadly celebratory series blurb:

"Jewish Lives is a major series of interpretive biography designed to illuminate the imprint of Jewish figures upon literature, religion, philosophy, politics, cultural and economic life, and the arts and sciences. Subjects are paired with authors to elicit lively, deeply informed books that explore the range and depth of Jewish experience from antiquity through the present" (Lang, [endpages])

The brief is ecumenical and catch-all, perhaps excessively so, immediately posing the

⁵ See Robert S. C. Gordon, "The Battle of the Biographers: Primo Levi, and 'Life-Writing,'" in *Biographies and Autobiographies in Modern Italy*, eds. Peter Hainsworth, Martin McLaughlin (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), 23-36

question of how “Jewish,” how centrally “Jewish,” the lives led by many of these figures were; and the extent to which these biographies will be constrained to approach their subjects from a predominantly Jewish angle (and what indeed that might mean in many cases). As it happens, of course, this is an extremely uncertain, pertinent and acute issue in the life and in our reading of Primo Levi. Levi himself felt the strain on his visits to Israel and the US, where he was all but exclusively categorized as a “Jewish writer.” The dilemma famously described by Isaac Deutscher of the modern secularized but culturally Jewish intellectual, the “non-Jewish Jew,” was one that cut across Levi’s biography at several points of intersection, not least at Auschwitz, and one that this “Jewish Life” poses once more in its very editorial form.⁶

Lang is carefully aware of the problem and duly cautious - he imagines Levi accepting his inclusion in the “Jewish Lives” series, perhaps, but no doubt looking to join other series also, “‘Literary Lives,’ ‘Twentieth-Century Lives,’ ‘Piedmont Lives’” (p. 153). And Lang makes a virtue out of this provisional uncertainty in a core chapter of the book entitled “The Jewish Question,” where builds a delicate picture of a Levi (like many secularized Jews) set squarely against himself, inconsistent in his statements and experiences of his own Judaism. “Levi vs. Levi,” Lang calls it (p. 93), echoing Levi own image of himself as a “centaur,” adopted as a critical key to his work by Belpoliti and others, but with a difference tone and nuance: Lang set Levi’s disavowal of his Jewish roots against his “*emphatically* Jewish” experiences (ibid, Lang’s emphasis). This divided Jewish consciousness is reprised in Levi’s serially strange or strained responses to Yiddish literature, to Israel and its tensions with the Diaspora, to the Judaism he encountered in Auschwitz, and so on. As Nancy Harrowitz has argued, there is much more complexity to this question than a sterile contrast of belief versus atheistic assimilation might suggest.⁷ Lang is especially good at projecting back into context and without hindsight: he sees Levi’s sympathy for Zionism, for example, but notes as no-one else quite has, that even before Levi knew whether or not his home and family were intact in Turin as he travelled home from Auschwitz in 1945, there is nevertheless no sign he himself contemplated emigration to Palestine (unlike the heroes of his novel *Se non ora, quando?*, say). More broadly, “Levi vs. Levi” or “Levi as a witness against himself” (p. 98) would not be a bad summary of Lang’s overall method of biographical reflection, his trick of reading Levi against the grain, through omissions, elisions and negatives, as much as through reasoned declarations.

One further element of the “Jewish Lives” rubric – and indeed the subtle engagements of Lang’s reflections on Levi’s Jewishness – alerts us to a key difference from Angier and Thomson. That is, the Yale series comprises commissioned biographies, selected pairings of biographer to subject. And the pairing of Berel Lang with Primo Levi is rather a

⁶ Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁷ Nancy Harrowitz, “Primo Levi’s Jewish Identity” in *Cambridge Companion to Primo Levi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17-30.

remarkable one. Lang has been one of the most important and sensitive figures to have written on the Holocaust over the last quarter century. Having started out as a philosopher, interested in issues of aesthetics and representation, in particular meta-philosophy or philosophy as a form of writing, he proceeded to test out his thinking against the great historical problem of our time and perhaps all time, the Holocaust. At a moment when serious reflection on the genocide of the Jews within philosophy was the exception rather than the rule (exceptions included Arthur Cohen or Emil Fackenheim), Lang's *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) appeared as a work of signal acuity and importance, already marked by a personally engaged intensity and alert thoughtfulness, combined with a trenchant forcefulness of vision, that comes through in his biography of Levi as much as in his five intervening books and many further essays and edited volumes on the Holocaust.⁸

Lang therefore brings to his account of Levi a lifetime of pondering problems of morality, representation and history, and of addressing the Holocaust as our prime test case for all of these. He finds in Levi one of the most acute interlocutors with whom to ponder these questions further. He wears his biographical and historical research lightly, choosing not to weigh the book down with documentation, but his research is thorough enough nevertheless. (He credits his daughter, historian Ariella Lang as a "partner in the search and research for this book," as well as acknowledging his debts to Angier, Thomson, Belpoliti etc., pp.153-4). His acuity is brought to bear principally on a set of fascinating questions posed by Levi's life and work, and by the particular shape Levi gave to his own life and the history he traversed in his own writing, a shape often only visible, in Lang's view, between the lines. Indeed, Lang's signature move, as we saw in his account of Levi's Jewishness, lies in a feint away from the surface evidence of text, life and history, a slight disruption of the evidence, in order to tease out oblique presences that even Levi himself might not be fully alert to. In this sense, Lang's biography, although lighter in information and in bibliographical reference (and, indeed, simply lighter), is probably more attuned than either Angier or Thomson to the hidden patterns of Levi's voice, to the effort of probing beneath the surface of the oeuvre to see its foundations in value, form, style, ethics.

Lang's first disruption is formal and chronological, sealed in a witty epigraph from Godard: "But surely, M. Godard, you would agree that every film should have a beginning, a middle and an end;" "Yes of course – but not necessarily in that order." So, the preface ends the book, the first chapter is entitled "The End," and the sixth and final chapter "The Beginning." In between are four further chapters, one historical ("The War") and three interpretive, tackling in turn the three key axes of enquiry: Levi's writing career and style, his Jewish identity and his ethics ("Writing," "The Jewish

⁸ On Lang's work, including a full bibliography, see *Ethics, Art, and Representations of the Holocaust. Essays in Honor of Berel Lang*, eds. Simone Gigliotti, Jacob Golom, Caroline Steinberg Gould (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

Question,” “Thinking”).

“The End” tackles the troubling and interfering role played by Levi’s death in the reading and understanding of his work over the last 25 years, the distorting perception that the death in some way undoes the life and the work, the optimism of both intellect and will in the face of catastrophe that Levi ostensibly embraced. (It is perhaps fair to say that this strange obsession with the death as Levi’s final work has somewhat faded as 1987 recedes in the memory.) Despite the fact that most of Levi’s closest family and friends and both of his previous biographers are firmly convinced and have furnished compelling evidence that Levi’s death was indeed a suicide, Lang carefully acknowledges that a certain act of inference is still required to reach such a conclusion. This leaves open the possibility of, if not doubting the suicide verdict– he does not – then at least of exploring the problem of suicide and its accessibility to explanation, of what might amount to its necessary and sufficient causes (and whether such notions have any purchase at all); and of exploring how a life, its history and the history that surrounded it, might or might not be included in these causes. In other words, rather beguilingly, Lang’s uses his clear and well-documented account of Levi’s death – he touches on Levi’s family history, his state of mind, his family and medical circumstances, his suicide stories, his exchanges with Jean Améry, the other suicides that touched his life (Agostino Neri, Cesare Pavese, Lorenzo Perrone, Hanns Engert, Paul Celan, those who deny his suicide etc. - is also an introduction and a dry run for his own method in interpretive biography: take elements of the life and infer from it a set of problems in experience and thinking about experience (Levi’s and ours).

“The War” performs a similar task, starting not with a single event but with the broad canvas of the Second World War, its history in Italy and beyond, Levi’s perception of it and participation in it. In regard of the latter, Lang – like Thomson before him – treats in a few pages of clear and proportioned attention Levi’s days as a partisan, including his involvement in the execution of two fellow partisans, recently forensically and somewhat obsessively exhumed for analysis.⁹ Lang acknowledges the eloquence of Levi’s near silence on these matters (“it turns out to have been much more consequential than he was later willing to acknowledge,” p.28) and he uses this as a lever to open up Levi’s life-long practice of “stretch[ing] and contract[ing] history in his writings” (p.29). But there is no facile accusation of omission or dishonesty here, nor of finding the single secret key to the man, but rather the beginnings of an understanding of how in Levi, his and others’ lives came to be written down and shaped in language (pp.30-32) and of the effort in him to understand fundamental questions of causality and responsibility in the process. Much emphasis is placed here on chance and contingency, as Levi sees it and writes it, on the ironic choices which were hardly choices at all (to declare himself a Jew

⁹ Sergio Luzzatto, *Partigia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2013); Frediano Sessi, *Il lungo viaggio di Primo Levi* (Venice: Marsilio, 2013).

rather than a partisan), on the relatively trivial details on which our insight turns (in *Se questo è un uomo*, the wipe of a hand, or the throwaway remark that the public hanging of “L’ultimo” in the chapter of that name had been the fourteenth he had witnessed), or on strange and eloquent absences (why does *La tregua* not give us the actual scene of Levi’s arrival back home, when return has been the driving force of the entire book?).

In the following three chapters, Lang’s approach gets into its most confident stride, particularly evident in the last, “Thinking.” Chronology and conventional biography fade a little and the task is more centred on the work, its engagements with history and the inferences from and consequences of its form and voice. In a certain sense also, the specificity and otherwise of the Holocaust comes more clearly into view, as Lang drives home through example, his core assumption that in rare figures such as Levi, writing, the “moral imagination” (p. 82), can guide us through the quagmire of history and of *this* history at its worst. The chapter “Writing” takes a bold, original step by trying to discover hidden first principles, to capture the original founding impulse in Levi to write: why did he write at all?, Lang asks. Above all, he argues, Levi starts not with himself nor with style and language, but with *acts* (echoing Lang’s own *Act and Idea*) – “what had happened to him, what he had seen happening, and, still more urgently in a reflective mind, what had *happened*” (pp.48-9). Only from the acts, the acts of genocide, do writing and ideas flow. Levi is unusual and unusually powerful in deflecting focus away from himself towards those acts and events. In this context, Lang returns to the tricky problem of Levi’s reshaping of stories, constructing of events around his testimony, asking “what exactly Levi understands ‘facts’ to be” (p.60), and even more tellingly, how a writer chooses to give a particular form to a story or name to character without consciously choosing between fact and fiction.

These are elusive and rather abstract questions, but Lang manages to transmit them with exceptional force and clarity by coming at them through rather pragmatic questions: what writing and which writers did Levi like and, perhaps even better, dislike (Borges, Beckett); and how can we read into his sometime trenchant judgements a “theory of discourse” (p.70)? Similarly, what forms of writing worked in Levi and, better still again, what forms sat more awkwardly with him (poetry, translation, prose fiction)? Lang concludes that for Levi “writing is a moral act” and so required the constraint and the impurity (the grain of sand, Levi might have said) of a purchase in history, science, matter itself. It must be, in a characteristic Levian (and Popperian) sense, falsifiable, reproducible, subject to stress-testing in the world. For these characteristics, Lang convincingly places Levi in the company of a canon of moralist writers – Montaigne and Thoreau, Pascal and Aesop, Emerson, Camus, Orwell (p.87). Indeed, he nicely inverts the canon by suggesting that each of these was a Levian writer *avant la lettre*, each building their own scaffold of moral enquiry, their own “assembly of human elements – *their* periodic table” (p.88).

The chapter “Writing” sits most closely with the next but one, “Thinking,” since the ethical-philosophical company that Levi’s keeps as a writer in the former is developed in the latter into the most eloquent case yet made for Levi as a proto-philosopher, as someone who, whilst decidedly not prone to abstract philosophizing, nevertheless crossed a border, from history into the understanding of history and experience and so “into territory marked off – vaguely but nonetheless – as philosophy” (p. 114). “Thinking” proceeds to elaborate and to “stress-test” five philosophical topics in Levi, five problems each with a vast philosophical tradition and hinterland to them, which Levi tackles by way of memoir and history, experience and moral imagination: human nature, evil, justice, the unspeakable and God. At its most compelling, the chapter proposes that Levi can negotiate these topics in ways not accessible to a detached and “pure reasoned” philosophy. So, he is shown to be an anti-essentialist, a contextualist on human nature; the Lager does not prove that “man is a wolf to man,” but rather that in differing contexts man will act in a spectrum of different ways, none of which represents the stripped down essence of the human. On evil, Lang shows how Levi can embrace a contradiction, sustaining and assuming at one and the same time that the world is intelligible (Levi the rationalist), but also that an irreducible evil can exist, an irreducible “uselessness” in Nazi violence. On justice, Lang offers a careful and important elucidation of Levi’s category of the grey zone, as embodying another unresolved tension. This middle ground must not simply be reduced to a tricky case of a mitigated good and evil; it is a genuine third ground, “a third modality of ethical judgement ... in addition to good and evil, right and wrong” (p. 129), and for this reason, of profound moral significance. In this resonant conjunction of the professional philosopher in Lang and the proto-philosopher in Levi, both graced with a gift of persistence or what Lang nicely calls “patience” (“patience in the face of facts and the matter they embody,” p. 15), both having dedicated a lifetime to the slow contemplation of the Holocaust, the powerful synergies at work in this book are at their most compelling. So that in the end, one hesitates to call the book a biography at all, but rather an essay in moral imagination that not only Levi, but also Orwell and his fellow moralists (Anglophone or not), would swiftly have recognised, contested and embraced.

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Adolphe Franck, Philosophe juif, spiritualiste et libérale dans la France du XIX siècle. Actes du colloque tenu à l'Institut de France le 31 mai 2010 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 234.

by Chiara Adorisio

This book is a collection of essays contributed to the international conference on Adolphe Franck, which took place at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* on May 31, 2010. Published in the rich series of the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses*, this book is an extraordinarily rich resource of historical information and philosophical reflections on a major but still little known figure among 19th century French scholars.

Being an eclectic and spiritualist philosopher in the wake of Victor Cousin and, at the same time, a politically engaged Jewish scholar, Adolphe Franck is described in the essays gathered in this book as an intellectual whose work and intellectual path traverses several disciplines, a circumstance that is characteristic for the pioneering work that Jewish and non-Jewish scholars did in the first half of the 19th century in France. Having been librarian, together with Hermann Zotenberg and Salomon Munk, at the National Library in Paris, Franck worked at the Catalogue of the Jewish and Samaritan manuscripts contributing to rediscover materials which became very important for establishing the role of Jewish and Islamic culture and philosophy within the history of western philosophy.

Conceived as an introduction to Franck's life and work, the book is divided into four sections entitled: *Adolphe Franck, un israélite français; Adolphe Franck, le philosophe; Adolphe Franck et le religieux en son temps; Adolphe Franck et la politique.*

The second section, which illustrates Franck's effort in studying the history of philosophy, is also the core of the book. Jean-Pierre Rothschild's essay *Le moyen âge dans la philosophie, le dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques, Adolphe Franck et quelques autres* focuses on Franck's work for the edition of the *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques* and analyzes above all the role and the functions of the history of philosophy according to the French academic culture of his epoch. An expression of this culture dominated by positivistic currents was for example the position of Victor Cousin, well known as a spiritualistic and eclectic philosopher, who identified in the history of philosophy three main functions. The first of these functions was to inventory and classify the different historical epochs, the second was to describe the genesis and constitution of human thought as the result of a collective effort, and the third function was to illustrate the tendencies of human spirit in order to understand it in a universal way. On the background of these three principal functions Rothschild describes the interest in history and in the history of philosophy as a need of 19th

century's reason to cover every domain of the human spirit. For this reason, says Rothschild, the famous Ernest Renan wrote a book on Averroes and Averroism, following Cousin's and Le Clerc's suggestions, though he was not interested at all in medieval and scholastic philosophy.

It is in this context, under the influence of Cousin's ideas, that many studies on medieval scholastic and, also, on Jewish and Islamic philosophy, appeared in France. As a disciple of Cousin, Franck did not separate philosophy from its history. Therefore, using his knowledge of various classical and modern languages, and last but not least, his expertise in philosophy, Franck intended to publish the *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques* as a work whose task was that of exploring all the different ages of philosophy. Rothschild's essay has the merit of reconstructing Franck's work besides that of many important scholars, for example that of the German-Jewish emigré Salomon Munk who gave also his contribution to the work for the *Dictionnaire*.

The second section of the book analyzes the relationship between Franck's work and the religious currents of his epoch, while the fourth part takes into examinations Franck's relationship to politics. To this very last section of the book belongs *Perrine Simon-Nahum's essay: Philosophie et science du judaïsme: la place d'Adolphe Franck dans le paysage intellectuel français du XIX siècle*. Simon-Nahum's essay shows how Franck was not only influenced by French academic philosophy but also by the work of German scholars, and in particular by the ideas and ideals of the Jewish movement called *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. He therefore can be considered as one of those Jewish scholars who during the 19th century participated in reshaping a new field of studies the history of Jewish and Islamic philosophy.

The influence of Cousin is evident in his *Dictionnaire*, but it is also testified by the fact that Franck dedicated to him a work entitled *Kabbale ou philosophie des Hébreux*. The analysis of this work leads Simon-Nahum to analyze Franck's work within the framework of the works generated in the context of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. As a Jewish scholar adherent to this very current, Franck contributed to make the historians of philosophy aware of the importance of the Jewish and Islamic contribution to the history of philosophy. These two sources of influence intertwines in Franck's intellectual path, according to Simon-Nahum, which is the path of a thinker who was deeply involved in the reflection on the juridical, religious and philosophical foundations of liberal society in France. This is why Simon-Nahum recognizes in Franck a sort of precursor of Henri Bergson as the author of *Deux sources de la morale et de la religion*.

Similarly interested in the contribution that Franck gave to the social criticism in France are both Paola Ferruta's contribution on the relationship between Franck and the religious and political movement of Saint-Simonianism (a current which, beginning

from the 1825, became also popular as a philosophical school), and Jérôme Grondeux's contribution on Franck's philosophy of natural right and law.

All these essays have the merit of showing the double aspect of Franck's work: his contribution to Jewish scholarship and Jewish life in France, on the one hand, and his contribution to the philosophical and social criticism in France, on the other. This double aspect has been also thematically treated in the rich contribution by George Weill entitled *Un philosophe engagé: Adolphe Franck et les organisations juives de France*, which the editors placed at the very beginning of the book.

Among Jewish scholars Adolphe Franck has not yet been fully recognized as a researcher who contributed in a seminal way not only to rethinking the role of Jewish philosophy within the history of philosophy, but also to opening the path to the scientific study of the Kabbalah, as Moshe Idel already suggested in his *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, published in English in 1988. Many essays of this book rightly recall Franck's study of the Kabbalah as an important part of his scholarship.

For having rediscovered an important figure of both French and Jewish scholarship during the 19th century and having underscored its importance from a historical and philosophical point of view, this book is a precious as well as rare tool for studying anew Franck's work in its historical, political and philosophical context.

Franck succeeded in gathering for this work important contributions from different scholars. One of these scholars was his colleague at the National Library in Paris, the German-Jewish orientalist Salomon Munk, translator of Maimonides *Guide of the Perplexed* and author of several studies on the history of Jewish medieval philosophy, that he considered to be a sort of synthesis between Jewish tradition and philosophical rationalism, a synthesis which was possible during the Middle ages, in particular thanks to Maimonides, but disappeared as a possibility in the modern ages after Spinoza.

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Luca Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati e la "Questione Ebraica" nella Francia Occupata dall'Esercito Italiano* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani Editore, 2013), pp. 188

by *Davide Rodogno*

This compact, dense and well-written book is worth reading. First, a young and talented historian, Luca Fenoglio, who is completing in PhD in Edinburgh, wrote it while his thesis manuscript is not yet achieved. He should be praised for such an accomplishment. Readers interested in the history of Italian anti-Semitism, of Italian military occupations during the Second World War and Fascist policies towards the Jews, will appreciate the study because of its clarity and the originality and soundness of the argument. Second, the book offers a balanced account and brings to the fore many documents researched in several archives. Third, Fenoglio puts forward his own interpretation of Fascist policies towards the Jews, connecting the figure, role, thought and actions of Angelo Donati to the events. Fenoglio places Donati in the midst of the events carefully. He wisely contextualizes the work of Donati to save the Jews in Southern France, avoiding a hagiographical account of the deeds of a hero. Fenoglio also offers his interpretation of where, how, and why previous generations of historians – including the author of this review – overlooked, misread or misinterpreted sources they consulted. History books should not be written to last forever; they do not contain incontrovertible truths; new research is supposed to complete, strengthen or revise statements and arguments put forward by previous cohorts of scholars. This is the purpose of Fenoglio's book.

Fabio Levi's preface explains Luca Fenoglio's purpose in detail. A short introduction sets the tone of the book, which opens with the longest chapter dealing with the "historiographical question" (as Fenoglio puts it). Here the historian reviews, categorizes and distinguishes the work of various generations of historians who have dealt with this question before him. Fenoglio is clear and goes straight to the point. His work helps the non-specialist to situate the historiography and sheds light on his intentions. The research questions underpinning the rest of the volume are listed at page 45-46. Here I will summarize some of them: Which were the consequences of the collaboration between the Jewish banker Angelo Donati and the Italian consul Calisse to hamper the decision of French authorities to expel foreign Jews from the *Alpes Maritimes*, in December 1942? How did Donati and foreign and local Jews interpret the Italian authorities' decision opposing the abovementioned decision to expel the Jews? What were the circumstances that led Donati to collaborate with Italian authorities and why did the latter pursued such collaboration? How did Donati manage to mobilize diplomatic representatives of four countries to transfer thousands of Jews in North Africa? Why historians have overlooked Donati's role?

Chapter 2, 3, and 4 are devoted to a political biography of Donati, his professional and social ascendancy in Paris; the shocking experience of the 1942 *Vél d'Hiv* rounding up, and Donati's activities on behalf of the Jews living in the Italian zones of occupation in Southern France. Chapter 5 and 6 offer a detailed account of Donati relations with Italian authorities and of what exactly he did to save the Jews. Chapter 7 to 10 cover the period going from the fall of Mussolini of July 1943 to the Armistice of 8 September 1943 and are followed by Fenoglio's conclusion and epilogue.

There is no doubt whatever that the activities of Donati contributed to postponing the deportation of thousands of foreign Jews who had sought refuge in Southern France. Fenoglio's narrative is persuasive as to Donati's rescue attempts during the summer of 1943, though this is not the most original part of his monograph.

This reviewer entirely agrees with Fenoglio's statement (page 162) that Angelo Donati's action in *Côte d'Azur* from 11 November 1942 to 8 September 1943 (i.e. the ten months of the military occupation of this area by Fascist Italy) did not determine Italian policies towards the Jews; and, that Italian authorities' decision not to collaborate with the deportation of Jews of the areas under occupation by Italian IV Army opened up the space inside which Donati could operate on their behalf. I also think the interpretation of Donati as *gevir* (i.e. the rich Jewish *notable* that in *ancien régime* Europe defended and protected his coreligionists) is appropriate and fruitful. I regret Fenoglio did not make the most of this analogy, which might have helped the reader situating Donati's involvement. Had the *gevir* analogy been put forward earlier in the monograph readers might have grasped the author's point of view better Donati. The *gevir* analogy is particularly appropriate to explain that Donati was more than a mere go-between or intermediary between Jews and Italian authorities. This reviewer also concurs with Fenoglio (p. 165) that the policies of occupation were far beyond Donati's influence as well as beyond local Jewish organizations; these policies followed multiple – heterogeneous – logics that were not systematically related to the “Jewish Question”. I also share Fenoglio's view that the action of the “Jewish banker”, as he often refers to Donati, had an impact on the modalities of the internments in various *résidences forcées*, showing that Donati's action were certainly not irrelevant.

Finally, at page 166, Fenoglio claims that the words of Donati on the absence of anti-Semitism and the humanity of Italian officers contradict the argument of my research, which claims the opposite. Here, I would like to say that I maintain my point of view. Yes, I do happily and comfortably sit with historians like Michele Sarfatti and others; this is the category of scholars that, according to Fenoglio, I belong to. Even if I disagree with Fenoglio I care about stating that the point Fenoglio makes is valuable, sound and put forward meticulously. His argument is developed from Donati's perspective; and obviously – and for good reasons – Donati saw a substantial difference between Italian and German authorities or between the former and French local authorities. The

QUESTION 7. - FOCUS

purpose of my study was to examine the politics and policies of Italian authorities in all European territories occupied by Fascist Italy. Therefore the starting point of our research and our perspectives are different, though not necessarily incompatible. If in my research the activities of Donati were overlooked or got lost in translation, it was because my focus was on the interlocutors of the *gevir* rather than on the *gevir*.

The exercise of zooming-in and zooming-out is an art that few historians master, one among them is Saul Friedländer. I wish Fenoglio to be able to zoom out and move beyond the individual – certainly meaningful and significant – case of Angelo Donati to investigate the complex, contradictory and ambiguous history of Italian politics towards foreign Jews in the annexed and militarily occupied territories during the Second World War.

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After the Holocaust. Challenging the Myth of Silence, ed. by David Cesarani, Eric J. Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge 2012), pp. 228

by *Regula Ludi*

Not too long ago it was the conventional wisdom among historians that there had been a period of silence regarding the Holocaust in the immediate post-war period. According to this widely held belief survivors, too absorbed by rebuilding their lives and starting new families, preferred to remain silent, while the bigger public turned a deaf ear on those who would have been willing to recount their horrific experiences. In recent years, however, new research has questioned that “orthodoxy” (David Cesarani) by uncovering a stunning variety of responses to the Holocaust in the 1940s and 1950s. This essay collection brings together some of these new findings. Concentrating on such different activities as collecting survivor testimony, early Hollywood productions, the preservation of records, historical research, and theatre performances in DP camps, the authors draw a fascinating picture of a rich and vivid post-war culture of remembrance.

In his survey of early responses to the Jewish catastrophe, David Cesarani shows that the first efforts to document Nazi atrocities and secure records often originated in survivors’ striving for restitution and retribution. Many of these initiatives started before liberation. At the end of the war, they quickly expanded, driven by what survivors understood as the imperative to document, and soon grew into hotbeds of research and memorialisation. The French *Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* provides a striking example. In her chapter, Laura Jokusch points to its key position in the struggle of Jews in France and their ambition to find their place in the republican cult of memory. The centre quickly developed a comprehensive programme which included a series of publications on Vichy anti-Semitism, carried out under the constraints of post-war shortages, plans for a memorial and efforts to assimilate the Jewish experience to the dominant cult of memory. Yet the French example also testifies to the constraints of republican laicism which required that Holocaust victims be transformed into martyrs in the struggle for universal values in order to integrate their experience into the national master narrative.

Responses to the Holocaust in the Yiddish press, in contrast, were initially characterized by a much wider variety of literary forms. The chapters by Mark L. Smith and David G. Roskies place much emphasis on survivors’ creativity in finding new forms to express their experiences. This resulted in the invention of literary genres, for instance documentary fiction as “a species of new journalism” (David G. Roskies, 93). The huge literary productivity, including the work of historians, autobiographies, fiction, religious writing and poetry, testified to an intensive engagement with the past. For linguistic reasons, however, because only few of the Yiddish or Hebrew titles were made accessible to non-Jewish audiences through translations, most of these publications have long escaped scholarly attention. A similar case can be made for many of the theatre

productions in DP camps that Margarete Myers Feinstein covers in her chapter. Theatre performances often portrayed life and suffering during the Holocaust in a blunt and direct manner. In acting out traumatic experiences, re-enactment of the past “had a therapeutic value for the survivors’ recovery, aiding the integration of Holocaust experiences into the survivors’ life stories,” Feinstein emphasises (47). Centring on heroic action, resistance and self-sacrifice, many of the plays also helped to reinterpret the Holocaust from an experience of victimization into a narrative of Zionist self-assertion.

Among the most intriguing contributions to this volume are the two chapters dealing with the work of David Boder, an originally Latvian psychologist who taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology. In the summer of 1946, Boder travelled across Europe to interview over 100 DPs. Being just a tiny portion of the survivor testimony collected by various institutions and individuals in the late 1940s, Boder’s interviews were quite unique. For example, they were among the first survivor testimony to be audio recorded. In focusing on the reception of Boder’s interviews in the United States, Alan Rosen reconstructs the circumstances of the recordings and the work Boder invested into publicizing his findings. In her fascinating analysis of individual interviews, Rachel Deblinger documents memory in the making, “in a transitional period, between the events of the Holocaust and the moment when Holocaust memory became cemented into a well-known narrative.” (120) As a consequence, survivors’ statements still were relatively free from many of the taboos and constraints ruling later testimony and gave evidence of emotional responses. Interviewees did not shy away from voicing their anger, frustration and thirst for revenge; and there were also sporadic indications of acts of violence inflicted by survivors upon their tormentors.

With chapters documenting the significance of Holocaust memory for sociological research, the impact of the Jewish catastrophe on theological reflection, representations of Nazi criminals in Hollywood films and American Jewish name changing, the volume includes a wide range of additional evidence questioning the myth of silence. As Beth B. Cohen argues in her contribution on DPs admitted to the United States, many survivors were eager to talk about their past and they did so among fellow survivors but, as they later recalled, did not find a receptive audience with American relatives and social workers. Such findings eventually raise questions about the actual significance of silence. What does “silence” exactly mean and what does the “myth of silence” refer to? Is it not talking about the horrific events, not finding the right words to express the “unspeakable?” Does it refer to the absence of a master narrative acceptable to the bigger public? Co-editor Eric J. Sundquist addresses some of these questions in his concluding reflections and makes an important point by stressing the dilemma of making sense of highly disturbing narratives with no interpretive framework at hand yet. “[I]t was not that the Holocaust had gone unmentioned or that the facts were unavailable,” he remarks, “but instead that their import remained elusive.” (210)

Yet this does not answer the question why “the myth of silence” emerged in the first place. An explanation is offered by Hasia R. Diner, who recounts how she felt

compelled to ask about the origins and the tenacity of obviously false recollections when being repeatedly confronted with disbelief on the part of American Jewish audiences despite the abundance of counter-evidence she produced. At some point the myth of silence had become so deeply rooted in American Jewish popular imagination, she observes, that it worked as the organizing principle of people's individual memories. Her reflections thus evolve into an intriguing case study about memory in collective contexts, while she finds the main source of the myth in the rebellion of the 1960s protest movement. Jewish students' allegation that their parents' generation had ignored the Holocaust or downplayed its significance underscored their criticism of their community establishment whom they charged with conciliatory and assimilationist attitudes in the early post-war period. Yet, with the members of the protest generation entering leadership positions in large numbers too, this claim solidified and became part of mainstream historiography and accordingly tightened its grip on Jewish communal culture.

With its rich new research, the volume offers a fresh approach to the post-war period and Jewish responses to the Holocaust. Yet, if there is one shortcoming to point out, the essay collection can be blamed for a certain U.S. centrism, which leaves the question unanswered whether the myth of silence was not in fact a specifically American way of framing Holocaust memory and as such part of a discourse that spilled over to Europe in the wake of second wave Holocaust restitution of the 1990s.

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Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 276

by *Jörg Baberowski*

Until it was conquered and destroyed by German troops in 1941, Minsk was a Jewish city. Minsk was, moreover, the only Jewish city to become capital of a Soviet Socialist Republic. Under the Tsarist regime, Jews had been a discriminated and victimized minority. They had to live within the confines of the Pale of Settlement and were largely prevented from studying in Russia's state-run universities. Whether religious or secular, traditional or assimilated in their outlook, Jews were categorically banned from state and civil service in the Russian empire. All this changed with the rise to power of the Bolsheviks. Bans were lifted and discrimination vanished. Minsk, formerly a town inhabited by Jews, turned into a Jewish city. Elissa Bemporad's study of Jewish Minsk traces this development in remarkable depth and asks: How did the Jews become a Soviet people?

Despite the fact that only a few number of Minsk's Jews were true sympathizers of the Bolsheviks, the city's Jewish population closely tied their fate to the Communist revolution. Threatened by antisemitism and pogroms all around, the Jews had few choices but to opt for the Bolshevik cause: a victory of their Polish, Ukrainian, and "White" enemies would have equaled the continuation of pogrom violence and the prolongation of ethnic discrimination. Hence, the Jewish revolutionaries sided with the Bolsheviks. They made Lenin's revolution into their own revolution. The actual experience of Minsk's Jews with Bolshevik power, however, was quite ambivalent. Lenin's comrades held neither religion nor trade in very high esteem. Thus, Jewish tradespeople were persecuted and disenfranchised. Synagogues, schools, and other religious institutions were forced to close their gates. While almost half of Minsk's Jews worked as petty traders and craftsmen, the Bolshevik regime came to view Jewish entrepreneurship an adversary activity of "enemies" of their non-capitalist state. As a consequence, thousands of Jews left the Soviet Union for good or tried to begin a different life with a different identity in a different Soviet city. Statistics provide the evidence: By 1928, Jews made up only 41 per cent of the overall population of Minsk. Under these circumstances, Jewish political and social activism significantly declined. The organizations of the Bund and various Zionist groups had been merged with the Communist Party as early as 1921.

According to Bemporad, Jews nevertheless gained more than they lost under the Bolshevik regime. In 1927, more than a third of Minsk University's student body was of Jewish origin. Soviet state agencies hired rising numbers of Jews to work as administrators and functionaries. Controlled by former Bundists until the early 1930s (who also ran the city's leading newspapers), Minsk's Communist Party organizations

became the homeland of politically active Jews. For the first time in Russian history, the Jews were not only equal but privileged citizens of the state. Among others, this cultural change manifested itself in the symbolic landscape of Minsk: In the city center a statue was erected to honor Hirsh Lekert, the unfortunate assassin of Vilno's Governor, Victor von Wahl, in 1902. The memorial to the Jewish hero was placed on the very same pedestal that had previously carried a statue of Alexander II.

The Bolshevik revolution was also a revolution in political communication. Thus, one of the main objectives of the Bolsheviks was to adapt public administration and school education to the local languages. All over the Soviet Union, the revolution was to speak in the native language of the local people. In 1919, Yiddish became the official language in Belorussia: it was to be used in courts, in schools and in the Party. While Belorussian was not viewed as an equal alternative, the decision for Yiddish had numerous foes. Both, peasants and non-Jewish intellectuals despised this decision because only few people in their environment spoke or wrote Yiddish. Even within the Communist Party, Yiddish was gradually replaced by Russian, the language of Soviet social climbers and careerists.

In her book, Bemporad devotes two chapters to the Bolshevik Cultural Revolution. She meticulously describes how Jewish life in Minsk was changed by this chain of events in the late 1920s. More synagogues were closed, shochets were persecuted, and Jewish communists were put on show trials for "inappropriate demeanor." In many ways comparable to the behavior of Soviet Muslim Communists, Jewish party members tried to walk the tight rope when "speaking Bolshevik" on the one hand while on the other hand retaining their Jewish culture. They continued to eat kosher, had their sons circumcised, and married according to tradition. When a campaign was organized in Minsk for the emancipation of women from male patriarchic oppression, some women acted as defenders of tradition and culture. The half-hearted campaign could not change rigid gender and family relations within the Jewish community. Here, Bemporad observes an intriguing Soviet paradox when she writes that "female empowerment eventually met and collided with male empowerment, as Jewish men who found Bolshevism exhilarating also viewed Jewish women as dangerous competitors for power" (p 154).

At first glance, the 1937-38 state terror campaigns in Minsk resembled the pattern that the Moscow party leadership and secret police deployed in other parts of the Soviet Union. Former Bundists and Zionists were accused of spying on behalf of foreign powers, swiftly arrested and briskly executed. Belorussia is likely to be the Soviet republic where more Communists were executed than anywhere else in the Soviet Union. In the borderland republic, Jews and Poles could easily be stigmatized and killed as "agents" of the Lithuanian and Polish state, respectively.

Bemporad spares only a few pages to describe the events of the Great Terror. The emphasis of her argument lays somewhere else: According to her, Jews remained loyal

QUEST N. 7 - REVIEWS

towards the Soviet cause despite state terror and mass executions. Moreover, in the course of the 1930s Jews had made the Soviet Union their homeland. Backed by the official propaganda, it was possible to fight antisemitism and to battle anti-Fascism. The Soviet way of life proved to be a true alternative. No one did feel any contradiction in being, at the same time, Jewish and Communist because the Soviet Union was the country that protected Jews from antisemitism. Supposedly, this fact outweighed the amount of oppression that the Soviet Jews experienced throughout the 1930s. 1937, Bemporad asserts, was not 1947.

The public display of loyalty by Jews towards the Soviet state did not escape the Polish and Belorussian inhabitants of Minsk. From their point of view, by the late 1930s Jews had turned into ardent supporters of a bloodthirsty dictatorship. Bemporad describes this tragic truth but shies away from thorough analysis. In her study, “real people” are mentioned rarely and named or described only now and then. When she cites examples of commitment and loyalty towards the Soviet state, she solely relies on materials from the Soviet official press. Above all, Bemporad does not provide a convincing interpretation of the interplay between Jewish loyalty and antisemitism within the Soviet Union. The annihilation of the Jews in 1941 and 1942, however, was not only a consequence of Nazi obsessions with radical extermination but also a product of Bolshevik minority policies. Regrettably, Bemporad does not treat this crucial nexus with due attention.

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