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Jews In Europe after the Shoah.
Studies and Research Perspectives
edited by Laura Brazzo and Guri Schwarz

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Introduction

by *Laura Brazzo and Guri Schwarz*

This monographic section (*Focus*) of the first issue of *Quest* is dedicated to the study of post-Holocaust European Jewry, a theme that only in very recent years has begun to be the object of systematic scholarly research. The turning point was of course the end of the cold war. In the early Nineties the palpable sense that new challenges were taking shape led Jewish intellectuals to tackle, on the one hand, delicate issues regarding the future of the Jews and, on the other, opened new possibilities for historical research. In 1996, British scholar Bernard Wasserstein boldly engaged in a narration of European Jewish history after 1945, offering the first global overview of Jewish life in Eastern and Western Europe. His analysis took off from the catastrophic consequences of the Holocaust, moving on to post-war reconstruction, the persistence of old anti-Semitic sentiments and the development of newer anti-Jewish ideologies, the issues raised by the birth of the Jewish State. However, what appears to be more striking is that his study was based on the assumption that European Jewry was a rapidly decaying body; once again assimilation was seen as a tremendous threat, capable of causing the final disappearance of European Jewry which Wasserstein depicted as a «vanishing diaspora»[1]. A few years earlier David Vital had been pondering on «the future of the Jews» and his outlook was also quite pessimistic[2]. In his view a key problem was represented by the uneasy relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, viewed as the symptom of the irresolvable fragmentation of the Jewish world.

In many ways the preoccupation of Wasserstein and Vital expressed a very common and often re-emerging trait in Jewish self-representation: Jews thinking of themselves as «an ever-dying people». As David Rawidowicz has shown, such a mode of self-portrayal has been instrumental to self-preservation, as fear represented a resource that could help guarantee survival[3]. It is surprising to register how such dramatic and negative views of European Jewry have been rapidly substituted by a new self-consciousness and a more optimistic outlook. As Israeli historian Dan Michman has lucidly noted, since the beginning of the 21st century meaningful changes took place in European-Jewish

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[1] B. Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: the Jews in Europe since 1945*, (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard U.P., 1996).

[2] D. Vital, *The Future of the Jews*, (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard U.P.,1990).

[3] S. Rawidowicz, "Israel: the Ever-Dying People", *Judaism*, 16 (1967), 423-33.

self-perception, influencing also the way in which 20th century history can be read[4]. Seen today, after the unexpected intense entrance of 'new' Jews in the European community, the desperate lamentations heard in the 1990s about the unstoppable demographic decline of European Jewry seem exaggerated and misleading. A decisive turning point was represented by the shift in the migratory flux of Russian Jews: after heading primarily to the US and to Israel in the 1980s and early 1990s, these groups started moving in considerable numbers to Western Europe, and to Germany in particular[5]. Demography and new immigration have thus certainly played a role in this new consideration, but that is only a part of the story. If we look at European Jewry today we see a varied and composite world, marked by a consistent fragmentation, and yet in some ways more lively than it has been for the previous sixty years. Following the symbolic events of 1989, new Jewish identities have started to emerge, especially but not only in Eastern Europe[6].

  The last twenty years have seen a paradigm shift in national memories, placing an unparalleled emphasis on the Holocaust and on the Jewish plight throughout the continent. Single national narratives started changing and, overall, it seems that Europe has acknowledged the Jewish tragedy as a key event in the fashioning of its history: the date of the 27th of January, which commemorates the opening of the gates of Auschwitz by the Soviet army, is one of the very few – if not possibly the only – common commemorative ritual shared by the countries of the European Union. Jews are not alone anymore in sustaining the burden of memory[7]. Parallel to the rise of new commemorative paradigms, a growing interest in Jewish folklore and tradition has also developed in non-Jewish European culture, with varying results that range from an archeological recovery of lost traditions to sheer invention and construction of Jewish festivals for the sake of the tourism industry[8]. All in all, it can be

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[4] See D. Michman, "A 'Third Partner' of World Jewry?", in K. Kwiet and J. Matthäus (Eds.), *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*, (Westport: Praeger, 2004),123-137.

[5] On Russian-Jewish emigration see O. Gloeckner, E. Garbolevsky and S. von Mering (eds.), *Russian-Jewish Emigrants after the Cold War: Perspectives from Germany, Israel, Canada, and the United States*, (Waltham (Mass.): Brandeis U. P., 2006); L. Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration, and Conflict*, (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2007). On the settlement of Russian-Jewish immigrants in Germany after the Cold War and their impact on German-Jewish life see M. Tress, "Soviet Jews in the Federal Republic", Jewish Journal of Sociology, n. 1 (1995), 39-54; see also Ch. Kahn, *The Resurgence of Jewish Life in Germany*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004).

[6] Z. Gitelman, B. Kosmin, A. Kovács, *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

[7] See T. Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945*, (London: William Henemann, 2005), in particular the epilogue, 803-833. For a different point of view see R. Robin, *La mémoire saturée*, (Paris: Stock, 2003).

[8] R. E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish. Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, (Berkeley and L.A.:University of California Press, 2002).

doubted whether European Jewry can become the «third pillar» - after Israel and the USA - of an authentic and renewed Jewish culture. More than taking the form of one single pillar, European Jews still appear as separated and distant worlds within a feebly united Europe[9]. Nonetheless it seems that we can look at Jewish communities and Jewish life in the European context possibly with less anxiety and with a different awareness of the opportunities and challenges that the future poses. We believe this different outlook also implies a chance and a need to reconsider post WWII European Jewish history.

Until World War II, Europe was undeniably the main center of Jewish life. Afterwards it became a peripheral site, both from a demographic and from cultural standpoint, while only in the latest period the role and position - between Israel and America - of the still small European-Jewish group is being reconsidered[10]. In this respect the impact of Nazi policies was tragically immense: in the immediate post-war years the Jews in Europe were merely survivors, a scarce remnant of a once flourishing and multicolored social reality[11]. In the first years following 1945 the key issue was the colossal difficulty – if not the impossibility – of thinking and performing a re-establishment of Jewish life in a continent that had witnessed appalling destruction. Never before had the Zionist ideal seemed more crucial for the future of the Jews, and never had it been so attractive for Western European Jews. It seemed as though the dreams of a positive integration in European societies had been shattered and the only possible response was in the creation of a Jewish Nation. Indeed one of the principal historical issues concerning the immediate post-1945 situation was the development of an unprecedented sympathy for the Zionist cause among European Jewry and – in parallel – the troublesome migration of many survivors to the 'promised land'. This story, the events that converge into what is generally known as the *Alyah Bet* are relatively well known; this is probably the single aspect of post-war European Jewish history that has been studied the most, the reason being quite clear. The *epos* of the illegal immigration to Palestine, violating the British naval blockade, was to constitute a part of the grand narrative of courage, pride and self-determination that would support

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[9] D. Pinto, "The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish Identity", in J*ewish Studies at the Central European University. Public Lectures 1996-1999*, ed. András Kovács, (Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 177-99.

[10] See for example S. Ilan Troen (Ed.), *Jewish Centers and Peripheries. Europe between America and Israel Fifty Years after WWII*, (New Brunswick (N.J.): Transaction Publishers, 1999).

[11] For a documented overview of geographic and demographic changes, and on the redistribution of world Jewry after 1945, see U. O. Schmelz, *The demographic impact of the Holocaust*; see also S. Della Pergola, *Changing Cores and Peripheries: Fifty Years in Socio-Demographic Perspective*. Both articles are published in R. Wistrich (Ed.), *Terms of Survival. The Jewish World after 1945*, (London: Routledge, 1995), see respectively, 42-54 and 11-41.

the building of the Israeli national rhetoric[12].

From a Zionist point of view those that did not seek refuge in the Jewish State were but a residue of a once vital branch of world Jewry. A similar outlook was shared by American Jews, who thought of themselves as the true heirs of the once glorious European Jewish legacy. Those who remained in Old Europe, those who did not flee to Israel or to other destinations, those who came back to Europe in the post-war, after having found temporary refuge in the Americas or in Palestine during the war years, had to face the challenges of reintegration, which were of course quite different in the varying national contexts. This is a story that in many respects still needs to be told. We have had some meaningful historical insight on the complex issues of reparations and property restitutions in the aftermath of the war[13], a side effect of the continent-wide movement – involving most European governments – that developed in the 1990s as a consequence of American law-suits[14]. Nonetheless, issues concerning reintegration, both from cultural and socio-economic perspective, still have to be properly analyzed. Some research has been done on single national cases but we still lack sufficient elements to draw a broader, European picture[15]. For example the support of American Jewry, principally through the American Joint Distribution Committee, undoubtedly represented a vital resource that greatly influenced the reconstruction trajectories, but we still have to systematically study such actions and their long term consequences[16].

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[12] See Y. Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Bricha*, Magnes Press, 1970; ID., *Out of the Ashes*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989); T. Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich. Die jüdischen Flüchtlinge 1945-1948*, (Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 1987); ID., *Flucht nach Eretz Israel. Die Bricha und der jüdische Exodus durch Österreich nach 1945*, (Innsbruck-Wien: Studienverlag, 1998); T. Albrich - R. W. Zweig, *Escape throuh Austria. Jewish Refugees and the Austrian Route to Palestine*, (London-Portland (OR): Frank Cass., 2002); J. Grodzinsky, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust. The Struggle Between Jews and Zionists in the Aftermath of World War II.* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 2004); A.J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); I. Zerthal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

[13] For a wide European picture of reparation and restitution policies see C. Goschelr, P. Ther (Eds.), *Raub und Restituzion. Arisierung und Rückerstattung jüdische Eigentums in Europa*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2003).

[14] For a first attempt at putting those events in historical context see M. Marrus, *Some measure of justice: the Holocaust era restitution campaign of the 1990s*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

[15] For a positive contribution in this direction see D. Bankier (Ed.), *The Jews are Coming Back. The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin after WWII*, (Jerusalem: Bergham Books-Yad Vashem, 2005).

[16] Some interesting hypotheses, whose value deserve to be verified by extending research to other countries, have been made by M. Mandel, "Philanthropy or Cultural Imperialism? The Impact of American Jewish Aid in Post-Holocaust France", *Jewish Social Studies* n. 1 (2002), 53-94.

Reintegration was not merely confined to the recovery lost property and of civil rights that had been denied on a racial basis. It was also, and primarily, a cultural and psychological process. In re-entering society, Jewish individuals and Jewish institutions had to rethink their place and their role within each single national context. Every state in continental Europe was forced to define its position in relationship to the actions of the local fascist or collaborationist forces, not only on a judicial or diplomatic level, but also in moral and cultural terms. The strategies adopted by the governing groups in each country in facing the responsibilities of the past and in protecting national interests could have grave and long-lasting consequences. They would contribute substantially to the remodeling of national identities and influence the cultures and mentalities that shaped the political systems developing in post-Fascist Europe[17]. How did the Jews and their peculiar story fit into those pictures? The development, in Western Europe, of national narratives centered on an idea of collective suffering made it possible to include the specific Jewish tragedy, while at the same time denying or minimizing its specificity[18]. Certainly a key role was played by the efforts of all European nation-states to discharge themselves of the guilt connected to racial persecutions, pouring the blame on Germany alone. In this case, the Italian dynamics appear particularly relevant: in fact they show how the political and cultural system could rebuke its responsibilities regarding racial persecutions, adopted in full autonomy since 1938, and in so doing, how it could build a key part of their renewed anti-fascist national self-image. It is interesting to register how Italian Jews and Italian Jewish institutions actively participated to such a process, giving strong support to the construction of the 'myth of the good Italian': a cultural construction that allowed the Jews of the peninsula to justify both their attachment to the home country and their wish to rapidly reintegrate in post-fascist society[19]. This is one of the reasons why, as Arturo Marzano shows in his article, most Italian Jews did not contemplate emigration to Palestine and later Israel in the same

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[17] T. Judt, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe", in I. Deák, J. T. Gross, T. Judt (Eds.), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 293-324.

[18] See the convincing account made by P. Lagrou, *Victims of Genocide and National Memory: Belgium, France and the Netherlands 1945-1965*, *Past and Present,* n. 154 (1997), 181-222; ID., "The Nationalization of Victimhood: Selective Violence and National Grief in Western Europe 1940-1960", in R. Bessel and D. Schumann (Eds.), *Life After Death. Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s*, (Cambridge: German Historical Institute and Cambridge U. P., 2003), 243-258. In the same volume see also I. De Haan, "Paths of Normalization after the Persecution of the Jews. The Netherlands, France and West Germany in the 1950s", 65-92.

[19] See D. Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano*, (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1994); G. Schwarz, "On Myth Making and Nation Building: the Genesis of the 'Myth of the Good Italian' 1943-1947", *Yad Vashem Studies*, n. 1 (2008), 111-143.

immediate post-war years in which about 30.000 mainly Eastern European Jews were crossing the peninsula headed to the Jewish homeland[20]. While the Italian case is certainly extreme, similar dynamics took place in other Western countries. On the other hand a disturbing uneasiness regarding the possibility to rationalize the desire to reintegrate would have permanently scarred German Jews and those Eastern European Jews who settled in post-war Germany. Holocaust memory was of course a very heavy burden that weighed on German society and culture[21]. Not surprisingly the German case, and the history of the Jews in post-war West-Germany has been a true historiographical laboratory, setting up in some respects a model for research on post-war Jewish societies[22]. Since the ground-breaking contribution made to the subject by Michael Brenner, studies have developed at a remarkably high pace, stressing not only the practical difficulties faced in re-entering society, but also the guilt feelings and the troubled conscience that affected German-Jewish identity, as well as the role of Jews and Jewish institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany. Anthony Kauders' article confronts the delicate question of Jewish life in the Federal Republic of Germany, placing at the center of his analysis the sensation of living «in the wrong country», in that same German soil that harbored the rise of national-socialism.

European Jewish history in the post-war era is not only the history of those survivors who, for various reasons chose to remain in the old continent; it is also a history that was greatly affected by the arrival of new, 'different' Jews. In the decades separating us from the war, European Jewry has changed a great deal, both from a demographic and cultural stance. Since the late 1960s unexpected migratory movements have enriched and transformed Jewish life in Europe. We have in fact to consider the income of Jews from the Southern Mediterranean – Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria – who settled mainly in France (doubling its Jewish population)[23], who certainly

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[20] On the complex political equation that allowed the entrance and the brief stay of so many foreign Jews in Italy, and the tacit approval granted by Italian authorities to Zionist naval operations see M. Toscano, *La "porta di Sion": l'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina (1945-1948),* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

[21] J. Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys,* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1997).

[22] See at least M. Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997 (or. ed. 1995)); Y. M. Bodeman (ed.), *Jews, Germans, Memory. The Reconstruction of Jewish Life in Germany*, (The University of Michigan Press, 1996); J. H. Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany 1945-1953*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); A. D. Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat: Eine deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, (Munich:Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2007).

[23] Beyond France, where about 220.000 Jews from Marocco, Tunisia and Algeria settled between the 1950s and the 1960s, it must be noted that about 3000 Jews from Libya moved to Italy, while other Jewish groups from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria also settled in Italy, France and the UK. For statistical figures and attempts at analysing the French

introduced new cultural traits and who contributed in raising new issues in European Jewish life[24]. But we also have to remember the emigration of Jews from Poland as a result of a new wave of anti-Semitism in 1968. In the post-war era Eastern and Western Jewries, Ashkenazi and Sephardic cultures have mixed and mingled in a possibly unprecedented manner[25]. Thus European Jewry was transformed, as a new mixture of Jewish cultures and traditions slowly started taking form. One of the curious and yet significant issues is that the European Jewish population is made up of individuals who not only did not leave as a result of the Holocaust, but also of Jewish groups that after the war and after the creation of the State of Israel preferred to settle in Europe when – for various reasons – they were pushed out of their countries of origin. So it would seem that European Jewry did not embrace the Zionist ideal, and yet no force or idea other than Zionism had more influence in re-shaping Jewish identity in Europe. After the war a new sense of belonging to a collective entity, resulting also from the identity forcibly imposed by racial persecutions, emerged among European Jews. This collective conscience was strongly and rapidly marked by the Zionist ideology. As the articles of Kauders on Germany and Kovács on Hungary show us, even those Jewish communities which had long resisted the Zionist call, nurtured a new fascination for that project since the immediate post-war years. From being a minority movement in Europe, Zionism (and the State of Israel) in the post-war turned into a common reference point for most Jews of the continent. In Italy, for example, the organized pro-Zionist minority rapidly conquered control of Jewish communal institutions since 1946[26]. In all of Western Europe the pro-Zionist orientation certainly influenced the role and public position of Jewish institutions, who often tried to behave as cultural mediators between Israel and the respective national political and cultural systems. More than that, the Zionist issue became a pivotal point

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case see D. Bensimon and S. Della Pergola, *La population juive de France: socio-démographie et identité*, (Paris-Jerusalem: CNRS and Institute for Contemporary Jewry, 1984); D. Bensimon-Donath, *L'intégration des juifs nord-africains en France*, (Paris: Mouton, 1971); C. Tapia, *Les Juifs Sépharades en France (1965-1985): Études psycosociologiques et historiques*, (Paris: L'harmattan, 1986). For a historical account of the relationship of Libian Jews with Italy and the context in which they were forced to emigrate see R. De Felice, E*brei in un paese arabo. Gli ebrei nella Libia contemporanea tra colonialismo, nazionalismo arabo e sionismo, 1835-1970*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1978).

[24] In the eyes of Shmuel Trigano this was one of the elements that generated a "new Jewish Question", challenging the assimilationist ideal of a Jewish identity that should manifest itself mainly, or solely, in the private sphere. See ID., *La nouvelle question juive*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2002 (or. ed. 1979)).

[25] For a stimulating reflection on the impact of Eastern European Jewish cultural codes on Western Jewry a must-read is J. Friedlander, *Vilna on the Seine: Jewish Intellectuals in France since 1968*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[26] See G. Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi. Gli ebrei nell'Italia post-fascista*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2004), chapter 2.

in a new, stronger collective identity. French intellectual Shmuel Trigano has written about a «community Zionism», a fascination for the Zionist rhetoric which did not push most Jews toward emigration and an effective realization of the Zionist project, but that rather contributed to shape growing community ties, a new sense of belonging[27]. Through their public and explicit pro-Zionist stance, the non-religious Jews of the West were somehow able to fill with meaning that Jewish identity that they felt to be important and yet had a great difficulty interpreting[28]. The support for Israel and a generic pro-Zionist stance were the building blocks of a Jewish identity that would manifest itself openly in the public sphere; in Western Europe Jewishness was not anymore a private and personal issue, but became a factor that would mould a collectivity, a group that would participate in public life as such[29]. This new sentiment combined with the idea, that rapidly spread since the 1970s, that Jews (as well as other groups) would not only have a right to equality, but also a fundamental right to manifest their difference without shame or fear; it was this new feeling identity that allowed Jews in France, Italy and Germany to explicitly manifest multiple loyalties with an unprecedented liberty. This does not mean that there were no difficulties or that anti-Zionist sentiments in each country would not create uneasiness within Jewish communities, but it must be recognized that never before in European Jewish history the minority was more free to explicitly manifest its polysemic identity.

This of course was not true for Jews living in Eastern Europe. Kovács' article clearly shows how, with the establishment of the Communist regime in Hungary, the Jewish condition changed abruptly, leaving much less space for the expression of the pro-Zionist feelings than in the immediate post-war years. In fact, one of the key factors that we have to keep in mind in confronting Eastern and Western Europe is not only the latter's incomparable freedom, but also the different role played by anti-Semitic prejudice in the two areas. While in the West public manifestations of Anti-Semitism became a taboo, relegated to tiny minority groups, in the East popular and ideological anti-Semitism played a fundamental role in shaping the Jewish condition. This subject

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[27] S. Trigano, "From Individual to Collectivity: the Rebirth of the 'Jewish Nation' in France", in F. Malino e B. Wasserstein (Eds.), *The Jews in Modern France*, (Hannover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1985) 244-281.

[28] See for example the provocative autobiographical reflection made by A. Finkielkraut, *Le Juif imaginaire*, (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

[29] See in this respect the sociological analysis of the French situation made by D. Schnapper, *Juifs et israélites*, Gallimard, Paris 1980. For the public positions taken with regards to Israel in the French community see Ph. Cohen Albert, "French Jewry and the Centrality of Israel: The Public Debate 1968-1988", in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism*, E. S. Frerichs and J. Neusne (eds.) (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) vol. 4, 202-235; D. Bensimon, *Les juifs de France et leur relations avec Israël (1945-1988)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989).

is at the center of the two essays by Salomoni and Tonini dealing respectively with the Soviet and Polish cases.

Antonella Salomoni concentrates her attention on the rapid development of new researches – that took off since the early 1990s - on the role of anti-Semitism in the late years of the Stalinist season. At the center of her analysis is the recent debate on the presumed preparations for a mass deportation of Soviet Jews. She indicates how the latest studies - conducted on a local level - allow us to better understand both the collective psychoses that struck Soviet Jews in the immediate aftermath of the war, as well as to ascertain the existence of a planned design to mobilize the population through the manipulation of Judeophobia. The interconnection between popular and traditional anti-Semitism, and the shifting ideological movements of the Communist regime in Poland, lies at the heart of Carla Tonini's paper. Her analysis offers us a broad and rich picture of the internal Polish debate - started in the 1980s – on the role of anti-Semitism in popular culture, as well as of the recent findings on various problems ranging from property restitutions and the difficult post-war reintegration to Jewish emigration and the Zionist issue.

Traditional catholic religious intolerance and its role in Polish culture and identity leads to reflect on one last fundamental element that has to be kept in consideration in analyzing post-war European Jewish history. In the decades following 1945 the attitudes of the Christian churches towards the Jews and the Jewish question have changed significantly. The echoes of the Holocaust certainly played a great role in forcing the Christian faiths to revise and reconsider their relationship with the Jews. It was, of course, a slow and non-linear development. Elena Mazzini's article, concentrating on one single peculiar source such as the Catholic Encyclopedia, published between 1948 and 1952, allows us to verify the uneasiness with which Catholic culture faced the issue of anti-Semitism. As we know a new and finally different approach to the problem would have matured only with the Second Vatican Council[30].

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The intent of this monographic issue is to offer a broad view on the history and historiography concerning post-war Jewish life in various European countries: Germany, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union. An article dealing with the French case was also expected, but did not reach us in time for the publication of this issue. We also chose not to dedicate a single article to the Italian case. In part this decision was made because such a paper has been very recently published by one of the

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[30] On the issue see the fundamental study by G. Miccoli, *Due nodi: la libertà religiosa e le relazioni con gli ebrei*, in G. Alberigo (Ed.), *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*, (Bologna: Peeters/Il Mulino, 1999), vol. 4, 199-219.

editors[31], but also because we thought it would be interesting to offer two examples of how research on peculiar issues - such as Holocaust survivors and emigration to Palestine/Israel and the Catholic reappraisal of the anti-Semitic discourse in the post-war years - would offer the chance to verify how studies on specific themes is fundamental for the development of a better understanding of wider problems. All the selected authors who answered our call for articles were asked to overview the state of the art concerning the history of the Jews in each specific national context and to suggest (if possible) new research perspectives. Our intention was to grant the authors ample margins to freely interpret the post-war order, concentrating on the problems they believed more relevant, and applying the methodology they saw most fit. Notwithstanding the 'third pillar ideology' it is still quite difficult to weave different national cases in a coherently intertwined pattern. Imagining one European Jewish community appears quite problematic and, ultimately, unrealistic. Keeping this in mind, the end result we were looking for was not a tightly coherent and unified final outlook, but rather the presentations of variations and diversities, illustrating multiple and multi-faceted approaches to the subject. Obviously we do not expect this rapid overview to offer a complete and systematic analysis of all issues and problems concerning the study of Jewish life in post-war Europe. Our goal was to raise, on a transnational and European scale, a series of key questions. The articles gathered here illustrate similarities and differences in the various national cases, as well as the very different approaches and historiographical sensibilities with which such a complex and elusive subject can be confronted.

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[31] G. Schwarz, *The Reconstruction of Jewish Life in Italy after World War II*, in «Journal of Modern Jewish Studies» n. 3 (2009), 360-377.

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West German Jewry: Guilt, Power, and Pluralism

by *Anthony D. Kauders*

Abstract

The essay will address the history of West German Jewry using the concept of guilt as its guiding theme. Jews in West Germany had a bad conscience on account of living in the "land of the murderers." This bad conscience not only distinguished them from other Jewish communities, it also explains much of what characterized West German Jewry from 1945 to 1989: its particular economic structure; its especially close ties to Israel; its preoccupation with democratization; its power arrangements; and its communal life. The essay will address these issues, and trace a development that led from a close-knit, ideologically homogeneous group to one that became ever more pluralistic in the 1970s and 1980s.

A plain but urgent question stands at the beginning of any history of West German Jewry: how could Jews have continued living in the "land of the murderers"? Many answers have been proffered, all of which are equally true: some Jews had survived on account of their Gentile partners or could only imagine life within German language and culture; others had established small businesses or had fled anti-Semitic pogroms in Poland; yet others were too weak, too old, or too sick to emigrate to Palestine/Israel. If it was sheer chance that had left Jews as survivors in postwar Germany, it was personal convenience that caused many to flout immediate relocation. But whatever the motive, West Germany's Jews resided in a country cursed among Jews everywhere. Their individual histories did not count in a post-Holocaust world that demanded a new Jewish consensus not only with regard to Israel, but also with respect to Germany.

West Germany's Jews were well aware of this consensus. They could not opt for pluralism at a time when the Federal Republic itself was neither pluralistic nor welcoming of Jewish "dissidents." Indeed, Jews in Augsburg, Hamburg, or Cologne did not wish to be treated like "dissidents" in the first place. They had internalized the widespread view that Israel was the new Jewish homeland, and they had to find ways to combine this emotional and intellectual truth with the reality of their physical presence in Augsburg, Hamburg, or Cologne. The Jewish predicament in West Germany therefore demanded considerable work. First, Jews were forced to confront feelings of guilt for living in the wrong country. Second, they had to face Jews in Israel and elsewhere who reminded them of this violation. Third, they were compelled to deal emotionally with their precarious condition. Fourth, they felt obliged to

develop justifications that would assuage their own guilt, mollify their Jewish critics, and command intellectual respectability at home and abroad. All this had to be done alongside the daily chores of life in a largely inhospitable land.

This essay will address the history of West German Jewry using the concept of guilt as its guiding theme. Many Jews suffered from a bad conscience because they had decided to remain in the "blood-soaked" country. This bad conscience not only distinguished West German Jewry from other Jewish communities, it also explains much of what characterized Jewish history in the Federal Republic from 1949 to 1989: its particular economic structure; its especially close ties to Israel; its preoccupation with democratization; its power arrangements and communal life. The theme of guilt will allow us to trace a development that led from a close-knit, ideologically homogeneous group to one that became more pluralistic in the 1970s and 1980s. With the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s the question of guilt no longer proved imperative to the course of German-Jewish history. It is here that our story ends.

Money's Charm

Today it is hard to imagine the pressure exerted on Jews in Germany after 1945. Relatives in the United States, politicians in Israel, commentators throughout the Jewish world — all regarded a Jewish presence on German soil as inexplicable at best and profane at worst. Hannah Arendt's comment to Gertrud Jaspers, the Jewish wife of the famous Heidelberg philosopher, was a restrained example of this ubiquitous approach to Jewish life in post-Holocaust Germany: "How one actually can bear to live there as a Jew, in an environment that doesn't even deem it necessary to talk about 'our problem,' and that today means our dead, is beyond me."[1] Less restrained voiced abounded, ranging from members of the Knesset calling for a boycott of Germany's Jewish community to the publisher Gershom Schocken calling on the Jewish state to dissociate itself from Germany's Jews.[2]

What is more, these and other critics blamed the refusal to emigrate on the "cash nexus." Eliahu Livneh, the Israeli Consul in Munich, reported to the Israeli foreign office in November 1949 that Jewish concerns in Germany centered on "money and profit," and that Jewish existence in the country was based on "insensitivity and the credit balance."[3] The

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[1] Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 1926-1969*, edited by Lotte Köhler and Hans Sahner (Munich: Piper, 1993), 77. Letter written on 30 May 1946.

[2] Tamara Anthony, *Ins Land der Väter oder der Täter? Israel und die Juden in Deutschland nach der Schoah* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 94, 96.

[3] Anthony, *Im Land der Väter*, 154. See also Meron Mendel, "The Policy for the Past in West Germany and Israel: The Case of Jewish Remigration," in: *Leo Baeck Year Book* 2004: 129.

head of the Jewish Agency in Munich, one Amos, voiced similar concerns in August 1950. Addressing Livneh, he summarized his impressions as follows: "The moral degeneracy that has been spreading among the Jews of Germany, especially among its businesspeople, makes its necessary to dissociate the Zionist movement and its institutions from the Jewish community in Germany, as we are not in the position to guarantee a continuation of an honorable Jewish existence" in the country.[4] One year later, the New York-based newspaper *Aufbau* maintained that a swift emigration of Germany's "opportunistic" Jews would be in the best interest of Germans and Jews alike.[5]

Most of these commentaries appeared at a time when *Wiedergutmachung* (restitution) was still heavily contested—and few Jews were actually benefiting from generous compensation payments. Indeed, in the early 1950s many Jews in West Germany barely made a living and relied on welfare from both Jewish and German institutions. Toward the end of the decade, however, the situation changed. Many of the 12,000 to 15,000 Jews who remigrated to Germany did so for economic reasons.[6] Again, motives varied, but numerous Jews either hoped that the process of *Wiedergutmachung* would be expedited if they lived in the Federal Republic; that finding a job would be easier in Munich or Berlin than in Haifa or Tel Aviv — particularly at a time when Germany's economy was in full swing; or that restitution of property and businesses demanded one's presence in the country. The decision of the Bonn parliament to grant financial help to remigrants in the order of 6000 Marks per person led to a further wave of immigration in 1956.[7]

Yet what was unusual about Jewish economic life in the Federal Republic was not what Zionist critics regularly insinuated: that Jews in Germany were bad Jews because they only had money on their mind.

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[4] Anthony, *Im Land der Väter*, 170.

[5] Ibid., 102, footnote 173. The extent to which this opinion took hold of the imagination was remarkable. As late as 1998 the co-founder of Germany's Central Council of Jews (*Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland*), Norbert Wollheim, repeated the same story in an interview with the well-known German-Jewish journalist Richard Chaim Schneider. Showing no compunctions, he asserted that many Jews had remained in the Federal Republic because of "Egypt's pots of meat," which they "enjoyed." Nobert Wollheim, 'Wir haben Stellung bezogen,' in: Richard Chaim Schneider, *Wir sind da! Die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland von 1945 bis heute* (Munich: Ullstein, 2000), 119.

[6] On the question of remigration, see especially Irmela von der Lühe, Axel Schildt, and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *"Auch in Deutschland waren wir nicht wirklich zu Hause." Jüdische Remigration nach 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008).

[7] Tobias Winstel, "Über die Bedeutung der Wiedergutmachung im Leben der jüdischen NS-Verfolgten. Erfahrungsgeschichtliche Annährungen," in: Hans Günter Hockerts and Christiane Kuller (eds.), *Nach der Verfolgung. Wiedergutmachung nationalsozialistischen Unrechts in Deutschland?* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), 199-227; idem., " 'Healed Biographies?' Jewish Remigration and Indemnification for National Socialist Injustice," in: *Leo Baeck Year Book* 2004: 137-152; Harry Maor, *Über den Wiederaufbau der jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland seit 1945* (unpublished dissertation Mainz, 1961), 48.

On the contrary, Jews in West Germany believed they were being good Jews because they had very little else on their mind other than making money. Put differently, focusing on money allowed many Jews to claim that they did not have emotional, let alone sentimental ties to the country, that, aside from money, nothing *at all* attached them to their temporary abode.

The abstract nature of money allowed Jews, if they so wished, to leave the country as quickly as possible. In the first decades after the Shoah, few Jews had the intention to stay in Germany permanently. Many preferred to rent rather than to buy real estate, many favored work in import-export businesses over jobs in the civil service sector. Stores that could be sold swiftly and professions that could be pursued elsewhere were more in line with "Jewish" objectives than occupations that possibly precluded emigration.[8] "Liquid" money, numerous Jews believed, would enable them to be in control of their destiny. Owing to their bad conscience, then, many Jews in the Federal Republic sought to avoid occupations and life-styles that would have entailed a long-term commitment to Germany. As the sociologist Y. Michal Bodemann has explained, "the preference for job qualifications that were relatively transferable, that is, not bound to the land or language" indicated that, initially at least, most Jews saw their future elsewhere.[9] In some extreme instances, the pursuit of money was indicative of how certain Jews—in this case men who worked in Frankfurt's real estate sector in the early 1970s—paid little heed to the concerns of society at large precisely because they did not intend to become part of that society in the foreseeable future.[10]

Absolute Loyalty: Israel

In the immediate postwar period, Palestine/Israel became the real or idealized home for many thousands of Jews from war-torn Europe. When the State of Israel gained independence in May 1948, most Jews in Germany had to ask themselves with ever greater urgency what reasons might still exist to postpone a move that seemed all but inevitable—the emigration to the "Holy Land." Whatever reasons they could muster in defense of their decision to stay, most Jews were united in their conviction that Germany offered neither an emotional *Heimat* nor a sense of security. As a result, Israel came to figure as a primary source of identity, or, in the words of Dan Diner, as an *Identitätsersatz.*[11]

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[8] Y. Michael Bodemann, *A Jewish Family in Germany Today. An Intimate Portrait* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 8.

[9] Y. Michael Bodemann, *In den Wogen der Erinnerung. Jüdische Existenz in Deutschland* (Munich: DTV, 2002), 128.

[10] This episode is discussed in Anthony D. Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat. Eine deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: DVA, 2007), 79-88.

[11] Dan Diner, *Negative Symbiose—Deutsche und Juden nach Auschwitz*, in: Micha Brumlik,

West Germany's Jews made every effort to prove that this emotional attachment was genuine. In countless letters, articles, and public talks, Jewish representatives detailed the importance of Israel for the Jews of Germany. What is more, Jewish officials repeatedly claimed that they themselves were needed in the Federal Republic as mediators between Germans and Israelis. Karl Marx, editor-in-chief and owner of the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*, belonged to the most vocal advocates of this stance. In October 1951 he claimed that the Jews' role in Germany should be that of an "outpost" (*Vorposten*), or, "of a mediator between the Germans (…) and the Jews of the world, particularly in Israel."[12] Similar thoughts emanated from Leopold Goldschmidt, executive member of the Jewish community in Frankfurt and leading official in the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (*Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit*). In May 1952 he submitted that the Jews in Germany could figure as the quintessential mediators, combining as they did a religious, historical, and "racial" attachment to all Jews on the one hand, and a civil bond with the West German state on the other.[13]

Karl Marx not only owned the main Jewish newspaper in the country, he also headed the Zionist Organization in Germany (ZOD). In this capacity, too, Marx was adamant that West Germany's Jews be treated as equals rather than pariahs in the Jewish world. In 1957 he sent a combative letter to Jewish community institutions and organizations throughout the Federal Republic, claiming that "the entire Jewish community in Germany, with only a few exceptions" had demonstrated its loyalty to Israel and continued to be willing "to do everything for Israel." These exertions, however, had been to no avail in international Zionist circles. The Zionist World Organization in particular had refused to admit the ZOD to membership in its association, thereby signaling that it was not ready to take German Zionism seriously. After countless futile appeals to the contrary, Marx announced that he would have to refuse all publications by Zionist organizations in the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung*, including ads and petitions coming from the Keren Kayemeth L'Israel (Jewish National Fund), Keren Hayessod (United Israel Appeal), and Youth Aliyah.[14] Zionist organizations were thus banned from publishing in Germany's principal Jewish periodical. That being not enough, Karl Marx reacted to further slights by canceling his membership in the Keren Hayessod in 1957 and stepping down from

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Doron Kiesel und Cilly Kugelmann und Julius Schoeps (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), 243.

[12] *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland* (*AWJD*), 5.10.1951 "Jom Kippur—Tag der Versöhnung—Tag der Besinnung," 1.

[13] Ibid., 16.5.1952 "Jüdische Aufgaben in Deutschland," 1.

[14] ZA (Zentralarchiv zur Erforschung der Juden in Deutschland) B. 1./7., 581, 9.8.1957.

his chairmanship of the ZOD in 1959.[15]

These may have been somewhat rash reactions to Israeli indifference and hostility, but they illustrate how much trouble even vocal advocates of West German Zionism had in dealing with rebuffs, all the more so when these snubs coincided with the extraordinary efforts on the part of West Germany's Jews to support the State of Israel. It would not have taken these rather unpleasant experiences to force Marx and others to engage in yet further pro-Israeli activities, this time on the financial front. When the economic situation of West Germany's Jewish communities improved in the 1960s, financial assistance to Israel followed as a matter of course. Even without outside pressure, Jews in the Federal Republic helped the young state, not least because Israel was suffering from severe economic turmoil during this period.

Zionist organizations did not only rely on the goodwill of potential donors. Instead, they instructed agents to collect funds from communities and individual community members. These agents were not at all averse to comparing the sum totals raised during the campaigns, lauding those who had given beyond the "call of duty" and castigating others whose contributions fell short of expectations.[16] Facing their watchful eye, West Germany's Jewish leaders felt obliged to praise the accomplishments vis-à-vis the Jewish state more than ever. The Central Council of Jews in Germany (*Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland*) therefore drew up league tables to prove how much its Jews had contributed to the Zionist cause. In August 1967, some two months after the Six-Day-War, General Secretary Hendrik van Dam informed his then assistant Werner Nachmann that West Germany's Jews stood all the way on top, inasmuch as one tallied total donations per community member. According to his calculations (which are difficult to verify), Jews in the Federal Republic contributed $ 250 per head, as against $30 for the United States. Van Dam did not fail to add that despite its "great (…) wealth," British Jewry had only approximated the US figures.[17] What is more, van Dam could not help to report these findings to an envoy of the Israeli embassy in Bonn, claiming that the results for West Germany were quite excellent indeed and unsurpassed by any other community in the world. He went on to say that all this had been achieved despite the financial burden brought about by East European

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[15] Ibid., letter of 19.8.1957. These developments were not mentioned in the 1965 Yearbook of the Keren Hayessod. Evidently Marx had become a member again or he had never left the organization. Karl Marx, "Israel und Wir," in: Mendel Karger-Karin (ed.), *Israel und Wir. Keren-Hajessod-Jahrbuch der jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Deutschland 1955/1965* (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), 97-99 and ibid., Marx to Dr. Rosenthal and H. Alroy, general secretary of the ZOD, 26.6.1959.

[16] ZA B. 1/2., 51, Mendel K. to "Magbit-Askanim, Gemeindevertreter und Magbit-Komitees in Deutschland," 3.3.1967, 3.

[17] ZA B. 1/7., 466, van Dam to Nachmann, 1.8.1967.

Jewish immigration to West Germany.[18]

Whoever composes league tables in the fashion of van Dam hopes to show that specific norms have been met. In this case, the addressee was not only the Jewish public abroad or Zionist representatives in Berlin, Munich, and Frankfurt; the addressee was also one's own conscience. In fact, certain community officials did not stop here: so as to placate their feelings of guilt, they were willing to intimidate and even shame members of the community whose behaviour appeared to threaten the reputation of West Germany's Jewish community and, by extension, that of its *élites*.

Pressure was exerted in two ways. During the first stage, functionaries and Zionist activists either appealed to the "Jewish conscience" or focused on individual community members, exhorting them to contribute to the cause — and that usually meant donating what the collectors judged appropriate. These attempts were usually confined to general pleas or one-on-one encounters, allowing the process of soliciting and pledging money to remain anonymous. The second stage followed from the first whenever community members refused to submit to the pressure. In such cases, officials informed the Jewish public of this intolerable behaviour and called on community members to ostracize the offender(s).

In Dortmund, the committee organizing the "Hilfe-für Israel Aktion" (Help for Israel Action) asked all community members to consider whether they had participated in the endeavor by pledging money and, if so, whether the donation was fitting given the needs of the Israeli people and the financial capacity of the individual benefactor. Since the committee was neither able to assess the "real possibilities of each person" nor willing to "sanction stubborn sinners," it suggested that all members deal with the issue in a conscientious manner.[19]

We can discern a similar approach, namely individual arm-twisting as against collective shaming, in a letter to community members whose financial resolve had allegedly left something to be desired — in the eyes of Zionist activists, that is. Henry O. of the Keren Hayessod censured their miserliness and wrote: "Some time ago you donated 2500 Marks (the sums varied according to the addressee, A.K.), which in no way corresponds to your economic means and lies well below the sum paid by people of much more humble backgrounds. The committee regards the sum of 2500 Marks as absolutely inadequate and inappropriate. Therefore I have been authorized (…) to refund the sum and transfer it to your account."[20]

When these measures failed to do the trick, community officials decided

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[18] Ibid., van Dam to A. Iden, 25.8.1967.

[19] ZA B. 1/2., 170, Komitee "Hilfe für Israel," Kultusgemeinde Groß-Dortmund, 3.8.1967, "Liebes Mitglied (...)".

[20] ZA B. 1/7. 466, Henry O. to Oskar F., 11.12.1967.

to put the screws on the "transgressors," hoping that shame might work better than guilt. On 19 June 1967, the Solidarity Fund for Israel published a statement demanding that representatives of Jewish communities and institutions in West Germany whose involvement had been insufficient be prohibited from holding an "honorary office in the Jewish community in Germany."[21] The Frankfurt community board was equally dismissive of these "black sheep," comparing their "treacherous" behaviour to that of "aiding and abetting murder."[22]

Collective shaming reached its apogee in the spring and autumn of 1969, when the Jewish communities of Munich and Frankfurt, in consultation with the Keren Hayessod, passed the following resolution: "All donors to the Solidarity Fund should 1. not accept any invitation to social events (organized) by persons who did not participate in the Solidarity Action of 1968 and who *thus abandoned the Jewish people and the State of Israel in times of need*, 2. not request these people's company, 3. not attend gatherings to which these persons have been invited. 4. This resolution also pertains to social functions (…) taking place in Israel and abroad."[23]

Concern for Israel's wellbeing was crucial here. Even so, some Jews in the Federal Republic constructed communities of shame in order to demonstrate their unequivocal allegiance to the Jewish state. These Jews were concerned about their standing in the Jewish world, as well as that of the West German Jewish community as a whole. Their feelings of guilt for living in the "wrong" country ran deep, so deep, in fact, that they were ready to isolate members of the community whose comportment had supposedly threatened their own status. Shaming others, then, promised to appease one's own bad conscience. Most Israelis, however, were quite oblivious to these disputes and remained hostile to the idea of Jewish life in Germany.

Guardians of West German Democracy

The refusal to commit oneself economically to a land that one did not and could not love came naturally to most Jews in the first decades after the Holocaust; the enthusiastic support for Israel was also to be expected. Inasmuch as both skepticism toward Germany and the commitment to Israel were perceived to be the only possible answers to the question of Jewish existence on German soil, they did not require great intellectual feats to be related to the outside world. But Jewish representatives also wished to show that, beyond helping Israel and championing its cause vis-à-vis German officials, there was a further raison d'être for Jews in the Federal Republic: to oversee West

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[21] Ibid., I.E. Lichtigfeld to all communities in Germany , 21.6.1967.

[22] Ibid., "Vorstand der Gemeinde Frankfurt, Betr. Solidaritätsfonds für Israel, An alle Mitglieder," 24.6.1967.

[23] ZA B. 1/2., 52, "Solidaritätsfonds für Israel," Frankfurt am Main, 28.3.1969 and "Solidaritätsfonds für Israel," Munich, September 1969, emphasis in the original.

Germany's democratization. This argument transpired over the course of many years, and its genesis owed much to the continued accusations from Israel and the rest of the Jewish world.[24]

In the late summer of 1951, an intriguing piece appeared in the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*, West Germany's main Jewish newspaper. Penned by Hendrik van Dam, General Secretary of the Central Council, the article addressed the thorny issue of Jewish existence in the Federal Republic, and it did so in a way that would exemplify much subsequent thinking on the matter. The Jewish official was not one to revel in *Geschichtsphilosophie*. He avoided the question of whether Jews should abandon the country for good, dismissing comparisons with Spain's Jewish community after the expulsion of 1492 as unnecessarily speculative. Instead, van Dam focused on the 30,000 Jews still living in the Federal Republic, whose role, he avowed, would be moral in spirit: "the criterion for the will of the Germans to renounce its anti-Jewish tendencies."[25]

For van Dam and most other Jews, foreswearing antisemitism was coterminous with democracy. In the post-war years, it had become a habit of West Germany's Jews to establish a causal connection between democracy and restitution, between the return to a *Rechtsstaat* and the remembrance of genocide, and between the newly created order and minority rights.[26] But that was not all. For in attempting to ensure that democratization go hand in hand with the struggle against prejudice, West Germany's Jewish representatives were changing themselves. Indeed, in the process of engaging with Germany's Nazi past and post-Nazi present, many of them came to identify with a role that proved too compelling to be discarded, namely that of guarantor of West German democracy.

Let us return to Karl Marx. Writing in April 1953, he opined that the *Allgemeine* had realized earlier than many others "that the thesis of collective guilt" was untenable and indefensible, massive critique from "large groups abroad, particularly in Israel" notwithstanding.[27] Two weeks later, Marx contended that Germany had done everything in its power to make amends, adding that, on the subject of collective guilt, it was the "duty of every cultivated Jew" to counter all those "extreme groups" who were in the business of using methods that had already led to much suffering among the Jews themselves.[28] Marx was not alone.

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[24] For this development see chapter 4 in Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat*.

[25] *AWJD*, "Periode der Normalisierung," Hendrik van Dam, 29 July 1951, 1.

[26] This point is argued in Anthony D. Kauders, *Democratization and the Jews, Munich 1945-1965* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

[27] *AWJD*, "Rückblick auf sieben Jahre. Kleine Reminisenz zum Beginn eines neues Jahrgangs," 1.

[28] *AWJD*, "Gedanken zum 5. Jahrestag," 24 April 1953. His comments touched on incidents that had taken place in Israel, where the violinist Jascha Heifetz had been assaulted for his decision to perform the music of German composers. On further

Hendrik van Dam, among others, denounced the "ideological observers of the German situation," for whom the "state of barbarism" was endemic in this "part of the world" and who abhorred "any kind of development" that would "contradict this prognosis." van Dam concluded his ruminations with the assertion that the Jewish community in Germany had every right in the world to exist, dismissing Israeli press statements that had suggested that only a "colony of diplomats" and a few "loners" seeking restitution or commercial contacts ought to be found in the country.[29]

In all of these cases, misrecognition of the Jewish predicament in Germany led prominent Jews to reflect on the actual state of German-Jewish relations. That state had changed to such an extent that endorsing West German democracy was becoming feasible. This did not mean that Jews now looked upon the country through rose-tinted glasses. Rather, it meant that Jews were increasingly being forced to evaluate the Federal Republic and its citizens in response to the unrelenting critique from abroad. And this in turn produced results that had not necessarily been anticipated.

Let me briefly illustrate this point. From the outset, Jewish representatives in Germany backed General John McCloy's famous declaration of 1949 that Jews had to be accepted as equal citizens in order for any people to stand the acid test of democracy.[30] For them, liberal democratic values implied an effort to allude to the symbolic link between human rights, memory of violations thereof (the Holocaust), and a healthy democracy.[31] But where this approach initially only related to *how Germans were supposed to act*, it would later also designate the *rationale for Jewish existence*. In other words, where many Jews as far back as the 19th century had understood the relationship between their well-

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interventions by Marx, see *AWJD*, "Die unsichtbare Front," 21 August 1953; "Hoffnungsvoll ins neue Jahr," 4 September 1953; and "Der besiegte Pessimismus," 18 September 1953.

[29] *AWJD*, "Das Recht zum Dasein: Zur Selbstbehauptung der jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," 25 September 1953, 1. See also "Um die Existenz der jüdischen Gemeinden: Von der Bremer Tagung des Zentralrats der Juden in Deutschland," 9 October 1953, 1; "Gegen Beschlüsse am grünen Tisch: Offener Brief der jüdischen Gemeinde Hamburg zum Thema Juden in Deutschland," 17 August 1951, 5; and "Verständnislose Einmischung: Ausländische jüdische Zeitung 'berät' Juden in Deutschland," E.G.L., 13 March 1953, 3. On the "positive fact" of Jewish existence in Germany, see also *Frankfurter Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, "Geleitwort," April 1955, 1 and "1945-1955: Frankfurter Tagebuch," May 1955, 1.

[30] Josef Foschepoth, *Im Schatten der Vergangenheit: Die Anfänge der Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1993), 82; Y. Michal Bodemann, "Staat und Ethnizität: Der Aufbau der jüdischen Gemeinden im Kalten Krieg," in: Brumlik, Kiesel, Kugelmann, *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945*, 49-69.

31 Kauders, *Democratization*, 6.

being and the success of liberal democracy,[32] after 1945 prominent Jews combined this position with one that established a connection between their very identity and the success of West German democracy.

Initially, this connection was remarked upon only sporadically — we have already encountered van Dam's hope that a Jewish presence would force Germans to disown antisemitism. Subsequently, however, this idea gained in popularity. On the occasion of the Momenta Judaica exhibition in Cologne in March 1964, for instance, van Dam recalled the resentment that the Jewish world had expressed toward Germany's Jews, despite the fact that these same Jews had helped create the Federal Republic, not least by ensuring that democracy would thrive in the country.[33] Heinz Galinski, head of West Berlin's Jewish community, was even more explicit. Writing in the aftermath of the World Jewish Congress meeting in August 1966, his words could hardly conceal the frustration that came with the incessant compulsion to legitimize his very existence: "The opponents of a dialogue between Jews and non-Jews in Germany," Galinski began, "should from time to time consider that the political development in Germany — democracy or dictatorship — is a decision that is also not without significance for them." On a more personal note, Galinski mentioned how people "in different Jewish communities and institutions" had seen it as their duty to assist Germany in "taking the democratic path and sticking to it." He then continued along similar lines, reminding those "who have nearly written us off" that "we Jews are engaged in pioneering work that is neither opportunistic nor demanding of gratitude, but is subordinate to the goal of human understanding (*Menschlichkeit*)."[34]

Galinski's words bespoke a self-understanding that was gaining ground during this period. Increasingly, Jewish public figures in the Federal Republic associated their own place in society as well as that of the larger Jewish community with the success of West Germany's democracy. While showing growing appreciation of the country's transformation, Galinski and others arrogated to themselves the role of assisting this

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[32] For the German-Jewish predilection for liberalism in the 19th and 20th centuries and the German-Jewish propensity to vote for liberal democratic parties before Hitler, see Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); Martin Liepach, *Das Wahlverhalten der jüdischen Bevölkerung: Zur politischen Orientierung der Juden in der Weimarer Republik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996); and Anthony D. Kauders, "Weimar Jewry."

[33] *AWJD*, "Zweitausend Jahre Juden in Deutschland. Auch die Nachkriegsgeschichte zählt," 20 March 1964, 1.

[34] Ibid., "Ein Nachwort zum Kongress," 19 August 1966. van Dam reiterated this point at about the same time: "It is logical that the existence of a Jewish community in Germany after 1945 represents a historical factor that is of considerable significance to the development of democratic institutions." Abraham Melzer (ed.), Deutsche und Juden—ein unlösbares Problem. Reden zum jüdischen Weltkongreß 1966 (Düsseldorf, 1966), 55.

process by offering special expertise. This Jewish know-how was a gift — and I would argue for three main reasons. First, it implied Jewish willingness to be interested in Germany's future, despite the heinous crimes of the past. Second, it suggested that Jews would benefit the country by demonstrating that change was indeed occurring. Third, it meant that the Federal Republic, in its dealings with other countries, could point to Jewish involvement in the affairs of the state. But West Germany's Jews were also receiving something in return. Both vis-à-vis Israel and the wider Jewish world, van Dam, Marx, and Galinski could point to their significance in upholding German democracy. This self-declared function boosted their own self-confidence, claiming as they now could to play a "pioneering" rather than an "obdurate" part in post-war Jewish history.

This interpretation reached its climax in the speeches and writings of Werner Nachmann, the Central Council's controversial chairman from 1969 to 1988. In numerous remarks, Nachmann elucidated the need to strengthen relations between Germans and Jews, so much so that some of his statements came very close to fusing the interests of both sides. A good case in point is his interview with the *Allgemeine* of December 1975. Asked to comment on why he had been invited to join Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Israel, the Zentralrat official surmised that it owed much to the way in which the Jewish community had enabled West Germany to "return to the family of free nations." That not being enough, Nachmann put forward the rather contorted but revealing observation that the "Jewish community in Germany evinces much attractiveness, both as citizens of the Federal Republic with its government and with the Federal government regarding the efforts to act on behalf of Israel." The activity of the Central Council, he concluded, "proved that the Federal Republic is today one of the most democratic countries on earth."[35]

Nachmann was seconded one year later, when his Secretary-General, Alexander Ginsburg (1973-1988), recounted the Central Council's recent trip to Israel. Unusually and naively optimistic about Israeli perceptions of West Germany, Ginsburg claimed that many Israelis had "appreciated the achievements of democratic society in post-war Germany" and acknowledged how much the Jewish communities had "contributed to the conditions" for democracy in the state. Accordingly, the words "Germania tov" (Germany is good, actually: Germania tova), which Ginsburg claimed could be "heard everywhere," summed up the

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[35] *AWJD*, "Werner Nachmann: Die jüdische Gemeinschaft der Bundesrepublik wirkt an der Friedensarbeit der Bundesrepublik mit," 12 December 1975, 2. At the general meeting of the Zentralrat in February 1976, Nachmann reported on a meeting with Defense Minister Julius Leber. It was essential, he declared, that the Jewish community ensure that the young soldiers be educated as "democratic citizens." *AWJD*, "Unveränderte Grundsätze und Aufgaben," 13 February 1976, 1-2.

"prevailing opinion" within Israeli society.[36] These lines, it will be appreciated, addressed two audiences. Ginsburg was certainly appealing to his Jewish readers, for whom Israeli sentiment toward Germany's Jews remained a source of continuous apprehension. Every little sign of hope, then, would help. Equally significant, however, was the overture to the non-Jewish public: the Jews had endorsed West Germany's democratization, made the state more respectable in the eyes of Israel's Jewish population, and provided the Federal Republic with ever-important credibility.

But it was left to the chairman of the Zentralrat to adopt a maximalist position. On the 25th anniversary of the consecration of Düsseldorf's synagogue in 1983, Nachmann spoke on the subject of "Jewish responsibility in the Federal Republic." In his speech, the chairman recapitulated most of his previous programmatic statements, though this time around the "exchange of gifts" in the shape German-Jewish relations was particularly evident, even if the language remained as stilted as ever: "Unfortunately it is today rarely noted that through the foundation of the new Jewish community so soon after the end of the Hitler tyranny the political trust of the free world in the young Federal Republic was strengthened and this state…. was very quickly accepted into the family of nations. This was also a prerequisite for the economic boom that brought this country prosperity. We have contributed to this development. We showed responsibility also toward this state, whose citizens we have again become. We are respected as a religious community and enjoy the same guaranteed rights as the Christian churches. We cultivate regular contacts with state institutions. We are in touch regularly with the representatives of the political parties, unions, and industry. We talk openly with the churches. We take part in public life." Toward the end of this section of his speech, he returned to the theme with which he had begun: "Of course it also belongs to our duty and to our responsibility to represent to the outside world the image of this Federal Republic that corresponds with the facts and does justice to the efforts of the politicians in charge. We can and wish to acknowledge that they have consolidated, through their politics, democracy and thereby the freedom of each individual citizen."[37]

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36 Ibid., " 'Diese Reise war notwendig, sie war gut': Gespräch mit Alexander Ginsburg über den Israelbesuch des Zentralrats der Juden in Deutschland," Friedrich Uttitz, 3 December 1976, 1-2.

37 *AWJD*, "Jüdische Verantwortung," Werner Nachmann, 1-2. See also "Versäumnisse nachholen: Werner Nachmann sprach in der Stuttgarter Theodor-Heuss-Kaserne," 24.2.1978, 1, 2, 3; "Bekenntnis zum Miteinander: Die zentrale Veranstaltung zum 9. November," 17 November 1978, Hermann Levy, 1, 3; "Das Erreichte absichern und ausbauen. Botschaft des Zentralrats der Juden in Deutschland zum Jahre 5740," 21 September 1979, 1; "Hitlers langer Schatten: Drei Thesen zu 1933," Werner Nachmann, 14 January 1983, 1-2; "Juden—Bürger der Bundesrepublik," Werner Nachmann, 10 February 1984, 1-2; and "Das jüdische Erbe in Deutschland," Werner

Now, it could be very plausibly argued that Nachmann was an extreme case, whose actions many Jews in West Germany disowned — and especially so when it became known, shortly after his death in 1988, that he had embezzled restitution monies in the order of 29.4 million marks so as to save his various firms from bankruptcy.[38] None the less, Nachmann *as a representative* of Jewry in the Federal Republic belonged to a tradition of leaders who had imbibed the belief of Jewish importance for West German democratization. What is more, those younger Jews who dissociated themselves from Nachmann, Galinski, or Ginsburg appropriated the democratic ideal in their discussions of Israel and the wider world. A classic example of this assumption can be found in the first editorial of *Babylon*, the Jewish journal put out by Susan Heenen-Wolff, Getrud Koch, Cilly Kugelmann, and Martin Löw-Beer. Although adamant that the publication would transcend the traditional concerns of the West German Jewish leadership, the editors embraced a core understanding of the latter in their emphasis on universalistic morals: "Not so much as representatives of a religious/social/ethnic minority do we want to make ourselves be heard, but as universalistically oriented intellectuals that want reflectively to go beyond the particularly of origins (*Herkunftspartikularität*) without wanting to deny it."[39]

Power and Pluralism

In fact, there had been calls for change well before Nachmann's death. The 1970s and 1980s, it can be argued, were an intellectual turning point in West German Jewish history precisely because of the growing importance of second-generation critics like Dan Diner and Micha Brumlik. To be sure, these young Jews were not alone in their calls for renewal. As early as 1970 van Dam had noted the need for change, given that West Germany's Jews were becoming ever more part of Christian mainstream society. The incessant talk of living on "packed suitcases," he noted, could no longer be sustained after more than twenty years of uninterrupted Jewish existence on German soil.[40] And in light of the fact that approximately two-thirds of Jews married non-Jews between 1973 and 1981, references to "packed suitcases" seemed rather reckless indeed.[41]

But it was the generational conflict emerging in this period that set the tone for future debate. Like their Gentile counterparts, Jewish youths

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Nachmann, 23 March 1984, 1-2.

[38] Erica Burgauer, *Zwischen Erinnerung und Verdrängung—Juden in Deutschland nach 1945* (Reinbek: Rowohlt 1993), 132-135; Michael Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust: Juden in Deutschland 1945-1950* (Munich: C. H. Beck 1995), 194-195.

[39] Babylon. Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart, editorial, 1/1986, 7.

[40] ZA, B.1/7., 250, Jahresbericht 1969-1970.

[41] ZA, B. 1/7., 332, Dr. Navè Levinson, Standesamtliche Ehenschließungen von Juden 1973-1981 nach den Statistischen Jahrbüchern der Bundesrepublik 1975-1983.

sought to pluralize society and its institutions.[42] Unlike many of their Gentile peers, early conflicts with the establishment were not meant to threaten the (Jewish) status quo: young Jews did not demand new leaders and did challenge the role of Israel within community life. Prominent representatives such as Munich's Hans Lamm or Düsseldorf's Paul Spiegel confirmed that most Jewish students, during this early phase, neither questioned Zionism as an integral part of Jewish education nor disowned the Jewish community in Germany as a whole.[43] Nevertheless, Jewish officials did concede that something had to be done against the general indifference among younger Jews, who often showed little or no enthusiasm for the goings-on in synagogues and community centers.[44] In the early 1970s we therefore have a situation in which young Jews expected the leadership to take seriously the concerns of a more liberal and critical generation, and in which older representatives wished to stave off the slow demise of community institutions whose very existence was under threat. Yet the interests of the one group (renewal) did not necessarily coincide with those of the other (survival).

The latter often reacted bureaucratically. Late in 1970 the Central Council set up a special committee for youth questions, whose aim it was to discuss current problems and whose (young) members were to meet regularly. The first such gathering took place in December 1971,[45] with further ones to follow. Although the committee discussed sensitive issues such as intermarriage or Zionism with much openness and dedication, the communication with both rabbis and officials proved difficult, to say the least.[46] Having set up the group, the Central Council had obviously hoped to be left in peace, and there is little evidence to suggest that Nachmann and his colleagues took seriously the discussions they had initiated in the first place.[47] From 1977 onward, Youth and

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[42] Gabriele Metzler, "Am Ende aller Krisen? Politisches Denken und Handeln in der Bundesrepublik der sechziger Jahre," in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 275 (2002): 103.

[43] *AWJD*, 16.10.1969 "Das innerjüdische Gespräch. Vorschlag zur Aktivierung des Gemeindelebens," 1; ZA, B. 1/7., 13, "Bericht über den Kongreß der jüdischen Jugend in Berlin, Paul Spiegel," 12.2.1970.

[44] *AWJD*, 14.2.1969 "Umwelt nicht unbedingt freundlich." Ratsversammlung des Zentralrats der Juden in Deutschland," 5; 14.4.1970 "Wir brauchen Jugend," 1; and ZA, B. 1/7., 417. Cantor Gerstel in a letter to Paul Spiegel 31.5.1970.

[45] For initiatives on a local level, see Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat*, 188-191. ZA, B. 1/7., 113 "Zusammenfassender Bericht des Seminars in Sobernheim vom 23.-26.12.1971."

[46] ZA B. 1/7., 391 Letter of Nomi Barlev, Daniela Thau, David Wasserstein (Initiativgruppe für Jugendfragen beim Zentralrat) to Herrn Lewy, 23.1.1972 and Daniela Thau, Ruwen Isser, Michael Bock (IGJZ) to "Mitglieder des Direktoriums zur Kenntnisnahme," 13.2.1974, "Zusammenfassender Bericht über das Seminar Sobernheim vom 21.-27.12.1973."

[47] ZA, B. 1/7., 391 Ben Klar, Ben Prinz, Michael Bock to the Zentralrat, 18.6.1974; ZA, B. 1/7., 391 Michael Bock, Ruwen Isser, Ben Klar, Benno Reicher, and Ralf Spier "Ist die jüdische Jugend aus dem Dornröschenschlaf erwacht? IGJZ—gestern—heute—morgen," no date.

Culture Conferences (*Jugend – und Kulturtage*) replaced the committee meetings. Again, while there is no extant material detailing the rationale behind this initiative, the subsequent dialogue between the *Zentralrat* and the conference participants indicates that the former was more interested in addressing the various issues pro forma than in adopting recommendations springing from the conference proceedings.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the ongoing debate on intermarriage. Whereas most members of the younger generation advocated an accommodating stance — allowing non-Halakhic children to join communities, integrating Gentile partners wherever possible, accepting the reality of mixed marriages as a fact of life —,[48] the Central Council under Nachmann moved in the opposite direction. In Frankfurt am Main, for example, a New Jewish List (*Neue Jüdische Liste*) took part in the community elections of 1986. Micha Brumlik and Susann Jael Heenen-Wolff, among others, not only spoke in favor of greater transparency and more democracy, they also demanded that non-Halakhic children be accepted in the community as equal members and that their mothers be taught Hebrew, Yiddish, and Jewish history. Otherwise, the party activists maintained, the tiny Jewish community would be unable to survive in the long run.[49]

Nachmann, however, did not appreciate such advice. From 1982 onward he and his supporters repeatedly demanded that Jews married to Gentiles be not admitted to leadership positions in communities, especially when these positions touched on questions of religion and education.[50] Nachmann argued, without providing any evidence, that offspring from such marriages rarely received a Jewish education; he added that it was hardly impossible to find Jewish spouses in West Germany. [51] In October 1984 the Directorate of the *Zentralrat* passed a resolution advising Jewish communities throughout the country to only send representatives to the Central Council who were married to Jews.[52]

Similar conflicts emerged with regard to Israel. A few examples must suffice. In 1980, Dan Diner, Micha Brumlik und Cilly Kugelmann founded the Frankfurt Jewish Group (*Frankfurter Jüdische Gruppe*); at

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[48] *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung* (*AJW*), 12.10.1979 "Die Jugendtagung in Hannover: Forum jüdischer Aussprache. Probleme der Juden in Deutschland," 2 and 2.12.1983 "Im Mittelpunkt Religion und Familie. Die 6. Jugend- und Kulturtagung des Zentralrats in Stuttgart," 1-2.

[49] ZA, B. 1/7., 263 Flyer "Neue Jüdische Liste," September 1986.

[50] ZA, B. 1/7., 339 "Vermerk über die Sitzung der Vorbereitungskommission der Jugend - und Kulturtagung in Stuttgart," 1.5.1983.

[51] ZA, B. 1/7., 339 "Vermerk über die Sitzung der Vorbereitungskommission der Jugend - und Kulturtagung in Stuttgart," 1.5.1983 und ZA, B. 1/7., 256 "Rede vor einem Landesverband" and *AJW*, 19.9.1986 "Planung für die Zukunft. Die Ratsversammlung des Zentralrats der Juden in Deutschland in Hannover," 1-2.

[52] ZA, B. 1/7., 836 "Protokoll der Sitzung des Zentralrats am 21.10.1984 in Frankfurt am Main," 3.

about the same time, the Federation of Jewish Students published the Munich-based journal *Cheshbon*. The need for a new beginning, Micha Brumlik maintained, was evident in all walks of Jewish life. He added that because the "Zionist experiment had failed," "Torah, Talmud, and Tanakh" would have to replace the undue fixation on the State of Israel.[53] Heschel Freudig, a member of the *Cheshbon* editorial board, agreed with this assessment. Not only had Israel ceased to be as important to Diaspora Jews as in the past, this erstwhile pre-occupation had also blinded West Germany's Jews to the fact that Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank was undemocratic.[54] Brumlik and Freudig were no exceptions. At the preparatory seminar for the fifth Youth and Culture Conference at Wiesbaden in December 1981, a majority of the participants rejected the concept of unconditional love for Israel (Ahavat Israel) as an unrealistic position to adopt in view of recent developments. "Love makes you blind," was how one woman summarized her thoughts on the matter.[55]

The Lebanon War of 1982 occasioned a further radicalization of this form of anti-Zionism. Diner hoped that the military victory of Israel would not lead to a psychological defeat of the Palestinians, and called on everyone to support the resistance of the PLO in the Occupied Territories.[56] Brumlik went one step further. He not only condemned the Israeli army for its "pogrom-like actions," he also compared the massacres of Sabra and Shatila with the murder of tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews in Babi Yar.[57]

Astonishingly, the Central Council did not lose the upper hand, though it was losing its purpose and appeal. In the first decades after the Shoah, the *Zentralrat* had represented most Jews in West Germany. At the time, men like van Dam and Galinski promoted the economic, political, and legal interests of the Jewish community vis-à-vis various German authorities — and in so doing, fulfilled their function in an exemplary manner. Matters looked rather different in 1984 or 1988, however. Now the Central Council lacked specific objectives most community members could unequivocally embrace. Now both young and old Jews increasingly contemplated the future of community life in the country as opposed to ensuring *Wiedergutmachung* or West German democratization. Now the Central Council had a much more difficult time suppressing controversy; determining the course a given controversy might take; or co-opting

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[53] *Cheshbon*, Spring 1980, "Krise der jüdischen Identität?," 7-11.

[54] *Cheshbon*, Autumn 1980, "Die 'Gefahr' der Selbstkritik," 7.

[55] AJW, 4.12.1981 "Ahawat Israel—oder macht Liebe blind?," 3, 5.

[56] "'Frieden für Galiläa'—Krieg den Galiläern," in: *links*, Nr. 148/149, July/August 1982, 2.

[57] Shila Khasani, "Minderheit in der Minderheit. Das politische Engagement der linksorientierten Juden in der Frankfurter *Jüdischen Gruppe*," in: *Trumah. Juden in der Bundesrepublik—Dokumentationen und Analysen*, Band 14 (2005): 61-62.

inexperienced youth to do its work. That being the case, Nachmann and others retained their authority even in this difficult and intellectually challenging period, mainly for two reasons: first, the Jewish community was too small in size to allow for formidable alternative factions or serious counter-publics; and second, the most vocal and intellectually commanding figures critical of the *Zentralrat* preferred to become involved in German politics and/or pursue academic careers to becoming immersed in the high politics of West German Jewry.

 The *Zentralrat* held on to its power because of habit and the particular make-up of West German Jewry. But this power was becoming hollow as liberalism, individualism, and pluralism were taking hold of the Jewish public. Gaining ground in many areas of life —marriage patterns, sociability, consumption —, the new pluralist paradigm was equally present in the ideological sphere, as the debate on the relationship with Israel testifies. If the critique of Israel initially reflected the desire of the second generation to emancipate itself from the first, the content of the critique prefigured the road ahead: more and more Jews would ignore *Zentralrat* pronouncements, indeed dissociate themselves from their official representatives. The culmination of this trend can be seen today, where the President of the Central Council, Charlotte Knobloch, resorts to language strangely reminiscent of the 1970s and often removed from the concerns of new immigrants and the third generation alike. Just as guilt is no longer the guiding force in Jewish life — most Jews are *at home* in Germany —, so the *Zentralrat* has lost much of its raison d'être. Pluralism, it can be argued, has bred a new generation of Jews whose interests are too diverse to be embodied by members of a generation still in the throes of a post-Holocaust world.

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http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/hi/staff/a_kauders.htm

Jews and Jewishness in Post-war Hungary

by *András Kovács*

Abstract

The emergence of a seemingly harmonic symbiosis between Hungarian majority and Jewish minority in 19th century Hungary was a unique phenomenon in a European country where the proportion of Jews was close to 5 percent of the total population, and about 20 percent of the capital city, Budapest. However, after the shocking experience of the persecution in 1944 it was to expect that the factor –unlimited readiness for assimilation in the belief of the unlimited readiness of the majority for accepting it- that made the uniqueness of the Hungarian Jewry will cease to exist. Since quite a large group of the Hungarian Jews survived the Shoah it was not purely a theoretical question that what sort of identity strategies would emerge among the Jewish population of the country. How did the Jews react to the dramatic political changes that occurred in the decades following the Shoah, what kind of identity strategies they developed in the search for their place in the post-war Hungarian society? After a historical introduction the article discusses the changing socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the post-war Hungarian Jews, Jewish politics in the decades of communist rule and finally the identity problems emerged in the post-war decades.

I. Between emancipation and the Shoah

"Uniqueness of Hungarian Jewry" – this is the title of a little known essay of the reknown Israeli historian of Hungarian origin, Jacob Katz.[1] In his interpretation modern Hungarian Jewish history was a unique procedure of social and cultural assimilation that became the substantial determinant of the fate of the Hungarian Jewry both in good and bad times. And, indeed, the founder of Zionism, the likewise Hungarian-born Theodor Herzl seemed to exempt the Hungarian Jewry from the validity of his strategic vision. In a letter written in 1903 to Ernő Mezei, a Jewish representative in the Hungarian parliament, he said: "… Hungarian Zionism can only be red-white-green, and I am not so infatuated that I would take it ill in Hungary".[2] Herzl's defensive attitude was no wonder at all, since the Hungarian Jewish reactions on

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[1]   Jacob Katz, "The Uniqueness of Hungarian Jewry", Forum (1977), 45-53.

[2]   Gábor Schweitzer, Miért nem kellett Herzl a magyar zsidóknak www.bparchiv.hu/magyar/kiadvany/bp604/herzl.html

the idea that being Jewish could mean an alternative national belonging provoked a series of indignant reactions like the one published in the most important organ of the contemporary Hungarian Jewry: "There is no Hungarian Zionism, it won't and should not be ever. It is not to reconcile with the soul of a Hungarian. A Hungarian is Hungarian, even if he is Jewish, his soul is Hungarian, his feelings are Hungarian. … In Hungary Zionism can have only one designation: high treason".[3] What Theodor Herzl felt and Jacob Katz historically diagnosed is probably true. The process of assimilation and the emergence of a singular symbiosis between Hungarian majority and Jewish minority in 19th century Hungary was a unique phenomenon in a European country where the proportion of Jews was close to 5 percent of the total population, and about 20 percent of the capital city, Budapest. According to Viktor Karady and other researchers the explanation of this phenomenon was an unwritten "social contract of assimilation"[4] between the Hungarian political class and the emancipated Jewry. This social contract for assimilation meant a compromise between the liberal nobility and the Jewish middle class. According to this a unique distribution of roles was set up by which the liberal nobility supported the emancipation of Jews and the Jewish middle class in carrying out the economic modernization of Hungary which they themselves were unable to achieve, while they considered political power their own monopoly. The state governed by the liberal nobility protected the Jews from the antisemitism, mainly directed against the achievements of emancipation that the Jews repaid with unconditional loyalty towards the state while trying to achieve total assimilation through which they strengthened the position of the Hungarians in the multi-ethnic state.

In this period between 1867 and 1918 the process of assimilation was unbelievably fast. In 1881 59% of the Jews living in Hungary declared Hungarian to be their mother tongue, but this same ration became 75% by 1891, or 85.7% among children.[5] In 1900 70.8% of the Jews in Hungary were Hungarian native speakers. The same ration was 75.5% in 1910, while only 54.5% of the Catholics in Hungary declared Hungarian as their mother tongue in the same year.[6]

Religious modernization, too, was speeded up in the period after the

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[3]   Adolf Soltész, "Magyarországi sionizmus", Egyenlőség, 1897 október 31.

[4]   Viktor Karády, "A zsidóság polgárosodásának és modernizációjának főbb tényezői a magyar társadalomtörténetben", A zsidókérdésről. (Ed. Fűzfa, Balázs, Szabó, Gábor, Szombathely: 1989): 95-136.

[5]   Károly Vörös, "A budapesti zsidóság két forradalom között, 1849-1918", Kortárs, 12 (1986): 100-118.

[6]   Victor Karady and Istvan Kemeny, "Les Juifs dans la structure des classes en Hongrie: essai sur les antécédents historiques des crises d'antisémitisme du XX siècle", Actes de la recherches en sciences sociales, n. 22 (1978): 4-28.

emancipation. By the end of World War I the "Neolog" - i.e. moderate reform - trend prevailed over orthodoxy, which greatly promoted secularization among the Jews. Gradually Hungarian had become the language of tuition in the denomination schools, and more and more Jewish children were enrolled into state schools, thus the educational segregation by denomination diminished. The strongest indicator of progress of assimilation is the annually increasing number of mixed marriages after 1895, the official reception of the Jewish denomination. The fast assimilation was accompanied by quick upward social mobility. In 1910 more than 40 percent of the countries medical doctors and lawyers were Jewish. Most of the country's Jews no longer faced poverty, as did their co-religionists living on Russian, Ukrainian, Polish or Romanian soil.

The basic experience of Jewish politicians of this period was that they could rely on the support of Hungarian noble liberals if they formulated their goals within the liberal-emancipation paradigm. The ruling politics took a firm stand against antisemitism, and the Jews of Hungary could rely upon the goodwill of Emperor Francis Joseph I – even against groups amongst the high clergy and the aristocracy with antisemitic sentiment. Almost all the Jewish objectives seemed achievable in this alliance – the climax of this development was the acceptance of the Israelite denomination as one of the four "historical denominations" (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and, from 1895 on, the Israelite Community) of the country. In Hungary, therefore, there were none of the typical bottlenecks that led in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe to the development of autonomous Jewish politics.

This symbiosis was torn apart by the changes after the First World War – as a result of which "a country [that had been] previously 'good for the Jews' is transformed, almost overnight, into a country … permeated with anti-Semitic hysteria" – and by the Hungarian Holocaust.[7] According to the newly emerged dominant ideology modernization, which began in the 19th century in Hungary, was not the integral result of Hungarian development but had been imported by aliens, Jews first of all, and in the long run served their interests exclusively. Assimilation on the other hand was only superficial and pretended: the Jews put on a Hungarian disguise simply in order to gain more opportunities to force back the Hungarian "historical classes", and to delete and disintegrate the nation from inside. This antisemitism based on the ethnic concept of nation was not anymore directed against the Galician immigrants wearing caftans and being reluctant towards assimilation, but against the middle class "cosmopolitan" Jewish citizens who had "apparently" assimilated and found their place in society.

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[7]   Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 98.

With this ideology in the background a series of antisemitic laws were passed by the Hungarian parliament starting with the infamous *numerus clausus* law in 1920 which limited the numbers of Jewish students at the universities, until the Nuremberg type of anti-Jewish legislation at the end of the thirties which annihilated fully the emancipated status of the Jews.

The new situation created a dramatic tension for majority of the Jewish population. Assimilation had already alienated quite a few Jews from the tradition. These people now had to realize that however far they went down on the road of assimilation they would have to remain Jews. For many there seemed to be no way out of this situation. After almost a whole century of efforts for assimilation only very few opted for the psychological burden of resuming old traditions, while Zionism, a modern secular Jewish identity, which may have offered an alternative in principle found very little resonance among the Jews in Hungary even in this period. The majority put their heads in sand desperately trying to prove the genuineness of their assimilation, to "refute" the "arguments" of the anti-Jewish attacks, to get rid of, to cover up or to get accepted all the various kinds of allegedly "Jewish" qualities and habits. It is, therefore, little wonder that the Hungarian Jews despite of all anti-Jewish measures –what they considered to be only temporary, forced on the Hungarian governments by the allied Nazi Germany- firmly believed that Hungarian state will never tolerate the physical persecution of its citizens. In consequence, the Hungarian Jewish institutions and the Jewish population was fully unprepared and paralyzed when after the German invasion of the country in March 1944 in a few months more than a half a million Jews were deported with the assistance of the Hungarian authorities, and the majority of them were killed in the concentration camps.

II. The post-war decades

After the shocking experience of the persecution it was to expect that the factor –unlimited readiness for assimilation in the belief of the unlimited readiness of the majority for accepting it- that made the uniqueness of the Hungarian Jewry will cease to exist. Since quite a large group of the Hungarian Jews survived the Shoah –due to the fact that the Jews of Budapest were not deported- it was not purely a theoretical question that what sort of identity strategies would emerged among the Jewish population of the country. How did the Jews react to the changes that occurred in the decades following the Shoah, what kind of identity strategies they developed in the search for their place in the post-war Hungarian society? These are the questions I would like to

discuss below.[8]

The post-war history of Hungary can be divided into four periods. The short democratic period between 1945 and 1948 was followed by the years of the Stalinist dictatorship (1948-1956), the post-Stalinist "Kadar-Regime" (1957-1989), and finally, after the fall of the Communist system in 1990, by the two decades of the new democracy. In all these periods, the external determinants of Jewish identity strategies were manifold, but the most important among them were the social-demographic changes in the Jewish population after the war and the changing political conditions.

1. The first post-war years: a democratic interlude (1945-1948)

1.1 Demography and socio-economic status

The Shoah destroyed the majority of Hungarian Jews. Depending on the method of calculation, estimates of the losses of Hungarian Jewry vary between 200-210,000 and 300,000. Scholars agree that in 1941, when the last census to include religion and origins was carried out, 400,000 persons of Jewish religion and 50-90,000 Christians of Jewish origins lived *on the territory of postwar Hungary* and survival *on the same territory* is assessed between 190,000 and 260,000. R. L. Braham arrives at his figure of 300,000 by subtracting the number of survivors registered by the Statistical Office of the Hungarian Section of the World Jewish Congress from the 1941 statistics.[9] Tamas Stark reaches his estimate of about 200,000 victims by adding up the numbers found in documents dealing with the deportations, forced labour, etc.[10] He believes that the difference in figures is due to the fact that using the subtraction method survivors who did not return to or soon left Hungary are also included among the losses. Due to the almost complete annihilation of provincial Jewry, the majority of the survivors,

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[8]   Many of the subjects I discuss below I analyzed before in detail in three articles. See András Kovács, "Changes in Jewish Identity in modern Hungary". Jonathan Webber (ed.), Jewish Identities in the New Europe, (London, Washington: Littmann Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994); András Kovács, "Jewish Groups and Identity Strategies in Post-Communist Hungary", Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin , András Kovács (eds.) New Jewish Identities, (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2003); András Kovács, "Hungarian Jewish Politics from the End of the Second World War until the Collapse of Communism", Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), Jews and the State. Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege. Studies in Contemporary Jewry, XIX. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[9]   Randolph L. Braham, A magyar Holokauszt, (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 454.

[10]   Tamás Stark, Zsidóság a vészkorszakban és a felszabadulás után 1939-1945, (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1995), 41-47.

144,000 persons, lived in Budapest and the Jewish community was reduced to a handful survivors in many provincial towns. It is estimated that one-third of the survivors was not Jewish by religion. In the following years numbers further decreased because of mixed marriages and low birth rates which reflected not only the disappearance or aging of spouses, but also the material and psychological consequences of persecution. Emigration contributed substantially to the numeric decline of Jewish population. In two large waves of emigration in 1945-48 and 1956-57 ca. 60-75,000 Jews left the country. Based on demographic extrapolations in present-day Hungary there are an estimated 80,000 to 140,000 people today with at least one parent of Jewish origin.[11]

If one looks at the demographic changes in the composition of the Jewish population then it appears that all the important changes favored further assimilation. Between April and July, 1944 all Jews living in the countryside were deported and very few ever came back. Thus the most important base of the traditional Jewry had perished, those families who were deeply religious, had many children and who almost completely refused apostasy or intermarriage. As it is known, the Jews were not systematically deported from Budapest and after the coup of Hungarian nazis in October 1944 in the chaos of the war-torn city those who had the necessary financial means or a great number of non-Jewish connections had a better opportunity to survive as it was easier for them to buy or get forged identity documents or hiding places. An indicator for the dominance of the assimilated Jews among the survivors is that the proportion of baptized Jews comprised about one third of the whole Jewish population of 1945 but among the young this proportion fluctuates between one third and two fifths.[12] The inequality of the chances for survival fundamentally defined the composition of the surviving Jewry: the greatest losses were among the men and the young. The consequence of this was that the possibilities of demographic compensation were extremely limited and the pressure to mixed marriages became extremely strong. These factors strengthened the tendencies towards assimilation.[13] Emigration's effect showed into the same direction: those surviving Jews who became convinced that assimilation was impossible and those who could not fit into their old surroundings after their families had perished left Hungary between 1945 and 1957. About one fourth of the Jews surviving the war

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[11]   Tamás Stark, "Kísérlet a zsidó népesség számának behatárolására 1945 és 1995 között", András Kovács (ed.) , Zsidók a mai Magyarországon (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2002), 101-135.

[12]   Viktor Karády, "Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére", Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon, (Ed. Péter Kende, Párizs: Magyar Füzetek Könyvei, 1984), 70.

[13]   See Ibid., 88-90.

emigrated before 1957. The majority of those who remained in Hungary, however, had belonged to the most assimilated strata even before. Thus, the relative weight of the more urbanized, secularized, assimilated, middle-class section of Jewry in the total Jewish population grew significantly.

It was not only the demographic composition of the surviving Jews but also the social transformation of the Jewish society after the war which proved to be favorable for the process of assimilation. Following the enforced nationalization of the whole industry, real estate, and other properties, and the disappearance of the private sector of economy along with the private employee and the free-lance intellectual strata, many Jews lost their livelihoods and were forced to find new professions. On the other hand, in the process of re-stratification that extended to all social classes in Hungary Jews, owing to their better education, higher qualifications and traditionally higher propensity for mobility, as well as their political reliability after a persecution of which they were the victims, had a favorable starting position. Chances opened for them to pursue careers for which they were qualified but which they had not been able to follow for political reasons before the war. A number of Jews entered the reorganized administration, public service, political institutions and the power-enforcement organizations. Thus, the social structure of the surviving Jewry was greatly altered and the prewar occupational boundaries between Jews and Gentiles faded.

1.2 Jewish politics in the post-war years

Considering all these socio-demographic factors, the initial post-war years brought a series of surprising developments: many surviving Jews turned to the movements and parties that proclaimed the necessity of autonomous Jewish politics. The rapid expansion of the Zionist movement is best illustrated by data on the numbers of the movement's members and supporters. According to these data, in the 1930s there were at most 4000-5000 members of the Zionist movement – an insignificant minority of the total Jewish population. However, in the first year after the war – according to the official congress report published at the time of the Twenty-second Zionist Congress, held in Basle in December 1946 – the number of purchased shekels amounted to 95,000.[14] This means that about two-thirds of the survivors supported the Zionist movement at that time. In 1948 the official report of the Hungarian Zionist Alliance mentions 15,000 registered members (8300 of whom were living in Budapest), which was more than 10% of the total Jewish population at the time.[15] In

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[14]   Attila Novák, Átmenetben. A cionista mozgalom négy éve Magyarországon, (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 2000), 33.

[15]   Ibid, 43, 154.

1949 the files with the complete records of the Hungarian Zionist Alliance fell into the hands of the Communist party. It contained 37,000 names.[16] The 1949 report of the State Security Authority (ÁVH) of the Ministry of Interior on the Hungarian Zionist Alliance mentions that the Hungarian Zionist Alliance had six sections and 80 local groups and a declared membership of 41,000, which – as the report itself determines – was obviously a considerable exaggeration.[17] Nevertheless, under the circumstances, even a fraction of this number would still have indicated considerable support for the Zionists.[18]

Viktor Karády has analyzed on several occasions the motives derived from personal-psychological[19] and social-political conditions[20] that led a substantial minority of the surviving Jews to choose dissimilation – in spite of their demographic characteristics. Clearly, many of the surviving Jews were diverted from their earlier identity strategies by various factors: their experiences of majority society at the time of the persecutions; attempts on the part of the majority to evade its responsibility for the persecutions and for compensation; the difficulties of integrating into post-war society; and the reappearance of antisemitism and its obvious manipulation by the political forces of the new system. For these people, Zionism – as the modern and secular alternative to assimilation – may indeed have been attractive. Nevertheless, for the Zionist movements and parties to strengthen in such an unprecedented manner and so quickly, a combination of circumstances was also necessary. The first of these circumstances was the unexpected increase in the prestige of the Zionist movements and of Zionism in Jewish public opinion.

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[16] The data of these files occur in the document dated December 5, 1949 and entitled "Az MDP KV Szervezési Osztálya javaslata a párt Titkárságának a cionista pártagok kizárásáról", (Múltunk, 1993, 273-276).

[17] Attila Novák, "Átmenetben", 295.

[18] This is especially so, given that post-war emigration peaked in 1949. By collating data from various sources, we may estimate the number of Jews leaving the country between 1945 and the end of 1949 at 40,000. Approx. 15-18,000 of this number emigrated to Palestine or Israel (see Viktor Karády, Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére, 113; Novák, "Átmenetben", 100-103; Novák, ibid, 38; Tamás Stark, Kísérlet a zsidó népesség számának behatárolására 1945 és 1995 között, 104). Emigration – and emigration to Israel in particular – obviously resulted in a reduction in the number of Zionists in Hungary.

[19] Viktor Karády, "Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás Magyarországon a régi rendszertől az ezredfordulóig – Összefoglalási kísérlet", Viktor Karády, Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás. A zsidó csoportazonosság történelmi alakváltozásai Magyarországon, (Budapest: Uj Mandátum, 2001), 56-60.

[20] See Viktor Karády, "Szociológiai kísérlet", 85-87.

One of the most shocking experiences of survivor Jews during the period of persecution was the complete failure to act of the official Jewish representative bodies. Irrespective of what these organizations – and above all the Jewish Council, which had been established by the German occupiers – had done or had not done, for the victims of persecution during the critical months, in the eyes of the great majority of those affected, they were institutions of betrayal; indeed, several of their leaders had to face accusations of collaboration. In contrast, the participation of small groups of Zionists in the resistance movement and in the human rescue effort raised dramatically the prestige of the Zionist movement.[21]

An immediate political factor also contributed to this sudden change in people's appraisal of the Zionist movement. The largest organizations of Zionism in Hungary – and especially the groups that had taken an active part in the resistance – were mostly of left-wing orientation. Zionist resistance closely co-operated – and in some places actually merged – with the small Communist resistance groups.[22] This factor contributed substantially to an increase in the prestige of the Zionist movement for two reasons: firstly, during the immediate post-war years, Jewish public opinion considered the two left-wing parties – the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party – unreservedly anti-fascist political organizations; secondly, it was generally expected that these two parties would have a determining role in the new political system. The Zionists' left-wing views and their left-wing connections held out the prospect of realizing Jewish interests in a left-wing alliance – and doing so in an effective manner.

Another factor contributing to the development of a political atmosphere that was favourable to the Zionists was that during the post-war period the chances of establishing a Jewish state grew, and the Soviet Union supported this. Thus, quite suddenly, the main aim of Zionist policy was transformed from a distant dream into an achievable reality– which was particularly important, since for the surviving Jews, many of whom had lost most of their relatives, friends and acquaintances, the foundation of the State of Israel offered the possibility of a completely new start in life.

Finally, another important reason of the strengthening of the Zionist organizations was that immediately after the war representatives of the foreign Zionist organizations could operate in the country without any limitations or hindrance, and these representatives provided practical assistance towards the everyday organizational work and the operation

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[21]   The history of Zionist resistance in Hungary has been elaborated most thoroughly by Asher Cohen. See Asher Cohen, The Halutz Resistance in Hungary, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[22]   Pál Demény, "A párt foglya voltam" (Budapest: Medvetánc Könyvek, 1988) 140-143.

of the newly-established institutions. The opportunities for organizational development were enhanced by the fact that – partly with their mediation and partly independent from them – the work of the Zionists was being supported by auxiliary organizations with substantial financial resources: primarily the Joint.

2. Under Stalinist rule (1948-1956)

2.1 Social status and social mobility

After the communist take-over, two man tendencies determined the status of Jews in the new social and political system. Although new channels of mobility opened up for Jews, at the same time a substantial number of Jews lost their former social status: their property was nationalized and the Jewish middle class and petty bourgeoisie were victims of the anti-religious and anti-bourgeois measures of the government. Along with non-Jews, many Jews who were considered to belong to the so-called "exploiting classes" were sent into internal exile. On the other hand, new channels of upward social mobility opened up for Jews who had been active in the left-wing parties and political movements before the war and who, therefore, were considered "reliable". They could now embark on careers in the state and party apparatus, in the police and in the army. Other Jews, who had been unable – because of the anti-Jewish laws – to find work in accordance with their qualifications or to attend university, now made use of the new channels of social mobility. This upward mobility triggered by the radical political and social changes characterized only a minority of the surviving Jewish population – but this minority was a very visible one. In the early fiftieth the top leaders of the Communist party, the political police and the army were in large numbers functionaries of Jewish origin who obviously rejected their former identity, cultural traditions and community ties. Thus, upward mobility after 1945 further reinforced the assimilatory trends inside of the Jewish population. This tendency was strengthened by an ideological one. Due to the role of the Soviet army in the liberation of the Budapest ghetto and of the concentration camps and the commitment of the communists to end discrimination, a part of Jews became militant supporters or simply were loyal to the communist system. Additionally, for many Jews, whose aim was earlier to attain complete reception into the nation, tried to find another framework for assimilation after the war. For this substantial group the communist ideology offered a new way of assimilation. Many Jews were now convinced that the new communist system would create a society where there would be no "Jewish problem" or antisemitism. They believed that joining the communist party would mean a final and positive integration into the society, an integration which is even superior to the assimilation they tempted to achieve before the war because the communist program

strives after a qualitative change not only of the life of Jews –like the liberal offer of assimilation into the nation- but of the whole society. As the Jewish-communist hero of a novel placed in the years after the war says: "Jews and non-Jews, we are all the children of a bad and unjust society... bearing its mark on us. We all must assimilate ... to the new ideal of man. We all must transform into socialist people." [23]

2.2 The politics of repression

The presence of Jewish communists in the party leadership and in the state apparatus did not mean at all that the Jewish population of the country would have exempted from the oppressive measures of the system. Although the Zionist left-wing cherished illusions with regard to Communist policies, the Communist Party viewed the Zionist movement with inherent hostility and suspicion from the outset, and leading ideologists of the Hungarian Communist Party had made it clear already in the first year after the war that they could not accept any form of Zionism. "In Hungary there is both a reactionary and a progressive path to the resolution of the Jewish question", wrote the historian and leading Communist Party ideologist Erik Molnár in a contribution to the Communist Party's theoretical periodical in 1946 . "The reactionary path is Zionism, which remains reactionary even if it proclaims socialism. ... The attempt of Zionism to restore the insignificant national consciousness of Hungarian Jews contradicts the direction of Hungarian social development and thus is a reactionary aim. ... In Hungary the progressive path to a resolution of the Jewish question leads towards the full assimilation of the Jews."[24] Also, it was not surprise at all, that after the communist seizure of power in 1948 the Zionist Association (the umbrella organization of all Zionist organizations and movements) was immediately forcefully disbanded, subsequently several of its members and leaders were arrested and put on trial.

The policies of the Communist party-state towards the Jewish denomination were practically no different from the policies pursued against the other denominations – and the leaders of the Community that were still in their posts behaved very similarly to the leaders of the "pacified" Christian churches. The agreement between the Jewish denomination and the Hungarian state was signed on December 7, 1948. The Jewish negotiators (Lajos Stöckler and Samu Kahán-Frankl, the leaders of the Neolog and Orthodox communities) gave their consent to the nationalization of the denomination's schools. The final

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[23]   Ervin Gyertyán, Szemüveg a porban, (Budapest: Magvető, 1975) 387.

[24]   Erik Molnár, "Zsidókérdés Magyarországon", Társadalmi Szemle, 7 (1946): Reprinted in: Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus, Péter Hanák (ed.), (Budapest:1984) 30.

step in the transformation of the Jewish denomination in line with the wishes of the State, was the forced union of the institutions of the Neolog and Orthodox Communities: In February 1950, in the great hall of the Community, under portraits of Lenin, Stalin and Rákosi (the Stalinist leader of the Hungarian Communist Party), the representatives of the Israelite National Assembly (Izraelita Országos Gyűlés) adopted a resolution establishing a single, uniform national organization – a body that the State could obviously control more easily. In doing so, they abolished the independence of the Autonomous Orthodox Central Office. From this point onwards, the Orthodox wing functioned as a branch of the united organization. An important element of full state control was the "Rules for Rabbis", which was adopted at the beginning of the decade. Section 25 of this regulation declared that a rabbi "could not preach sermons whose content or philosophy contradicted the political, economic or social order of the Hungarian state, or which conflicted with the interests of the Hungarian Jewish denomination".[25] Finally, in 1957 senior appointments in the Jewish Community and the rabbinate were formally made subject to the approval of state bodies – and thus the leadership of the Jewish Community became an institutional part of the *nomenklatura* system of the party-state.[26]

While the repressive policies employed by the party-state against the Jewish denomination were no different from policies pursued against other religious denominations, Jews were affected by forms of repression that in the case of the other churches were clearly absent. Such repression was inflicted on real or perceived manifestations of secular Jewish identity or Jewish descent was used merely as a pretext for political repression. From 1949 until 1954 a whole series of political trials based on accusations of Zionist activity took place – the imprisoned or interned victims of such trials included former Zionists, Orthodox Jews, as well as those who succumbed to the wave of anti-Zionist purges within the Communist Party. The anti-Zionist campaign that began in the Soviet Union in 1952-1953 led in Hungary not only to the imprisonment of various senior officers of the Communist political police – a majority of whom were of Jewish descent – but also to the arrest on charges of Zionism of those Jewish leaders, who had consistently represented Communist interests within the Jewish Community. Another special manifestation of the policies of intimidation imposed on the Jews was the recording of Jewish background and the attempts to restrict the number of Jewish cadres.

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[25] Quoted by László Csorba, "Izraelita felekezeti élet Magyarországon a vészkorszaktól a nyolcvanas évekig", L. Ferenc Lendvai, Anikó Sohár, Pál Horváth (eds.), Hét évtized a hazai zsidóság életében, (Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Intézet, 1990), 131.

[26] Ibid., 141.

2.3 Identity options

The communist dictatorship narrowed down the identity options of the Jews. In line with all post-emancipation policies the communist regime was prepared to treat Jewish affairs at best as denominational issues. The public display of any other identity forms was banned. Zionism was persecuted, and secular Jewish culture was considered to be a remnant of a reactionary old world. Even the memory of the Holocaust was repressed: with the Communist seizure of power in 1948, the former vivid debates on responsibility were abruptly stopped and the theme of the Holocaust was expulsed from the public sphere.[27] The wartime persecutions appeared embedded in the boring Manichean narrative of the "official" ideology. This narrative was constructed around the principle of heroic struggle of Good – the Communist parties and movements – against Evil – all other players, i.e., the conscious or unconscious representatives of the exploiting classes. Between 1948 and 1956 the fact that the majority of victims were Jews remained in the background and was hardly mentioned in the history textbooks.[28]

Since the Jewish population of the country was already highly secularized and, additionally, religious life was drastically restricted (Shabbat was a working day, kosher food was hardly available, etc.), religiosity could not serve as basis of identification for substantial Jewish groups, either. The official Jewish representation, the leadership of the religious community accepted the given conditions and never tried to deviate from the official definition of Jewishness, i.e. that of the religious one. Consequently, the potential target group of their policies was only a minority of the survivor population.

The position of the leaders of the Jewish Community may be regarded as a decision based on a sober estimation of the possibilities. They may have really believed that it was worth giving up secular Jewish goals, which were untenable anyway, in order to preserve the viability of the religious institutions. A radical (and ritually repeated) rejection of Zionism in the statements of the Jewish leaders and in the Jewish press, as well as a harsh criticism of Israel could be the consequences of sensible considerations. It appears, however, that in some matters of great importance and affecting the everyday lives and existence of many Jews, the behaviour of the leadership of the Community went

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[27]   Imre Kertész, K. dosszié (Budapest: Magvető 2006).

[28]   As historian László Karsai has noted, "There was a peculiar bidding game of who suffered most and who lost more people in the course of which Hungarian textbook writers attempted to conceal the uniqueness, essence and peculiarities of the Jewish Shoah. The 'ranking order' of victims is remarkable from this aspect: in accordance with the emphasis on class struggle, communists were listed first, followed by political prisoners and Soviet prisoners of war". László Karsai, "Tankönyveink a Shoáról", Világosság 7 (1992), 534.

beyond what one might call political realism and it bordered on collaboration.[29] Thus, the process which led to gradual alienation of the Jewish majority from the official Jewish representations, which started already in the period of the persecution accelerated, the distance between the Jews and the Jewish institutions permanently grew.

The socio-demographic composition of the Jewish population, the new political circumstances and the behaviour of the Jewish institutions together greatly contributed to the rise of an identity pattern which was only sporadically present among the Jews of the country before. Whereas on one hand a Jewish minority group by accepting the offer of the new ruling ideology experimented with the identity strategy of the total dissimulation, on the other many former Zionists and the Jewish Orthodoxy – the two groups that suffered most from Communist repression – while wanting to preserve a well articulated Jewish identity clearly considered the Communist party-state to be an anti-Jewish regime,[30] the great majority of country's Jews took a middle-of-the road position. Among Hungary's secularized Jews there must have been many who considered the political regime -whose measures had caused them great suffering as "members of the bourgeois classes" and had created material conditions that were far worse than before the war- a dreadful thing, but not something that bore down on them as Jews, and quite clearly the "lesser evil" – when compared to the era of persecution. Additionally, they might have felt that under the new circumstances they could get rid of from the stigma of being Jewish much easier than before, since not only any public display of Jewish identity was banned but all open forms of antisemitism as well. Hiding Jewishness and other forms of "stigma management" by passing became a frequent phenomenon. A characteristic indicator of this is a piece of data from an interview project carried out in the mid-eighties with members of the "second generation". In the families of the 117 persons we interviewed it was not an exceptional case if the family never revealed the secret of a child's Jewish origin. 31 interviewees found out from strangers and not their relatives or members of their families that they were Jews or deduced the fact from certain indications. For an other 24 person it took a long time to find out the truth about their origin. It was only when a difficult situation occurred –f.e. the child started to make antisemitic remarks at home- that their parents had to "enlighten" them

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[29]   See Kovács, "Hungarian Jewish Politics".

[30]   Sándor Bacskai, "A magyarországi zsidó ortodoxia története 1945 után", Múlt és Jövő 4 (1993), 73-83; Sándor Bacskai, Egy lépés Jeruzsálem felé, (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Könyvkiadó, 1997); Béla Dénes, Ávósvilág Magyarországon. Egy cionista orvos emlékiratai, (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 1997); Imre Goldstein, Novemberi tavasz, (Budapest: 2000).

and reveal the secret of their Jewishness.[31]

3. The post-Stalinist period (1957-1989)

The reception of the 1956 revolution differed among the various groups of Jewish society. For religious Orthodox Jews the revolution meant liberation from the oppression of an atheist state that persecuted religion – and not least the possibility of being able to leave the country. A significant group among the secular Jews was also sympathetic to the changes promised by the fall of dictatorship. On the other hand, there was also renewed fear of antisemitism: a great number of reports of antisemitic manifestations and groups – almost all of which were never confirmed – circulated in Jewish society in Budapest. No doubt, the fear of a renewed outbreak of antisemitism led many Jews to leave the country. But two other factors were more important than this motive: the experiences of the first decade after the war had made it clear to many Hungarian Jews that life would be easier elsewhere – both for those Jews that wished to retain their Jewish identity and faith *and* for those Jews who finally wished to free themselves from their old bonds. According to estimates, about 20,000-30,000 Jews left Hungary in the course of the wave of emigration of 1956-1957.[32] There were quite a few Jews who actively participated in the events led to the revolution and in the revolution itself. Many of them came from the group of the earlier devoted communists: facing the reality of Stalinism, the majority of the intellectual Jewish communists were gradually disillusioned and many of them joined the emerging opposition and became militants of the 1956 revolution. In the days of the revolution, the Jewish Community issued a statement in which it supported the revolution and announced the dismissal of the old leaders.[33]

After the period of retribution that followed the 1956 revolution – from the latter half of the 1960s onwards – Communist politics changed in comparison with the situation in the 1950s. The nature of the political system was unaltered; the party still refused to tolerate the operation of independent institutions and continued to control public

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[31]   Ferenc Erős, András Kovács, Katalin Lévai, "Comment j'en suis arrivé à apprendre que j'étais Juif?", Actes de la Recherches en Sciences Sociales 56 (1985).

[32]   The most recent review of the data concerning the emigration of Jews from Hungary is that of Tamás Stark. He, too, has confirmed – on the basis of his inquiries – the variously cited figure of 20-30,000 Jewish emigrants in 1956. See Stark, "Kísérlet", 122, 123.

[33]   This was reported in the November 2, 1956 edition of the daily "Magyar Nemzet". According to other sources, however, the retirement of the old leadership took place only in January 1957. See Csorba, "Izraelita felekezei élet", 140.

bodies, but it now refrained from exercising control over people's everyday lives. Post-Stalinist communist politics did not attempt to mobilize society constantly and made numerous concessions to the individual, who – after the political frustration that had followed 1956 – now desired an undisturbed existence at least in the private sphere. The Communist Party's policy on the churches reflected this general political change. In the period after the retribution that followed the revolution, the pressure on religiosity and everyday religious practice gradually declined. The main body of control became the State Office for Church Affairs, which regulated church life primarily by monopolizing the rights of decision in areas such as church finance and ecclesiastical appointments.[34] The policy of the state was fundamentally directed at placing individuals at the head of the denominations that were prepared to collaborate without reservation. Like in the case of all other denominations, in the case of the Jewish Community, this aim was fully achieved, as well.

3.1 Demography, social mobility and social status

After the 1956 wave of emigration the profile of Jewish society in Hungary changed once more. The remaining Jewish population outside Budapest disappeared almost completely: many Jews emigrated or moved to the capital city. Religious Jews – particularly the younger and middle-aged ones – left the country in large numbers. Of 190 pupils enrolled into the Budapest Jewish Grammar School in 1956, just 47 remained in 1957.[35] It appears that most of the Jews that had been involved in the post-war Zionist movement also emigrated. In early 1956 the Budapest Jewish Community had 15,000 tax-paying members. After 1956, however, this number fell considerably, although according to estimates[36] in 1960 at least 115,000 Jews were still living in the

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[34]   Under Law-decree no. 22 of 1957, the prior approval of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary was necessary for the following appointments (and dismissals): National Representation of the Hungarian Israelites – chairman, deputy chairmen, general secretary; the Budapest Israelite Community – chairman, deputy chairmen; Neolog Rabbinical Council – chairman; and Orthodox Rabbinical Council – chairman. The approval of the State Office for Church Affairs was necessary for the appointment of directors to the Jewish Grammar School and the Rabbinical Seminary.

[35]   László Felkai, A budapesti zsidó fiú- és leánygimnázium története, (Budapest: Anna Frank Gimnázium Kiadása, 1992), 153, 168.

[36]   Stark, "Kísérlet", 119.

country.[37] In 1960 the Budapest Jewish Community registered just 12 births, and this number fell even further during the following ten years: the Community's records show 3 births in 1965 and 9 births in 1970.[38] The number of Jews who remained affiliated in some manner to the official community further diminished in the following decades: the decline may be demonstrated once more by the dramatic reduction in pupil numbers at the Budapest Jewish Grammar School: in 1959-1960 75 pupils received certificates from the school; this number rose in the following years to over 100; then from 1967 it declined steadily to a low-point in 1977 when just 7 pupils were studying at the grammar school. It was not until 1986 that the number of pupils rose once again to more than thirty.[39]

In the years of the post-Stalinist "soft" dictatorship the upward mobility of the Jewish population continued. A demographic survey on the Jews of Hungary (carried out in 1999) revealed that Jews have a very high level of educational achievement. The percentage of those with academic degrees, is extremely high: more than two-third of those who were born between 1945 and 1965 have university or college graduation. Correspondingly, the social status of the Jewish population moved further upwards in the decades between 1956 and 1988: ten years after the fall of the Communist system the percentage of managers, academic professionals and the self employed was higher than 70 per cent. Thus, the majority of the Jews moved towards an upper-middle class position.

3.2 Communist policy and the Jewish institutions

In the decades after 1956 a pragmatic compromise characterized the relationship of the state and the Jewish institutions. The Communist

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[37] The social background of Jews that emigrated in 1956 may be reconstructed on the basis of secondary sources alone. In late 1953 the political police compiled a report for Communist Party General Secretary Mátyás Rákosi concerning Jews who intended to emigrate. The report - see Dokumentumok. A magyar zsidóság és a hatalom 1945-1955. 32 dokumentum, ed. by László Svéd, (Múltunk, 1993), 291, 292 - indicates approx. 10,000 potential Jewish emigrants, of whom 80% were Orthodox. This represented approx. 80% of the Orthodox Jewish population. About half of those who intended to emigrate were aged 35-55. The primary reasons for emigration included religious or Zionist convictions, as well as relatives living in Israel.

[38] János Gadó, "Zsidó újszülöttek bejegyzése 1945-től 1996-ig", Szombat 1 (January 1998), 8.

[39] László Felkai, "A budapesti zsidó fiú- és leánygimnázium", 152, 153. The fact that demographic factors were not the primary cause of the decline in pupil numbers is proved by the developments of the period after 1990: by the academic year of 1990-1991 the school had 119 pupils. Since 1990 the number of pupils attending Jewish schools in Budapest (four primary schools and three grammar schools) has been approx. 1200. The Community's school has had about 300 pupils.

party-state appeared willing to stifle public manifestations of antisemitism[40] – obviously fearing that antisemitism and anti-Communism might become intertwined – but it placed strict conditions on protection against antisemitism. The first condition was that the Jewish organizations should adhere declaratively to the definition of the Jewish community as a religious denomination, and that they should reject any endeavors to speak of the Jews in any other manner. "Whoever does not consider the complete assimilation of the Jews into the surrounding society possible or desirable", wrote one of the leading political publicists of the Kádár era, that is, whoever thought that some kind of Jewish identity was possible outside the walls of the synagogue, "with his ideas, justifies Hitler and the gas chambers"[41] But the ideas underlying this approach were also explicitly formulated by a leading politician of the Kádár era and a member of reformist wing of the Party, Imre Pozsgai. According to him, for today's Hungarian Jews there is no alternative to assimilation, but assimilation is also in the community's interest: "It is a historical fact that a majority of the Jews of Hungary have chosen this path, and are walking along this path voluntarily today, and thus nobody has the right to use in connection with them the pronouns *we* and *they*." The offer that followed was simple: assimilation, identification with the nation meant identification with the Communist system and its program, and it was acceptance of this that established the right to protection from antisemitism.[42]

In the three decades after 1956, this principle determined the Jewish policy of the Hungarian post-Stalinist regime. The policy consistently applied two fundamental principles: "Jewish matters" do not exist and therefore cannot appear in the political arena (or if they do then only where they may be treated as sub cases of "church affairs"); the state would take a tough stand against anybody who appeared either within the power apparatus or outside of it as either a mediator of "Jewish affairs" or as the enemy of the Jews.

The definition of the Jewish community exclusively as a denomination excluded a great part of Hungary's Jewish population from the circle that the Jewish institutions sought to represent.

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[40]   See, for instance, the Ministry of Interior's proposal of September 1960, which mentions "nationalist and anti-semitic" chanting at football matches and the planned attack of the "hooligans" against the students of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary, and demands authorisation to take a tougher stand from the Politburo. See Belügyminisztérium "Előterjesztés egyes preventív intézkedések bevezetésére" (Magyar Országos Levéltár, M-KS-288-5/198) 10-11.

[41]   György Száraz, Egy előítélet nyomában, (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó 1976), 265.

[42]   Imre Pozsgay, Bevezetés, Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus, Péter Hanák (ed.), (Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1984), 11.

Consequently, the Jewish Community could not count upon any significant social support. The Community was not backed by any group whose reactions needed to be considered by the Hungarian politicians as they made decisions concerning Jewish institutions and the Jewish community in general. Moreover, there was no change during these years in the anti-Zionist policies of the Jewish Community and its rejection of any public identification with Israel. In consequence, the possibility of exerting pressure from abroad on domestic political decisions was reduced to a minimum. In this situation – a state of complete internal and external isolation – the Jewish Community and Jewish institutions became fully dependent upon the Communist state. Beside of the support of elderly people, the one remaining political goal, which served to legitimize the Community, was the defense of the Jewish community from antisemitism. But this was the goal by which the Community's leadership, in its complete dependence on the state, also attempted to legitimize its unconditional loyalty to the Communist party-state. As a Community document expressed it: "There are just two paths ahead: socialism, that is, the possibility of life – and fascism, that is, death".[43] Under these circumstances, those young Jews who adhered in some form or another to Jewish identity, could only imagine manifesting this outside the official Jewish institutions. However, the self-organizing young Jewish groups that appeared after the late sixties on the scene, proved to be weak, and were oppressed without hesitation by the authorities – often with the assistance of the community leadership.[44]

3.3 Identity options

The above presented socio-demographic tendencies and political conditions – growing dominance of the secular groups, upward social mobility, assimilationist state policy and defensive community reactions- further strengthened the assimilatory pressure. An obvious indicator of this was that during the 1985 survey on the identity of the Jewish generation born after the war, we often met with the phenomenon that quite a substantial number of our interviewee attributed only a reactive content to their identity. Jewishness only assumed a meaning for them when they were faced with judgments of a non-Jewish environment concerning "Jewish differentness", or outright antisemitism. They could not cope with the fact that they remained Jewish in the eyes of their surroundings though they considered themselves fully assimilated. A "negative" identity based on this stigma emerged and became gradually widespread: those concerned, communist or not, believed that it was only antisemitism that made them Jewish. They felt that the boundaries separating them from others are externally defined; they did their best

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[43] Quoted by Csorba, "Izraelita felekezeti élet", 141.

[44] See Kovács, "Hungarian Jewish Politics", 145, 146.

to hide everything that could identify them as Jewish, nevertheless, this stigmatized identity infiltrated their thinking and behavior. As Erving Goffman has analyzed it, stigmatized individuals - even if they think that their stigmatization has no real foundations - try to develop behavior patterns and communicational rules that make it easier to live with the stigma.[45] As a result, they also draw, often involuntarily, boundaries between their own group and others. They are afraid - and in this respect, it is unimportant whether with good reason or not - of social conflicts, political phenomena and rhetoric that do not invoke fear in others. They behave and communicate differently and assign different meaning to certain gestures, words and behavior within the group and outside it. Consequently, it is easy for both members of the ingroup and outgroup to identify this behavior developed in order to coping with the stigma. Identification in this case, however, develops into identity and this identity is often a painful and burdensome one. No wonder that after the fall of the communist system for a younger generation of Jews who could start to live without the political restrictions placed upon their parents in the Communist system one of the main motives behind their efforts aiming at a renewal of Jewish identities was that such identity has been not simply unattractive but absolutely unbearable.

4. After 1990: an ethnic revival?

After the collapse of the old system – despite of the Jewish majority's highly secular and assimilated status and its the distance from all Jewish institutions – signs of a Jewish revival appeared. A growing number of Jews started to take an interest in Jewish religion, traditions and culture. Religious life became animated and a number of cultural, religious and Zionist organisations have been set up or revived. One reason for the resurgence of Jewish identity was obviously a general strengthening of the demand for ethnic and religious identities. This is a natural phenomenon at a time of great social change which generally plunges acquired social identities into a crisis. This search for identity was enhanced by the growing acceptance of multiculturalist orientations. Finally, the revival was facilitated by the opening of borders and above all by rapidly developing relations with Israel and Jews in the United States. But – as I have mentioned before – the main motive behind the new identity strategy seemed to be the desire to throw off the stigmatized identity of the older generation.
Which Jewish groups initiated the revivalist tendencies and what was their status in the Jewish society? A survey which was carried out among the Jews in Hungary in 1999-2000 offers good insights into the

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[45] Erving Goffman, Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity (Penguin Books, 1984) 57-128.

nature and extent of these new phenomena.[46]

In the analysis of the survey results firstly, we examined the extent to which each of the various generations has moved away from the Jewish religious-cultural tradition. Secondly, we tried to develop types of multi-generational patterns of identity strategies. The result of our analysis was, that 18% of the total sample fell into a *fully assimilated group* in which neither the parental family nor the current family exhibited any elements of tradition at all. On the other hand, in the case of 11% of families*, traditions were observed by both generations.* These two groups represent the extremes of an imaginary identity scale. The third group (28%) abandoned traditions in the lifetime of its members: although parents still observed traditions, the respondents themselves indicated that they don't follow this path at all. A fourth group (15%) has shown the clear signs of ongoing secularisation. The parents observed traditions but the children celebrated only some of the High Holy days. In a fifth group (15%), tradition was symbolically present in both generations, mainly by celebrating some of the main Jewish feasts. The *revivalist group* consisted 13% of the population: in this group Jewish traditions were stronger in the current family than they had been in the parental family.[47]

If we examine the different groups, it becomes apparent that three factors have a special role in determining the identity patterns of the group: *age, social mobility, and the strength of Jewish tradition at the time of generational changes.* Our basic supposition was that a combined effect of the generation factor and social mobility has had the strongest influence on identity strategies.

In the course of the examination, we divided the four generations of Jews living in Hungary today into separate groups. The members of the first generation were born before 1930, who were already adults at the time of the Shoah. The second generational group comprised those who were born between 1930 and 1944, whose life-forming experiences were made during the era of Stalinist Communism. To the third generational group belonged those who were born between 1945 and 1965, i.e. the generation that grew up under consolidated Communist rule and Kadarism. Finally, the fourth group comprised those born after 1966, whose most powerful experiences as a

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[46]   Between November 1999 and July 2000 we held personal interviews with 2015 individuals. The group surveyed consisted members of the Hungarian Jewish population aged over 18 years. The basic results of the survey see András Kovács (Ed.), Jews and Jewry in contemporary Hungary: results of a sociological survey, (London: Jewish Policy Research Institute 2004. http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/PJC_Reports/no_1_2004/pjc_1_2004.htm

[47]   A detailed analysis of these data see András Kovács, "Jewish Groups and Identity Strategies in Post-Communist Hungary", Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin, András Kovács (eds.), New Jewish Identities, (Budapest: New York: Central European University Press, 2003), 228-236.

generation may have been the disintegration and collapse of the Communist system. On the basis of our data it becomes apparent that detachment from tradition and the abandonment of tradition were most frequent amongst the 65-75 age group (27 and 43 %), i.e. amongst the young survivors of the Shoah who were born between 1924 and 1933. This is the age group which experimented with new and radical means of exiting the Jewish community and which was most exposed to the anti-religious policies of the Communist regime. The complete lack of tradition is particularly characteristic of the children of this generation, who were born between 1954 and 1974 (31%). But this same age group – which experienced the collapse of Communism aged between 15-35 – has the highest proportion of reverts to tradition (24%).

Upward social mobility speeded up the abandonment of tradition, and the fading away of Jewish identity considerably influenced the next generation's relationship to the Jewish community - but it did not prevent the resurgence of the demand for a redefinition of the substance of Jewish identity, especially among those born after 1970.

If look at the six multigenerational identity groups described above, we have to notice, that in the "old" groups (groups 3 and 4 in which the older generations are stronger represented), mobility is clearly the strongest factor that influenced the registered identity pattern. The extent of the group member's progression down to the path of assimilation – i.e. whether they completely abandoned tradition or retained certain symbolic elements – depended from which social status the parents' generation departed, for in this generation tradition was present in equal strength in both groups. In the "young groups" (groups 1 and 4) mobility had merely an indirect effect: in both groups higher social status was characteristic even of the parents' generation. The main factor influencing the first group to choose a strategy of complete assimilation and the second group to choose a strategy of "symbolic acceptance of tradition" appears to have been the extent to which Jewish tradition was still alive in the family after the path of mobility had been closed off.

The "revivalist" group comprised mainly young people – four-fifths of the group belong to the younger age groups. This is the first group in which the gender ratio differs from the average: the proportion of women in the group is higher than in other groups. Usually, the parents of members of the group are university or college educated, the mobility leap occurred between the grandparents' generation and the parents' generation. Members of the group generally live in favourable circumstances. The employment structure of the group includes significantly more academic professions than that of the other groups.

Although the group's Jewish identity is undoubtedly strong, it is an acquired identity. "Reverting to tradition" does not mean the revival of religious orthodoxy: just 10% of members of the group strictly follows the religious rules, many of the group members (41%) observe the

major Holy Days only. However, in their parental families and in their childhood no tradition was present at all – many of them did not even know that they were Jewish (15% of the group were already adults when they discovered that they were Jews). In general, members of the group refuse assimilation and strongly sympathise with Israel. A significant proportion of the group opposes mixed marriages, and many members of the group (69 %) have mainly or exclusively Jewish friends. This group is the group of "voluntary Jews"[48] – the possibility of an "exit" strategy had been open to them, but they have chosen a "return" strategy, instead.

For the future, it seems so, that a complete revival of religious tradition affecting all aspects of life will probably be the new identity strategy of a few. The renewed elements of tradition seem destined to serve as identity marker, token of an ethnic group consciousness. The first and foremost function of ethnic groups is the securing of conditions necessary for the self-maintenance of the group as an important social identity source. The stability and strength of the ethnic group depends up on its level of institutionalization as well as the ability of its institutions to focus on the problems considered by the group to be its own.[49] These factors will determine the future of the ethnic revivalist movements in Hungary, too.

Similar movements and tendencies may be observed among the Jewish populations of the other former Communist countries of East Central Europe. Nevertheless, in an extremely important respect, the situation of the Hungarian Jews differs from that of the Czech, Slovak or Polish Jews. In the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, owing to the small size of the Jewish communities in these countries, the 'revival movements' seem unable to prevent the gradual disappearance of the Jewish Diasporas. In Hungary, however, where according to various types of estimates there are between 80,000 and 140,000 Jews, the size of groups searching for a new identity probably may exceed the critical point that is indispensable to slow down or even counterbalance the process of attrition at the margins. Unless a strong emigration wave occurs due to a dramatic deterioration in external conditions, it is these factors that shall determine the extent to which Hungarian Jews develop an ethnic group consciousness and identity in the future.

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[48]   Diana Pinto, "The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish Identity", András Kovács (ed.), Jewish Studies at the Central European University. Public Lectures 1996-1999, (Budapest: CEU, 2000) , 188-189.

[49]   For the effect of these factors both in general and specifically – e.g. in the case of the Polish Jews – see Claire A. Rosenson, "Polish Jewish Institutions in Transition: Personalities over Process", Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin, András Kovács (eds.), New Jewish Identities, 263-290.

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The Jews in Poland after the Second World War.
The Most Recent Contributions to Polish Historiography.

by Carla Tonini

Abstract

In recent years Polish historians have shown a growing interest in the history of the Jews in Poland after 1945. Studies on this topic had started – although in a sporadic way - in the 1960s, intensified in the 1980s and at the turn of the twenty first Century they have focused on three main issues: post-war anti-Semitism; emigration and the creation of the State of Israel, and the restitution of property. The aim of this article is to set these studies in the Polish political and cultural context in which they were written in order to highlight elements of change and continuity within the historical debate.

Since 1989, Polish scholars have taken a growing interest in the history of the Jewish community in Poland after Second World War.

The first studies date back to the 1960s when, thanks to the liberalization following Stalin's death, both the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH) and the Jewish Social and Cultural Associations (TSKŻP) were able to publish works on the economic and social conditions of the Polish Jews in post-war Poland. Most of these were occasional publications dealing with regional realities, particularly those of Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania, the main resettlement areas for the Jews in the aftermath of the war. Their chief aim was to emphasize the positive role which the Jews had played in the creation of Polish Socialism, for instance through Jewish cooperatives and factories[1]. They were works written by Jewish historians for the Jews themselves, often in the Yiddish language: a sort of parallel historiography which had no relevance for Polish historiography based on the idea of a country inhabited exclusively by Poles.

These studies tackled topics like religion, the development of Zionism after 1945, even the situation of the Jews under the Stalinist regime, provided that Polish anti-Semitism wasn't mentioned. Nevertheless, the 1960s studies give important information on the activities of the

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[1] Samuel Bat, "Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku", Rocznik Wroclawski, (1961): 50-80; Id. "Badania ankietowe ludnosci żydowskiej Dolnego Śląska. Problematyka demograficzna", Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego"(BŻIH) 47 e 48, part one (1963): 52-78; Id, BŻIH, 50 part two (1964): 44-70; A. Goldstein, "Powstanie skupiska ludności żydowskiej na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-1947", Sobótka, 1 (1967); Szeyja Bronsztein, "Uwagi o ludności żydowskiej na Dolnym Śląsku w pierwszych latach po wyzwoleniu", BŻIH 75 (1970): 31-54.

Committee of the Polish Jews (CKŻP) – the organisation that held sway over social and political life between 1944 and 1949 – the demographic structure of the Jewish community and the migratory trends[2]. As late as the 1990s, some of these studies were among the very few sources on subjects like the school system or the professional structure of the Jews in Pomerania[3]. Inside the TSKŻP a group of scholars could debate and research; since 1989 their regional studies have helped to correct a historiography almost exclusively focused on the Jews of Warsaw.

The post-Stalinist thaw was short-lived. The anti-Semitic campaign launched by the communist government in 1968, forced about 20.000 Jews to flee the country, thus bringing the Jewish presence in Poland down to 12.000 people. Several Jewish historians were fired whilst others were imprisoned; the Jewish Historical Institute, which was placed under strict control and deprived of most of its scholars, was forced to revert to old subjects such as the Jews' "class struggle from the tenth to the nineteenth century" or their "martyrdom and resistance during Second World War". The ŻIH Bulletin contributed to the wave of nationalist publications, which, glorified the help the Poles had given to the Jews during the war[4].

In 1980, the birth of Solidarność paved the way for the debate on post-war anti-Semitism. Warsaw University organized a conference on 'March '68' at which the leading figures of the student's protests, both witnesses and victims of the anti-Semitic campaign and now mostly professional historians, related their personal experiences. Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, Jerzy Jedlicki discussed the 1968 anti-Zionist campaign, the way the competing factions in the Communist Party had made use of the Zionist issue in the internal struggle for power, and the role of anti-Semitism in Polish society. At the same time, however, they placed part of the blame for anti-Semitism on the Jews themselves, who "had joined en masse the Communist Party", thus endorsing the stereotype of the Żydokomuna (all Jews are Communist and all the Communists are Jews)[5]. The following year, historian Krystyna Kersten, going against a well-established taboo, published in the weekly Solidarność an article on the pogrom of Kielce, the town where on the fourth of July 1946 a mob of hundreds of Poles murdered forty two

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[2] Izroel Bialostocki, "Wojewódzki Komitet Żydów w Szczecinie, 1946-1950", BŻIH, 71-72 (1970): 83-105.

[3] J. Pluciński, "Ludność żydowska na pomorzu zachodnim w latach 1946-1949", Przegląd Zachodnio Pomorski 3, (1969): 51-63; Kazimierz Wasiak, "Szkolnictwo i kultura grup narodowościowych w Polsce Ludowej", Przegląd Zachodni" 4 (1972): 35-47; Józef Orlicki, "Wstęp do monografii o ludności żydowskiej w latach 1945-1949", Przegląd Zachodniopomorski. 4 (1970): 41-56; Szeyja Bronsztejn, "Uwagi o ludności żydowskiej na Dolnym Śląsku", BŻIH, 75 (1970): 31-54.

[4] See BŻIH, 1970, n. 73-76.

[5] Marzec '68: sesja na Uniwersytecie warszawskim (NOWA, Warszawa 1981).

Jews and injured eighty. The author describes the massacre, which was triggered by the rumour that a Christian child, who had disappeared, had been ritually murdered by the village Jews. The mob, made up of ordinary Poles - policemen, soldiers and workers" - beat to death all the Jews, men women (including those who were pregnant) and children. Kersten also reports that the returning survivors of concentration camps and gulags were greeted by a wave of assaults throughout the country, most which were caused – as in the case of the Kielce pogrom- by rumours of ritual murder. Yet, the author doesn't question the die-hard persistence of this medieval belief and the role of the Church in this regard. She seems mostly interested in proving the existence of some kind of 'provocation' and, to sustain this theory, writes that the "actual people responsible for the massacre" (senior officers of the secret police and the army, who did nothing to avoid the murders, as well as the policemen who played an active part in it) had been released at the end of the 1946 trials of the pogrom. The Communist Party made political use of the pogrom, accusing, without any evidence, the anticommunist opposition of being the real instigator. According to Kersten, the 'provocation' was aimed at drawing people's attention away from the falsification of the June 1946 referendum results and from the subsequent wave of repression[6]. The 'provocation theory' was supported also by official historiography, as shown by an anti-Semitic pamphlet published by a secret service officer in 1983, in which the responsibility for the pogrom is attributed to the Zionists, whose goal was getting permission to leave the country[7]. After the Jaruzelski coup of December 1981 and the following ban on Solidarność, the debate on anti-Semitism continued in the clandestine press.

In the late 1980s, thanks to the loosening of censorship, historians were able to openly discuss subjects that had until then been considered taboo. The publishing house Puls edited the research that ethnologist Alina Cala had carried out in the villages of eastern Poland at the end of the 1970s. Her work demonstrated the persistence of strong anti-Jewish imagery and the continuing recurrence of the ritual murder myth. However, Cala's book didn't spark any public debate[8].

In autumn 1988 the previously underground weekly Respublica Nowa began publishing legally with a series of articles about "March 1968", which was one of the main topics of post-communist historiographical debate.

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[6] Krystyna Kersten, "Kielce, 4 Lipca 1946" , Tygodnik Solidarność, 4. 12. 1981.

[7] Józef Orlicki, Szkice z Dziejòw stosunków polsko-żydowskich, 1919-1969 (KAW, Warszawa 1983).

[8] Alina Cała, Wizerunek Żyda w Polskiej kulturze ludowej (Puls, Warszawa, 1987).

Post-war anti-Semitism

In Poland, then, 1989 did not represent a radical turning point for the historiographical debate on post-war anti-Semitism. The three most important books on the Kielce pogrom, published in 1992, were based on research carried out in the 1980s[9]. Bożena Szaynok's work is a detailed description of the pogrom, while Tadeusz Wiącek's one is a collection of press articles, reports and memories of those events. The two volume book edited by Stanisław Meducki and Zenon Wrona is made up of documents of great value: the statements of the Catholic hierarchy which, with the exception of the bishop of Częstochowa, Teodor Kubina, not only did not condemn the pogrom but also pinned the responsibility for the pogrom on the Jews, because of "their support for Communism"; the articles by some Polish intellectuals expressing horror at such a dreadful crime and offering a reflection on the persistence of anti-Semitism in Polish society "even after the Holocaust". The core part of Meducki and Wrona's book contains documents of the trials held in the summer 1946 against those responsible for the pogrom; it is noteworthy how candidly the witnesses and the accused described the massacre and how often they used anti-Semitic stereotypes of a religious nature.

Although the materials presented are very significant, none of the authors seems interested in a discussion of anti-Semitism and its effects on Polish society. The questions they try to answer –who was behind the Kielce pogrom, and who profited from it – show that these historians view historical research more as a police investigation than an effort to understand what really happens. Even when they acknowledge that some inhabitants of Kielce killed the town Jews, they play down their responsibility: "the perpetrators", they say, "were outcasts, people who would have not killed anybody without being "provoked", most probably by the Soviet or the Polish security services". Only Krystyna Kerstern, in her book on "Polish-Jewish relations from 1939 to 1968", had the courage to call things by their real name: "causes aside, both the way the pogrom developed and the number of people involved - not only in the town, but also in the neighbourhood – show that part of the Polish society was ready to kill […] and that the " provocation"- provided that a provocation really existed - triggered off a social dynamite"[10].

In the early 1990s the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes

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[9] Bożena Szaynok, 4 Lipca 1946 (Wyd. Bellona, Wrocław, 1992); Tadeusz Wiącek, Zabić Żyda. Kulisy i tajemnice pogromu kieleckiego (Temax, Kraków, 1992); Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały, edited by Stanislaw Meducki, Zenon Wrona (KTN, Kielce, 1992).

[10] Krystyna Kersten, Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd, 1939-68 (NOWA, Warszawa, 1992), 130.

against the Polish Nation (GKBZPN) investigated the Kielce pogrom[11]. Its conclusions basically confirmed the view, generally accepted by the Polish society, that "the pogrom had been instigated by the Polish security forces, whose membership was mainly Jewish"[12]. It is hardly surprising, then, that early researches on the Kielce pogrom did not spark any historiographical debate. In fact, in the late 1990s, openly anti-Semitic books were published, like Marek Chodakiewicz and Tadeusz Kąkoleski's ones, which put the blame for Polish anti-Semitism on the Jews themselves, due to their support to Communism[13].

In the early 1990s, however, it was not the Kielce pogrom that attracted the attention of Polish historians; their interest was mainly focused on the events of 1968. The first monograph on this subject discussed the intraparty struggle of the Communist Party, the students' protest (provoked by the censorship of a theatre play), and its repression at the hands of the security forces. Only cursory attention is paid to the "anti-Zionist" campaign of that year and its effects on Polish society[14].

For a different historical approach one has to wait until the late1990s and the arrival of a new generation of historians, free of the weight of ideological constraints and more receptive towards new methodologies, like social history or the history of the elites.

The publication of the proceedings of the conference held on the thirtieth anniversary of March 1968, is an example of this changed approach[15]. Besides essays based on a political view of the events, there are others which analyse the positive response of the society to the anti-Semitic campaign, which, as Felics Tych writes,: "at a local level exceeded the expectations of the very organizers". According to this historian, to understand Polish society's response to the anti-Semitic campaign, we should take into account the Poles' moral condition after the war in which they had witnessed the Holocaust, the silence later imposed by the Communist Party on anti-Semitism and the attitude of the Catholic Church, which did not condemn post-war anti-Jewish violence. After Second World War, anti-Semitism was the glue between political power

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[11] The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation (GKBZHwP-IPN), established in 1945, was the heir to the Commission for Investigations of Nazi Crimes in Poland (GKBZHwP) and preceded the Institute of National Memory (IPN), founded in 1998. The changes occurred in the 1990s were aimed at extending the Commission's scopes for investigation to the Communist crimes.

[12] Wokół pogromu kieleckiego, edited by Łukasz Kamiński e Jan Żaryn (IPN, Warszawa, 1992) vol. I.

[13] Krzystof Kąkolewski, Umarły cmentarz (Warszawa, s. d); Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Żydzi i Polacy, 1918-1955. Współistnienie-Zagłada-Komunizm (Fronda, Warszawa, 2000).

[14] Jerzy Eisler, Marzec 1968. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje (PWN, Warszawa,1991).

[15] Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat póżniej, edited by Piotr Osęka and Marcin Zaremba (PWN, Warszawa, 1998) vol. I and II.

and society, between right-wingers and left-wingers. This made it possible for the Communist Party to resort to anti-Semitism in what Tych defines "the greatest anti-Semitic campaign after Second World War, carried out in Nazi style and with open references to Nazi propaganda"[16].

Tych's approach is taken over by Marcin Zaremba, who claims that only a very small part of society supported the students' protest, while the vast majority approved both the role played by the security forces in its suppression and the anti-Semitic campaign[17]. Support for the "anti-Zionist" campaign, Zaremba writes, was a mixture of the Polish society's traditional authoritarian culture, its widespread anti-Semitism, and a general feeling of frustration with a situation that did not offer chances for social improvement. This book also contains one of the very few analyses of the stand taken by the Catholic Church, which publicly defended the students on strike but didn't take side for the Jews who were being fired on and expelled from the country. According to Primate Wyszynski it was better not to attack Zionism "as an aspiration of the Jewish nation for its own state"; besides, "the existence of a Jewish national homeland, able to attract the Diaspora", was an important way of "lessening anti-Semitism"[18].

Since the late 1990s, the 'anti-Zionist' campaign has attracted the growing interest of Polish historians; an instance of it are the monographs by Piotr Osęka, Dariusz Stola and Agnieszka Skalska. The former analyse the language of the 1968 propaganda and its impact on Polish society. For her part, Skalska studies the satirical drawings in the press of the period, pointing out that Zionists/Jews are portrayed with a mixture of old and new stereotypes: the Jews are parasites, exploiters, devils, besides being Fascists, imperialists and Nazis[19].

The publication of the collective work Contemporary History of the Jews in Poland has been a real event in post-1989 historiography. The last chapter, by Józef Adelson, reconstructs the Jewish political life of the years 1945-50: the activity of the Religious Congregations and the Jewish Committee (CKŻP), the Polish government's policy towards the Jews, anti-Semitism, and Jewish emigration. In hundred pages the author

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[16] Feliks Tych, "Kilka uwag o marcu 1968", Ibidem: 17-30. See also Id, Dlugi cień Zagłady (ŻIH, Warszawa, 2000).

[17] Marcin Zaremba, "Biedni Polacy 68. Społeczeństwo polskie wobec wydarzeń marcowych w świetle raportów KW i MSW dla kierownictwa PZPR", Marzec 1968.Trzydzieści lat później, cit.: 144-170.

[18] Andrzej Friszke, "Trydny egzamin. Koło Znak w okresie Marca 68", Ibidem: 183-206.

[19] Piotr Osęka, Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele. Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968, (ŻIH, Warszawa, 1999); Dariusz Stola, Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1067-1968 (ISP, Warszawa, 2000); Agnieszka Skalska, Obraz wroga w antysemickich rysunkach prasowych Marca '68 (NCK, Warszawa, 2007).

renders the dynamism of this community in the political, the economic and cultural fields: eleven Jewish parties were functioning, there were a great number of Jewish cooperatives and more than seventy periodicals (most of them bilingual, written in Polish and Yiddish)[20]. Adelson's chapter has become a point of reference for later research, mainly devoted to post-War Jewish political life, to the activities of the CKŻP, to the conflicts among different Zionist groups, and to those between these and the Bund on one side and the Jewish section of the Communist Party (Frakcja) on the other. Frakcja's role and, in general, the one of the communist movement among the Polish Jews, are the subject of several studies, especially by Polish Jewish historians. They aim at contesting the myth – quite widespread in the Polish society – according to which all the Jews are Communist and every Communist is a Jew (żydokomuna). These works point out that the Jews supported the communist regime because it promised equality and social mobility, that, after 1945, they were allowed to hold offices once forbidden (in the secret police or the army), that the Communists were just a small percentage of the Jewish community and that their political influence was negligible. Finally, even Frakcja had played a positive role in the Jewish cultural field[21].

In fact, this insistence in explaining the Jews' support for the communist regime tells us that even Polish Jewish historians accept an ethnic-biased criterion: the Jews are not citizens with the same standing as the Poles; their membership in the Communist Party, in the secret police or the army, needs to be "justified". The same does not apply to the Poles who have the right to be whatever they choose to be; anyway the "Polish nation" is sound as a whole, with the exception of a few who supported the communist regime and are considered as traitors.

More useful to understand the complex nature of the post-1945 Jewish society is the research in local history that since 1960s has focused on the role of the Jews in the economic and cultural life of Poland. The most recent of them, like the ones on the Jewish elites and on very small communities in Pomerania after Second World War, show the Jews' different paths to integration and assimilation in Polish society. Izroel Białystocki, chairman of the Szczecin TSKPŻ, tried to combine Communist and Jewish cultures, while Piotr Zaremba, the first post war mayor of Szczecin, thought it necessary for the Jews to renounce any

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[20] Józef Adelson, "W Polsce zwanej ludową", in Najnowsze Dzieje Żydów w Polsce, edited by Jerzy Tomaszewski , (PWN, Warszawa, 1993): 387-477

[21] August Grabski, "Kształtowanie się pierwotnego programu żydowskich komunistów w Polsce po Holocauście", Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945, edited by Grzegorz Berendt, August Grabski e Albert Stankowski (ŻIH, Warszawa, 2000): 67-100; Id., Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944-1949), (Trio-ŻIH, Warszawa, 2004); Id., Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944-1949 (Trio, Warszawa, 2000); Między emigracją a trwaniem. Syjoniści i komuniści w Polsce po Holocauście, edited by Grzegorz Berendt, August Grabski, (ŻIH, Warszawa, 2003).

ethnic affiliation and that all enemies of Socialism, whether they were Jews or Poles, should be fought against[22].

As M. Heiger shows, in an essay based on documents of the Polish secret police, even very small groups could be made of individuals of different background and lives: German speaking Jews, Holocaust survivors and Jews repatriated from the USSR[23] - forty six in 1946, twenty two in the 1950s - lived in Koszalin on the Baltic coast. Their only common feature was to try to get by unnoticed, by hiding their Jewish past or changing their names. The group of Jews, born and raised in communist Poland, interviewed by Joanna Wiśniewicz, tell us the story of their family environment – mostly secular and communist – and of their "broken dreams of belonging". For them all, 1968 was a dramatic turning point: many emigrated (among them many community leaders), while others stayed on, searching for new forms of assimilation, like mixed marriage[24].

The growing interest in the life of individuals and in the complexity of their experiences testifies to the intent of Polish historians to break free from an approach to the minorities issue which, in the last 20 years, has studied them only as homogeneous 'communities' or 'ethnic groups'. Examples of this new approach are The Jewish life in Poland from 1950 to 1956 by Gregorz Berendt and the collective work on Jewish Society in People's Poland before the Anti-Semitic Campaign of 1968. Both volumes depict the everyday life of the Polish Jews, their different lifestyles, professional choices, cultural aspirations, and contrasting loyalties towards their representative institutions – first of all the TSKŻP[25].

These new trends notwithstanding, studies on post-war Jews still focus – both at regional and national level – on the anti-Semitic outbursts which accompanied the major political crises in Poland (1956, 1968, 1980).

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[22] Janusz Mieczkowski, "Izroel Białystock jako działacz i historyk społeczności żydowskiej – przyczynek do studium elit żydowskich w Polsce", Żydzi oraz ich sąsiedzi na Pomorzu zachodnim w XIX i XX wieku, edited by Mieczysław Jaroszewica e Włodzimierz Stępinski (Wyd. DIG, Warszawa, 2007); Halina Domanska, „Czołowi działacze gdańskiej społeczności żydowskiej po drugiej wojny światowej", Tożsamość kulturowa, Szkice o mniejszościach narodowych na Pomorzu Gdanskim, series two, edited by Andrzej Chodubski e Andrzej Waśkiewicz, (TPS, Gdańsk, 2002; Janusz Mieczkowski, Między emigracją a asymilacją. Szkice o szczecińskich Żydach w latach 1947-1997, (TSKŻ, Szczecin, 1998).

[23] M. Heiger, "Ludność żydowska w woejwództwie koszalinkim w świetle materiałów Służby Biezpeczeństwa", Żydzi oraz ich sąsiedzi, cit.: 486-497.

[24] Joanna Wiśniewicz, Życie przecięte. Opowieści pokolenia Marca (Wyd. Czarne, Warszawa, 2008).

[25] Grzegorz Berendt, Życie Żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950-1956. Z dziejów Towarzystwa społeczno kulturalnego Żydów W Polsce (WUG, Gdańsk, 2006); Spoeczność żydowska w PRL przed kampanią antysemicką lat 1967-1968 i po niej, edited by Grzegorz Berendt (IPN, Warszawa, 2009).

Scant attention is devoted to Jewish-Polish relations, while those with other minorities, like the Germans or the Ukrainians, are ignored. Most studies take for granted the 'Jewish traditional separateness' and this prevents them from seeing the many points of contact. The vast literature on post-1945 minorities in Poland, describes each group – German, Ukrainian or Jewish – in separate chapters, where each of them live separate lives without any apparent contact with others or the Poles[26].

Anti-Semitism, the subject of most historical studies in the last decade, is the only topic that gives rise to public debates[27]. Five years after the publication of the book on the pogrom of Jedwabne[28], historian Jan Gross's new work Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz, has sparked a new lively debate. After the Second World War, Gross writes, pogroms occurred in the eastern regions of the country and in the district of Krakow, while fifteen hundred were killed while trying to get back their properties[29]. The core of the book centres on the bloodiest of them, that of Kielce. The research does not offer new insights, being based on material already published in the 1990s, but its style and pathos are new, as well as its ability in anthropologic insight and, above all, its outright denouncement of the perpetrators and their accomplices: the Catholic Church and the police. All this makes the book a pillar for post-1945 research on post-war anti-Semitism.

In some way, the lively debate that followed Fear recalls the one occurred after the publication of the book on the Jedwabne massacre. Now, as before, some historians maintained that the violence had been instigated by 'others', that only a small group of villagers had taken part in the murders and that the majority of them had simply "been bystanders". However, in the debate over Kielce, the apologetic camp has become even stronger. The defensive reaction of the majority of historians, columnists and Catholic hierarchy - their opponents have pointed out - shows that the relinquishing of the myth of the Poles as 'good people' has yet to be attained. Few stood up in defence of Gross and those that did were mostly Polish Jews. Moreover the group that, during the debate on Jedwabne mediated between the two positions this

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[26] Żydzi oraz ich sąsiedzi, cit.; Leszek Olejnik, Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944-1960, (Wyd. UŁ, Łódz, 2003).

[27] Jan T. Gross, Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców 1939-1948 (Uniwersitas, Kraków, 1998); Anna Cichopek, Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 Sierpnia 1945 (ŻIH, Warszawa, 2000).

[28] In Sąsiedzi. Historia Zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka (Pogranicze, Sejny, 2000) historian and sociologist Jan Tomasz Gross gives a detailed account of the mass murder of the Jews of Jedwabne, in the Łomza district. On 10 June 1941, the Polish villagers beat to death and burned alive in a barn the entire Jewish community. Gross' book opposes the sour truth of the Polish complicity in the Holocaust to the myth of the Poles " sole victims and heroes under Nazi occupation".

[29] Jan T. Gross, Strach: Antysemitizm w Polsce tuż po wojnie (Znak, Kraków, 2008).

time didn't speak out[30].

After the publication of Gross' book, the IPN made further research and issued a second volume of documents about the Kielce events. It definitely demonstrates that there was no provocation and that 'popular violence' broke out spontaneously following rumours of ritual murder. Yet, the documents are introduced by many essays that show no interest in what really happened and that repeat, instead, the old argument that the Jews were responsible for the pogrom "because of their support for Communism"[31].

Emigration and birth of the state of Israel

Historical demography is a recent addition to studies on Polish Jews after the Second World War. Out of 3.300.000 Jews in 1939, some demographers estimate that at the end of the conflict 216.000 were living in Poland, while others claim that they numbered 243.000 while others conclude 300.000. Holocaust survivors represented but a small part of them (between 30.000 and 80.000), while all the others came back from Russia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia following the agreements signed by the Soviet and the Polish Governments[32]. The problem in ascertaining the actual number of Jews in Poland in the early post-war years is due to the rate of migration: departures started just after the end of the war, stopped briefly in 1947 and were resumed in the years 1948-51.

The majority of studies on post-war emigration focus on the years 1944-50 and on the departures following the political crises of 1956 and 1968. Only Albert Stankowsky has given an overall account of Jewish emigration from 1944 to 1968, the year that marked the end of the presence of the Jews in Poland. The highest number of Jewish departures (through the so-called Bricha) – 126.000 between 1944 and 1947 – were illegal. The second wave was caused by the anti-Zionist campaign following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and went on until 1951, when only 70.000 Jews were left in Poland. From 1955 to 1960 both Jews who were still resident in the country and the ones who had arrived in the country from USSR after 1956, emigrated. On the eve of 1968, the Jewish community had dwindled to 28.000 people[33].

After years of neglect, the reasons which were behind the Jews' decision

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[30] For the debate in the press see Wokół Strachu. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Gross, edited by Mariusz Gądek (Znak, Kraków, 2008)

[31] Wokół pogromu kieleckiego, edited by Łukasz Kamiński, Jan Żaryn (IPN,Warszawa, 2006).

[32] Albert Stankowski, "Nowe Spojrzenie na statystyki dotyczące emigracji Żydów z Polski po 1944", in Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku, (ŻIH , Warszawa, 2000) cit.: pp. 103-151.

[33] Ibidem.

to emigrate, have recently become the subject of several studies. Research on the Kielce pogrom had emphasized the role of anti-Semitism in the Jews decision to leave Poland, but not all historians agree. According to Maciej Pisarski, the reasons were different at different times: between 1945 and 1948 they were psychological (the impossibility to live in a country that they considered to be a sort of vast burial ground), political (the diffusion of Zionism), and material (the difficulties experienced in retrieving their properties). Pisarski claims that anti-Semitism was very important, but was not the only factor and that, after 1948, with the onset of Stalinism and the creation of the state of Israel, political motives prevailed[34]. Regional studies present an even more complex picture. Marcin Stefaniak studied Jewish illegal emigration from western Pomerania, and paid special attention to the Szczecin route of escape. The fact that the border split the city and that millions of Germans had crossed it in 1944-45 to escape from the advancing Red Army made Szczecin, at the end of the war, the most important centre in Poland for smuggling people and goods. Jews, as well as Polish and Soviet soldiers, were involved in illegal trading; the main traffic concerned the emigration of Russian Jews, who headed directly to Szczecin after escaping from the Soviet Union[35]. Albert Stankowski's essay on Jewish emigration from western Pomerania reverts to the theory that anti-Semitism was the main factor for leaving. Pomerania – the former German region annexed to Poland in 1945 – had been chosen by the Polish government as a resettlement place for the Jewish survivors, in the hope that relations with the Poles would be different and more positive in a new environment free of old resentments and of property claims. As Albert Stankowski shows, these hopes quickly disappeared: a Polish backlash followed when and wherever a sizeable group of Jews gathered[36]. Similar remarks on the attitude of the local population are contained in the book that Bożena Szaynok has written on the Jews of Lower Silesia in the aftermath of Second World War and in works of other authors on the issue of emigration[37].
Natalia Aleksiun is the author of the first book on the Zionist movement in Poland from 1944 to 1950[38]. All the Zionist parties – from the right-

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[34] Maciej Pisarski, "Emigracja Żydów z Polski w latach 1945-1951", in Studia z dziejów i kultury Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku, edited by Jerzy Tomaszewski, (Trio, Warszawa, 1997): 13-81.

[35] Marcin Stefaniak, "Nielegalna emigrazja Żydów z Pomorza Zachodniego", Żydzi oraz ich sąsiedzi, cit.: 437-474.

[36] Albert Stankowski, "Emigracja Żydów z Pomorza zachodniego w latach 1945-1960", Studia z dziejów i kultury Żydów (Trio, Warszawa, 1997) cit.: 83-141.

[37] Bożena Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku (Wyd. U. W, Wrocław, 2000); Natalia Aleksiun-Mądrzak, Nielegalna emigracja Żydów z Polski w latach 1945-1947, BŻIH, n. 3, 1995: 67-90; Id., BŻIH, n. 3, 1996, pp. 33-54; n.1, 1997: 36-48.

[38] Natalia Aleksiun, Dokąd dalej?Ruch syjonistyczny w Polisce, 1945-1950 (TRIO, Warszawa, 2002).

wing Poalé Sion to the democratic Hitachud – supported mass emigration to Palestine, but were divided on the kind of state which should be built and the kind of relations to maintain with the Arab population. According to the left wingers Poalé Sion and Haszomer ha-Cair, Palestine was to be turned into a bi-national state supported by the Soviet Union; while the mainstream Hichud wanted an independent state with minority rights for the Arabs. Aleksiun describes the post-war evolution of Zionism and how it took root among Polish Jews. However, the afore mentioned studies show that only a part of them – approximately 100.000 – went to Palestine. Szaynok claims that affiliation to Zionism was not an ideological option; it was rather the outcome of the chance given by Bricha to leave the country and reach Western Europe, or the United States or Canada.

The majority of these studies point out that the Polish Government maintained an ambiguous attitude towards the Jews; on the one hand it stressed the will to fully integrate the Jews into the economic and social life of Poland; on the other hand it spoke in favour of their emigration to Palestine. Bożena Szaynok argues that in the aftermath of the war, Poland was one of the main supporters of the creation of a 'Jewish national homeland' in Palestine and, after 1947, of the creation of the state of Israel[39]. Drawing on archival records and on the press of the time, the author follows the evolution of the Polish Government's stance which, from early enthusiastic support for the 'Jewish national homeland', changed into one of hostility that, in 1967, ended in the severing of diplomatic relations with Israel. Behind this change of attitude was Poland's growing dependence on Moscow: after the creation of a pro-Western Israel the USSR saw its efforts to extend its influence in the Near East frustrated, and thus becoming one of the main opponents of Israel.

According to Szaynok, the Polish Communist Party's early support for the Palestine project was due to real sympathy for Jewish claims to independence but also to the chance of playing an active role on the international arena, due to the relative freedom of manoeuvre enjoyed by Poland in the early post-war years. The analysis of the Polish press shows that the project of a Jewish national homeland was supported by most of the Polish society. What Szaynok omits is that one of the main reasons for this support was the Communist government plan for a mono-ethnic state. This explains why Jewish emigration was a central pillar of Communist Party policy even after the creation of Israel and up to 1968, the year when the anti-Semitic campaign put an end to the Jewish presence in Poland.

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[39] Bożena Szaynok, Z Historią i Moskwą w tle. Polska a Izrael, 1944-1968 (IPN, Wrocław, 2007).

Property restitution

Recent research on the restitution of Jewish property is part of the post-1989 debate on "reprivatisation". The failure, on the part of the post-communist governments, to pass a law which would allow the Polish citizens to regain the properties seized by the Communists after 1945, has led many of them to file their restitution claims in Polish or international courts. In order to get back houses, companies and lands, the claimants have to collect hundreds of documents (death records, inheritance and property titles), which make useful material for historical research.

In 2001 the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Property (FODZ), was established in partnership with the World Jewish Restitution Organisation (WJRO) and the Union of the Jewish Religious Communities in Poland (ZWRwP). The FODZ web portal holds the history of more than four hundred (ultimately there will be 1200) pre-1939 Jewish inhabited villages and cities. It also gives information on private and religious communities' properties and on their fate both under Nazi occupation and in the aftermath of the war[40]. The Jewish Historical Institute organises seminars on the changes in Jewish property ownership after 1939, while the Warsaw branch of the Washington Holocaust Museum deals with the expropriation of Jewish properties under Nazism and plans to expand this research to post-war years. On the Internet we can find the stories of Jewish families and of the changes in their property during the last seventy years[41].

The question of Jewish property has gained new impetus thanks to the most recent research on the participation of local populations in the process of expropriating Jewish wealth during the Holocaust. Jan Thomas Gross was the first to investigate this issue in Poland, a country where historians have been most reluctant to raise it. In his book on the Jedwabne pogrom he writes that "in place of atavistic anti-Semitism, or along with it, the actual reasons that led some Poles to begin the massacre were greed and the unexpected opportunity of seizing the Jews' properties once and for all"[42]. Gross also refers to the post-war destiny of Jewish properties claiming that, in the Jedwabne district, illegal seizure of former Jewish properties "went on until 1949". Although only a few pages of his book are dedicated to this topic, Gross' ability to highlight the continuity between robbery under Nazism and restitution under Communism, has certainly contributed to the historical debate.

Jan Grabowski and S. Piątkowski studied the role of the Trustees

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[40] www.fodz.pl, see the portal Polin.

[41] www.restitution.pl

[42] J. T. Gross, I carnefici della porta accanto. 1941: il massacro della comunità ebraica di Jedwabne in Polonia, Mondadori, Milano, 2002, pp. 92-93.

(Treuhänder) in the management of confiscated Jewish enterprises during the Nazi occupation. In the Warsaw district one hundred and twenty nine Poles, seventy Germans, one hundred and nine Volksdeutsche and one Russian were entrusted with the management of seven hundred trading and industrial enterprises that were formerly Jewish[43]. Hundreds of Poles – teachers, clerks and judges – applied to the German administration to be appointed Treuhänder in order to administer flats and parcels of land. One of their first tasks was to replace the name of the legitimate owner with that of their own in the land register[44].

Recent studies have brought to light many cases of post-war abuse and fraud by gangs that specialised in the illegal seizure of real estate that was formerly Jewish above all in the Łomża district. During his archival research on the Jedwabne pogrom, historian Krzystof Persak found documents on the 1947-49 civil proceedings regarding the illegal seizure of Jewish property, in which some of the Poles responsible for the pogrom were involved[45]. Persak has investigated the activity of gangs in which both Poles and Jews were involved: after identifying former Jewish real estate, the Poles would find a Jew willing to declare himself in court as the sole heir of the deceased and to initiate the restitution procedure. The same Poles would confirm the Jew's statement, thus allowing the fictitious heir to get back the property, sell it and share the earnings with them[46]. The activity of these 'societies' – as a member of one of the gangs referred to them during the 1949 trial – and its ramifications throughout the region are described in an essay of the IPN Bulletin. The Polish members of the gang were able to give false testimony in different courts thanks to the complicity of local officials; a scandal occurred in Białystok when it was made public that the director of the Security Service – Samuel Faber – was the head of the gang[47]. In Jedwabne, Tadeusz Zarzecki played the role of intermediary between the municipality - in which he had contacts – and the gang; for this he was rewarded with a house and a shop in the centre of the town. The frauds

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[43] S. Piątkowski, "O niektórych ekonomicznych aspektach postaw Polaków wobec Zagłady Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim", Z przeszłości Żydów polskich, Polityka, gospodarka, kultura, spoleczenstwo edited by Jacek Wijaczka and Grzegorz Miernik (IPN, Kraków, 2005): 170-179.

[44] Jan Grabowski, "Żydzi przed obliczem niemieckich i polskich sądów w dystrykcie warszawskim Generalnego Gubernatorstwa", 1939-1942, Prowincja noc, Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim, edited by Barbara. Engelking, Jacek Leociak and Dariusz. Libionka, (IFS PAN, Warszawa, 2007): 75-116.

[45] K. Persak, Akta postępowań cywilnych z lat 1947-1949 zmarłch żydowskich mieszkanców Jedwabnego, in P. Machcewicz, K. Persak, Wokół Jedwabnego, vol. 2, Documenti, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 375-389.

[46] Ivi: 379.

[47] J. Kułak, "Faber i S-ka. Krótka historia pewnego przekrętu", Biuletyn IPN, n. 6, 2002: 80-83.

went on even after the truth came out into the open; in 1948 the gang was still trying to gain ownership of Jewish real estate[48].

Behind these frauds was, as demonstrated by Monika Krawczyk's essay on the "legal status of Jewish property after 1945", the post-war legislation on 'abandoned' and 'left behind' property[49]. 'Abandoned properties' were those in the possession of the former German Reich; while 'left behind' were assets and real estates that – due to the war – were no longer in the possession of their legitimate owners or their heirs, or that had been entrusted to third parties through "agreements signed, during the war, by the owners or their legal representatives". Post-war legislation annulled these agreements, both those signed with the authorisation of the occupying authorities and those stipulated between private people, and all purchases were declared "mala fide". The State Office for Temporary Administration (TZP) was assigned the task to allocate 'abandoned' properties to "social and public institutions, or organisations for the relief of the people persecuted by the occupying forces" and to return 'left behind' properties to legitimate owners. District courts had only a few weeks to decide on the legitimacy of restitution applications. Although the law didn't openly mention the specific case of Jewish property, both provisions regarding agreements which Jews had signed in their hundreds in favour of the Poles before entering the ghettos and the extensions of hereditary rights to very distant relatives, could not but be applied to them Restitution claimants were not required to produce certificates of citizenship; the heirs of the deceased owner had only to provide a declaration of presumption of death in order to apply for restitution. This, as we have seen, gave way to several embezzlements. The Jewish claimants were very few: 90% of them had been exterminated by the Nazi, the majority of the survivors emigrated soon after the end of the war. The actual beneficiaries of the 1945-1946 legislation were then the Polish state and the Poles. In fact, the 1946 decree, stated that the Polish state and the Poles would forever acquire abandoned and left behind properties after 10 years from its implementation, by "usucaption"[50].

Any study of the restitution of Jewish property after 1945 should distinguish between the property of private and religious (kehilla) communities. Eleonora Bergman claims that before 1939 about 1500 Polish kehilla owned 100 synagogues, an undefined number of prayer houses and 2000-2500 cemeteries[51]. To these we must add schools,

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[48] Anna Pyżewska, "Losy ludności żydowskiej w województwie białostockim w latach 1944-1949", Z przeszłości Żydów, cit.: 278-296.

[49] Monika Krawczyk, Status prawny własności żydowskiej w powojennej Polsce i jego wpływ na polsko żowskie stosunki, forthcoming by the Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw.

[50] Ibidem

[51] Eleonora Bergman, Co zostało po dawnych gminach żydowskich? Sinagogi i

hospitals, orphanages, hospices and libraries, run by the communities together with several foundations and associations. No nation-wide estimate exists. We only know, from research conducted in 1988, that the Warsaw Jewish community owned more than 300 prayer houses, two cemeteries and twenty five schools or kindergarten[52]. It was a considerable amount of property that was largely destroyed during the war, especially as far as worship buildings were concerned. Destruction and the improper use of the community properties, however, did not end with the war: the Jewish cemeteries became quarries for lime extraction; synagogues went on to be used as private dwellings or were occupied by local institutions[53].

In theory, the religious communities were the natural heirs of their pre-war property but, having been deprived of legal right after the war, they had not title to apply for restitution. However, both the June 1945 decree and the following laws on restitution allowed the Jewish Religious Unions (later Congregations) to hold in 'usufruct' buildings for worship and charitable activities, provided that there was the minimum number required to establish a community: ten people at first, later twenty five.

Both the Jewish congregations and the CKŻP protested against vandalism and misuse of property, especially where cemeteries and synagogues were concerned. Kazimierz Urban has collected hundreds of official documents that account for the whole post-war process of dispossession/restitution and report the reaction of the Jewish associations. Conflicts on dispossession or destruction of Jewish property grew worse and worse when the ten-year period envisaged by the law expired. In the subsequent years the congregations appealed to the courts but to no avail; most of the synagogues went to ruin while others became museums, libraries, restaurants, storehouses, shops and cinemas. Cemeteries were changed into public parks, building land and kindergarten; in that of Kalisz, which dated back to the thirteen century, a school, a boarding school and some residential blocks were built[54].

The post-1989 governments have chosen to deal separately with single groups, instead of passing a law on restitution to all Polish citizens. Firstly it was the turn of the Catholic Church to be given back its properties, then, in 1997, came the law for the restitution of property to the Jewish Religious Communities, thus allowing them to apply for more than 5000 buildings. Half of them were returned, mostly cemeteries and synagogues.

Research on post-1945 changes of Jewish property are just beginning and

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cmentarze 1944-1947, forthcoming by the Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw (ŻIH).

[52] Krzyszrof Krasowski, Związki wyznaniowe w II Rzeczypospolitej. Studium historyczno prawne, (PWN, Warszawa-Poznań 1988).

[53] Kazimierz Urban, Cmentarze żydowskie, synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce w latach 1944-1966 (Nomos, Kraków 2006): 33-39.

[54] Eleonora Bergman, Co zostało po dawnych gminach żydowskich?, cit.

it is difficult to forecast their development. Apart from the psychological barriers that lead historians to avoid controversial issues, there are real impediments. Before the Second World War the property census was not ethnic-based. Only during the Nazi occupation property was classified as Jewish and after the war the TZP followed up by applying the 'post-Jewish' label to properties once owned by the Jews.

The most difficult problem is to define 'Jewish' property and quantify it. This is a huge task that historians are just beginning to tackle[55].

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[55] The Warsaw branch of the Washington Holocaust Museum, directed by Alina Skibinska, deals with the cataloguing of Jewish property under the Nazi rule and after 1945.

State-sponsored Anti-Semitism in the Post War USSR.

Studies and Perspectives of Research

by *Antonella Salomoni*

Abstract

This essay offers a review of recent international historiography on "State anti-Semitism" in the USSR after WWII. After emphasizing the difficulties of reintegration of the Jewish population in the aftermath of conflict, the essay covers the different stages of anti-Jewish policies and focuses on the transition to a new phase in relations between Soviet Jews and Soviet state, coinciding with the struggle against "cosmopolitism" and the start of a more explicit anti-Semitic hate campaign. The author reconstructs the repression of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the invention of the "Doctors 'Plot', and finally recalls the debate about the alleged preparation of a mass deportation of Soviet Jews. Promising research perspectives for the future are indicated in local case studies that would clarify the validity of "collective psychosis" which affects the Jewish community in the postwar era, as well as offer more information on the existence of a plan to mobilize the population on the basis of Judeophobia.

For a long time the Holocaust in the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union has been the most neglected aspect of the annihilation of European Jewry. At least three elements engendered this delay in research by affecting the process of source collecting: first, the forty-year embargo on the huge documentation that the Red Army took from the Germans during and at the end of the hostilities, as well as on the relevant material produced by the military enquiry commissions on war crimes during the ascertainment of responsibilities; second, the ideologically-based refusal of Communism to consider the *shoah* as a distinctive event of extermination, thus to assess the history of Jewish victims separately from the other victims of Nazism; third, the impossibility for the surviving community to collect a body of sources on experiences lived by Jews, since – as stated by the Soviet Union – the project of extermination afflicted all the peoples of the USSR, not merely a single nationality.

After the war no special publication in the Soviet Union focused on the extermination of Jews during the conflict. By and large the subject was ignored in the monographs on the Second World War and basically neglected in the collections of sources, as well as this it found almost no place in schoolbooks and traditional inventories. The only great work of documentation in the Soviet era occurred during the war,

when a Black Book was compiled in real time in order to record a
sizeable selection of witnesses to the genocide. It is known that the
volume was stopped by censorship in 1947, at the time of the
disestablishment of the Jewish Antifascist Committee (EAK), which
had promoted the work, and the beginning of the most acute stage of
the campaign against the so-called 'nationalism', 'cosmopolitism' and
'Zionism' of the Soviet Jewry. That is the reason why the integral
publication of this collection in 1993 was perceived as a turning point
in research[1].

   It is almost needless to stress the importance of the liberalisation of
access to certain archives – with the related acquisition of an amount of
unpublished material – for historical research. It was all the more
important, as many scholars believed that documents taken by the
security forces in late 1948 had been destroyed. Among the most
important works published in the last twenty years, one should
remember – beyond the Black Book mentioned above – The Unknown
Black Book, which collects material not present in the former volume
because it mainly centred on the issue of collaborationism[2]; some
anthologies of reports, witnesses and letters that shed light on the EAK
history and repression[3]; a selection from proceedings of the secret trial
from 8 May to 18 July 1952 against the top members of the EAK, who
were sentenced to death by judgment of the Supreme Tribunal's
Military College on 12 August 1952[4].

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[1] *Chernaia kniga: o zlodeiskom povsemestnom ubiistve evreev nemetsko-fashistskimi
zakhvachikami vo vremenno okkupirovannykh raionakh Sovetskogo Soiuza i v lageriakh
unichtozheniia Pol'shi vo vremia voiny 1941-1945 gg.* [The Black Book: The Ruthless
Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders throughout the Temporarily Occupied
Regions of the Soviet Union and in the Death Camps of Poland during the War of
1941-1945], ed. Vasilii Grossman and Il'ia Erenburg (Vilnius: Yad, 1993); *The
Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers,
2002).

[2] *Neizvestnaia chernaia kniga. Svidetel'stva ochevidtsev o katastrofe sovetskikh evreev, 1941-1944*
[The Unknown Black Book: Testimonies of Witnesses about the Holocaust of the
Soviet Jews in 1941-1944], ed. Il'ia Arad and T. Pavlova (Moskva: GARF, 1993); *The
Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-occupied Soviet Territories*, ed. Joshua
Rubenstein and Ilya Altman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in association
with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008).

[3] Shimon Redlich, War, *Holocaust and Stalinism. A Documented History of the Jewish Anti-
Fascist Committee in the USSR*, (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995); *Evreiskii
antifashistskii komitet v SSSR, 1941-1948. Dokumentirovannaia istoriia* [The Jewish Anti-
Fascist Committee in the USSR. A Documented History], ed. Shimon Redlich and
Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1996).

[4] *Nepravednyi sud: poslednii stalinskii rasstrel. Stenogramma sudebnogo protsessa nad chlenami
Evreiskogo antifashistskogo komiteta*, [An Unjust Trial: the Last Stalinist Execution by
Shooting. A Stenograph of the Trial of Members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist
Committee], ed. Vladimir P. Naumov (Moskva: Nauka, 1994); *Stalin's Secret Pogrom:
The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*, ed. Joshua Rubenstein and
Vladimir P. Naumov (New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the

These early important collections of material, being for the most part unpublished, were instrumental in a sizeable widening of our knowledge of the functioning and consequences of the shoah in the occupied Soviet territories[5]. Among several other contemporary investigations, one should remember the works by Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko, the scholar who gave the greatest contribution to a thorough and systematic scientific analysis of 'state anti-Semitism' in the Soviet Union, especially in the post-war period. Thanks to his works not only does it seem currently possible to outline the main stages of the disestablishment of Jewish cultural organisations and associative network, as well as the purge in state institutions and the actual – if not legal – discrimination in the workplace; his works also serve to assess effectively the scope of repressions in quantitative terms and to interpret the specific political code employed in view of the internal control and social mobilisation[6]. Kostyrchenko himself has produced a fundamental collection of archive sources that allows us to follow step by step the development of Soviet anti-Semitism from 1938 to Stalin's death. Set in great chronological periods, the collection offers – among others – invaluable material on Mikhoels' murder and the liquidation of EAK, the destruction of Jewish literature and the purges in the scientific and industrial sector, the fight against 'cosmopolitism' and 'international Zionism', the orchestration of legal enquiries and criminal trials – including the indictment of Maria Veitsman (sister of Chaim Weizmann, first Israeli president) and the denunciation of the 'Doctor's Plot'[7].

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

[5] In order to follow this line of research one may see *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941-1945*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993; *Bitter Legacy. Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Zvi Gitelman, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Il'ia Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti: kholokost v Rossii 1941-1945 gg.* [Victims of Hatred. Holocaust in the USSR, 1941-1945], (Moskva: Fond Kovcheg, 2002); Antonella Salomoni, *L'Unione Sovietica e la Shoah: genocidio, resistenza, rimozione*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007); Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, (Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press - Yad Vashem, 2009).

[6] Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko, *V plenu u krasnogo faraona. Politicheskie presledovaniia evreev v SSSR v poslednee stalinskoe desiatiletie* [In the Prison of the Red Pharaoh: Political Persecutions of Jews in the USSR in the Last Decade of Stalin], (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1994); *Out of the Red Shadows: Anti-semitism in Stalin's Russia*, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995); *Tainaia politika Stalina. Vlast' i antisemitizm* [Stalin's Secret Policy: Power and Antisemitism], (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2001); *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov". Vlast' i evreiskaia intelligenciia v SSSR* [Stalin against the "Cosmopolitans": Power and the Jewish Intellectuals in the USSR], (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2009).

[7] *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v SSSR. Ot nachala do kul'minatsii 1938-1953* [State Antisemitism in the USSR: from the Beginning to the Culmination 1938-1953], ed. Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko (Moskva: MFD - Materik, 2005).

Victims vs. perpetrators: basic anti-Semitism

One of the most urgent and difficult problems facing the Soviet rulers after the liberation was that of 'national reconciliation'. During the war every effort had been made to minimise the existence of a 'Jewish question', most of all because of the fear of the possible success of German propaganda against 'Judo-Bolshevism'. Indeed, the Nazis had strongly put the 'Jewish' image of the Soviet power at the centre of their political communication with occupied populations[8]. In the new phase of 'pacification', however, the watering down of German crimes was outside the need to conceal the actual scope of connivance between different nationalities and the Third Reich. Collaboration apparently had become rooted in anti-Judaism and anti-bolshevism, showing how brittle the idea of Soviet 'motherland' and 'fraternity' among people actually was.

In the post-war period, throughout Eastern Europe, anti-Semitism was frequently accompanied by collective violence. The Polish situation is well known, with the emblematic example of the disorders in the city of Kielce (4 July 1946), which caused the death of more than forty Jews out of roughly 200 survivors of Nazi extermination[9]. Similar pogroms occurred in several Polish cities and towns: Białystok, Krakow, Lublin, Łódź, Rzeszów, Warsaw and many others. According to tentative assessments (these events were recorded in very selective ways and the authorities did not make any effort to collect and systematically preserve), 327 Polish Jews died in the 130 episodes which occurred in 102 different places in the period between September 1944 – September 1946. Some sources indicate 189 murders from March to August 1945 and 351 victims between November 1944 and December 1945[10].

The picture for the Soviet territory is much more fragmentary, still it is reasonably safe to say that between 1943 and 1946 – especially in the Ukraine – episodes of violence against the Jews rose significantly in the areas once under German occupation. The documents recovered in the last few years show that the Soviet authorities soon became aware of the vitality and strength of anti-Semitism at the heart of population. For example, the reports of the security bodies of the Socialist Republic

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[8] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy. Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[9] Bożena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946*, (Warszawa: Bellona, 1992); *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, ed. Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006); Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 81-166.

[10] David Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946", *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998): 43-85.

of Ukraine began to inform the leadership of the Communist Party as early as from summer 1944, covering the racially-tinted incidents occurring in most major cities – actions that were taking on ever increasingly the semblance of a pogrom[11]. One of the most serious of such episodes took place in Kiev on 4-7 September 1945. It has never been officially acknowledged and sufficiently precise information has begun to accrue just lately[12]. A second period of violence occurred in 1948-1953, this time embedded in a specific anti-Jewish campaign and the repressions set out by the Stalinist regime; this period of violence allowed the return of abuses and the revitalisation of stereotypes of anti-Jewish flavour[13].

Nowadays we can check rather extensively the point of view of the surviving Jews, either missing or re-evacuated, who were returning – or, at least, trying to return – to their just liberated cities, towns and villages. Here they are welcomed with open resentment: subjects to discriminations and administrative abuses, only with the utmost difficulty did they succeed in affirming their property rights – if they did not became targets of anti-Semitic violence. Time and again a new trauma is added to the upheaval caused by physical brutalities and the loss of their families, i.e. living along with the persecutors or – much more often – their accomplices and informers. Several letters witness the difficulty of living side by side with those who had denounced and sacked their Jewish neighbours; the indignation at seeing people responsible for persecutions and mass murders going around freely, often even armed as they were called "to defend the motherland"; the delusion in learning that those who had enjoyed directive roles under the German occupation were still holding the same position or other important administrative offices[14]. The result is a widespread feeling that, as expressed by a denouncing letter written by an inhabitant of the region of Rivne (Ukraine) in February 1945, "not only is anti-Semitism not ebbing, on the contrary it is mounting day by day"[15]. Therefore the opposition against internal anti-Semitism, which was developing at

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[11] See Mordechai Altshuler, "Antisemitism in Ukraine Toward the End of the Second World War", *Jews in Eastern Europe* 3 (1993): 40–81; *Bitter Legacy*, 77-90; Mikhail Mitsel', *Evrei Ukrainy v 1943-1953 gg. Ocherki dokumentirovannoi istorii* [The Jews of Ukraine 1943-1953. Essays of Documented History], (Kiev: Dukh i Listera, 2004), 36-53, 126-129.

[12] See Mitsel', *Evrei Ukrainy v 1943 – 1953 gg.*, 63-66; *Gosudarstvennyi Antisemitizm v SSSR*, 62-72.

[13] Frank Grüner, "Did Anti-Jewish Mass Violence Exist in the Soviet Union? Anti-Semitism and Collective Violence in the USSR During the War and Post-war Years", *Journal of Genocide Research* 11/2 (2009): 356-357.

[14] See *Sovetskie evrei pishut Il'e Erenburgu, 1943-1966* [Soviet Jews Write to Ilya Ehrenburg, 1943-1966], ed. Mordechai Altshuler, Yitzhak Arad and Shmuel Krakowski (Ierusalim: Centr po issledovaniiu i dokumentatsii vostochnogo-evropeiskogo evreistva - Yad Vashem, 1993), 181-194.

[15] *Sovetskie evrei pishut Il'e Erenburgu*, 193-194.

both popular and institutional level, came firstly from the Jews themselves, who turned active complicities and collective responsibilities bare.

In face of the ever-increasing anti-Semitic attacks and abuses in different places of the Soviet Union, the authorities reacted mostly by rejecting their collective character and reducing them to isolated episodes of vandalism. This is what emerges from a confidential report sent in September 1944 to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. The report had been commissioned in order to ascertain the truthfulness of the conclusions of a previous enquiry on anti-Semitism in the Ukraine pursued by order of the minister for state security[16]. Denying and partially condemning the previous conclusions, the document stressed that the root of those episodes of intolerance was the anti-Jewish propaganda organised by the Nazis and the local nationalists during the occupation – though it admitted that sometimes it was the problems of ordinary life to embitter people's spirits. Anyway, it was not a reflection of "the genuine political and moral approach of the people", so it did not warrant maintaining that manifestations of anti-Semitism were on the rise. On the contrary, the same document insisted specifically on "the nationalistic expressions of single members of the Jewish population". In brief, they were "Zionistic elements" that were circulating "provocative rumours on the existence of anti-Semitism as a political movement in the Ukraine and even on a supposed anti-Semitic policy on the part of the Republic's government"[17].

Further research needs being pursued in the future regarding the differences of views and the contrasts that shook the bodies of the state on this very subjects, as shown – for example – by another confidential document of October 1944, which denounced to the Central Committee the serious mistakes committed by the leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party, responsible for "having let themselves be kept on the leash by the Jewish community". Such a brutal accusation was motivated by their authorisation for the building of special schools, a kindergarten and a nursery school; the Lithuanian leaders had accepted to fund the running expenses of a museum promoted by the society for the defence of the Jewish culture through the budget of the ministry of education; they also granted the authorisation for a rally in memory of German atrocities against the Jews[18].

What these documents reveal most vividly is the determination – already explicit at the end of the war – to resist the creation or the

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[16] *Bitter Legacy*, 300-307.

[17] *Bitter Legacy*, 307-314; Mitsel', *Evrei Ukrainy v 1943 – 1953 gg.*, 54-62; *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v SSSR*, 40-44.

[18] *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v SSSR*, 44-45.

strengthening of 'special Jewish organisations'. In such a context, the EAK – which emerged during the conflict with an explicit propaganda purpose, but whose scope had developed into an institution for the protection of identity – was very soon accused of interfering in matters that were out of its competence. Already in the spring of 1944 the proposal of some of its leaders to create a Jewish republic in Crimea, somewhat as compensation, had caused strong uneasiness[19]. Moreover the Committee was deemed 'politically damaging' for having served as bearer and guarantor in connection to the appeals for material help, the complaints and petitions of the survivors or victims of new discriminations; for having unwarrantedly taken charge of "educational-cultural activities"; for having entertained independent relations with Jewish international organisations. When the EAK set the stages for a campaign to raise funds to build monuments to the Holocaust's victims, or when it acknowledged the needs of the Jewish population and defended them in front of the different Soviet institutions, as well as when it asked for distributing material help to single citizens or entire communities, the Committee tended to strengthen a representing and mediating role that had not been entrusted to it in any way. The principal concern of the communist authorities – as explained in a note to Georgii M. Malenkov in December 1945 – was that the post-war peculiar context could help the transformation of EAK into "a sort of commissariat for Jewish affairs", which was "a distortion of the aims set at the moment of its foundation"[20].

The anti-Cosmopolitical campaign and the attack against the intelligentsia

In the past, well before the fall of the communist regime, Soviet state anti-Semitism has often been remembered; such anti-Semitism emerged beginning with the non-aggression pact with Germany. At that time attention focused on the person of Stalin, whose anti-Jewish prejudices and obsession regarding the existence of a 'Jewish nationalist plot' were well known. In the latest studies psychological-based explanations, though not completely abandoned, have been compounded by the effort of understanding the reasons leading to the campaigns against the so-called Jewish 'cosmopolitism' in late 1940s, to a new wave of

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[19] Kostyrchenko, *V plenu u krasnogo faraona*, 32-57; Id., *Tainaia politika Stalina*, 428-445; Id., *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 300-328.

[20] *Evreiskii antifashistskii komitet v SSSR*, 180. On the actual post-war construction of the ethnic hierarchies cf. Amir Weiner, "When Memory Counts. War, Genocide, and Postwar Soviet Jewry", *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 167-188.

trials, and to the physical liquidation of Jewish intellectuals. This research is pursued through the deconstruction of the different levels of the ideology and the interconnections between the cultural purview and the fields of politics.

In the summer of 1946 the campaign against foreign influences started, 'bourgeois nationalism' and 'western decadency' managed by Andrei A. Zhdanov[21]. It amounted to general prescriptions against literature and arts, along with a strong action aimed at destroying the peculiar features of the Jewry, accused of 'rootless cosmopolitism'. Only in post-Soviet times was the Communist Party's Central Committee resolution of 14 August 1946 was published; the resolution vehemently condemned the 'servility' towards western culture and denounced the deviations of that press which was circulating "ideologies that are alien to the spirit of the Party" through poetry and literature[22]. If the resolution had no anti-Semitic flavour, nevertheless it caused immediate consequences in the Jewish circles, which had found in the writers the most strenuous defenders of identity reconstruction. Then the attacks multiplied against those intellectuals who seemingly claimed a cultural autonomy by recalling the issues of the genocide, so recovering the idea of a relatively independent Jewish community with respect to the geographic and political divisions of the contemporary world. As shown by many confidential party documents, the misgiving arose – often purposely fomented – that the active engagement in the fight against internal anti-Semitism and the effort to assume 'representational functions' in the Soviet Jewry were the Trojan horse for foreign organisations, which had an interest in strengthening 'nationalist' and 'Zionist' leanings. Against this background, any attempt to collect documents or commemorate the shoah began to be seen as a mere expression of Jewish 'particularism'[23].

In spite of many projects for the EAK dissolution or self-dissolution, as well as proposals for suiting its tasks and composition to the new post-war scenario, the communist authorities did not seem ready to disestablish the EAK as late as in the midst of the Middle East crisis.

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[21] On Zhdanov see Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948*, (Montreal and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).

[22] See *"Literaturnyi front". Istoriia politicheskoi tsenzury, 1932-1946 gg. Sbornik dokumentov* ["The Literary Front". A History of Political Censorship, 1932-1946. Collected Documents], ed. Denis L. Babichenko (Moskva: Entsiklopediia rossiiskikh dereven', 1994), 221-225. In the Soviet Union the "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign was finally discussed with the advent of 'glasnost'. See Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov, "O nizkopoklonstve i kosmopolitizme: 1948-1949" [On Grovelling and Cosmopolitanism: 1948-1949], *Zvezda* 6 (1989): 157-176.

[23] See *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v SSSR* and *Stalin i kosmopolitizm. Dokumenty Agitpropa TSK KPSS, 1945-1953* [Stalin and Cosmopolitism. Agitprop`s Documents, 1945-1953], ed. Dzhakhangir G. Nadzhafov and Zinaida S. Belousova (Moskva: MFD - Materik, 2005).

Nevertheless, the accusatory mechanism was refined in the different institutional interventions denouncing the Committee's 'nationalist' activity and the 'Zionistic' propaganda of its leaders; this mechanism would soon serve as a base for the arrests and other restrictive measures enacted in late 1948, supporting even the following trial evidence procedure. The most serious accusation was certainly of being an organisation at the service of the U.S., which was fomenting 'separatist feelings' and circulating ideas of 'specificity' by supporting the creation of an independent state in the Middle East.

Actually the post-genocide strengthening of the Jewish identity led to the formation of informal groups in different areas of the country, which debated on the problem of internal anti-Semitism and the ways to counter it, considered the perspectives of Zionism, and analysed the events in Palestine. We can consider this leaning as a form of resistance against the anti-Jewish chauvinism that was beginning to permeate the administration and a reaction to a merely negative- or discriminatory-construed Jewry (for instance the refusal to reintegrate the Jews in their former working positions or the barrier to upper education represented by the numerus clausus). One should also consider the jubilation followed by the establishment of Israel, when thousands of Soviet Jews expressed publicly their support to the new state entity and many applied for clearance in order to emigrate there. The reactions of the Communist Party Central Committee were of alarm, while misgivings and suspects increased in September 1948 after the arrival in Moscow of the Israeli diplomatic mission led by Golda Meyerson (Meir), which was welcomed with genuine public demonstrations in several occasions[24]. These events strengthened the 'plot' thesis, namely the firm belief that such mobilisations covered a certain design and that an underground campaign was under way to attain the recognition of the Zionist ideology.

'Forced' assimilation and repression: anti-Semitism from the top

State anti-Semitism, however, was already in a very advanced stage and exploited these misgivings and suspects to its own advantage. The beginning of the most violent period of repression has been conventionally set on 12 January 1948, when the actor Solomon M. Mikhoels – director of the State Jewish Theatre in Moscow and president of the EAK – was murdered in Minsk by some security agents[25]. His death was officially ascribed to a car accident and a state

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[24] Yaacov Ro'i, *Soviet Decision Making in Practice. The USSR and Israel 1947-1954*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1980), 183-219.

[25] Nataliia Vovsi-Mikhoels, *Moi otets Solomon Mikhoels. Vospominaniia o zhizni i gibeli* [My Father Solomon Mikhoels. Reminiscences on His Life and Death], (Moskva: Vozvrashchenie, 1997); Matvei Geizer, *Mikhoels, zhizn' i smert'* [Mikhoels: Life and

funeral was bestowed upon Mikhoels, who was a prominent figure in Soviet culture.

The murder, whose instigator is now plainly identified as being Stalin[26], marked the beginning of a new stage in the relations between the Soviet state and the Jews, at the same time when the fight against 'cosmopolitism' broke out and the campaign of anti-Semitic hatred became ever more explicit. Both the worsening of international relations and the foundation of Israel influenced it by leading the authorities to look at the Jews as a 'Diaspora nationality', which was animated by increasingly evident Zionistic feelings and potential aspirations to emigration – in brief, a potential threat to 'patriotic' integrity[27]. Some stages of the 'normalisation' ushered in the last season of Stalin's terror: the dismantling of the network of surviving cultural institutions; the suppression of the press and book industry in Yiddish language; the closure of the most active Jewish sections of the Union of Writers, often followed by the arrest of the main collaborators. Moreover, in violation of the rights sanctioned by the Constitution, the trend towards 'forced' assimilation was strengthened through an increasing social and economic discrimination. No explicit obstacle was opposed either to residence or to the admission of Jews into the army, the party or the trade unions, but a clandestine system of quotas was actually in force (particularly in the education and public employment) in order to hinder their accession to certain functions and specific sectors.

On 20 November 1948 came the decision of finally liquidating the EAK by means of a resolution of the Central Committee' of the politburo, which entrusted to the Ministry for State Security the task of dissolving the organisation "since the facts show that it is an anti-Soviet propaganda centre and it regularly sends information [...] to foreign secret services"[28]. Even before the adoption of this resolution, the first arrests of writers of Jewish nationality had already taken place and the process would gain momentum in the following months, with

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Death], (Moskva: Zhurnalisticheskoe Agenstvo "Glaznost"", 1998); Viktor Levashov, *Ubiistvo Mikhoelsa* [The assassination of Mikhoels], (Moskva: Olimp, 1998).

[26] Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko, "'Delo Mikhoelsa'. Novyi vzgliad: zakaz na likvidatsiiu i ispolnenie" ['The Case of Mikhoels'. A New View: The Order to Liquidate and Its Implementation], *Natsionalnyi teatr v kontekste mnogonatsionalnoi kultury: arkhivy, biblioteki, informatsiia* [National Theater in the Context of Multinational Culture: Archives, Libraries, Information], ed. Ada A. Kolganova (Moskva: Fair-Press, 2004), 5-25; Id., *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 153-163. On the role of Stalin and the Soviet security services in the general purview of the anti-Semitic post-war campaign, cf. Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939-1953*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 197-214.

[27] See. Jeffrey Veidlinger, "Soviet Jewry as a Diaspora Nationality. The 'Black Years' Reconsidered", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 33/1 (2003): 4-29.

[28] *Evreiskii antifashistskii komitet v SSSR*, 372.

charges ranging from treason and espionage to subversive activity and nationalism. The charge of 'anti-patriotic' activity, which was made public especially since the infamous article appeared in the Pravda in January 1949[29], would play a prominent role in passing from the anti-Cosmopolitical campaign to the anti-Jewish one. The latter would reach its climax on 12 August 1952, when – after a closed-door trial (8 May – 18 July) – the most important leaders of EAK were executed. The press did not cover the hearings nor reported any information on the fate of the defendants, who were all sentenced to death with just one exception. All of them had been subjected to brutal and exhausting interrogations, somebody was even beaten and tortured in order to extract a confession. As several testimonies suggest, the enquiry had manifest anti-Semitic connotations and its main thread consisted of alleged 'nationalistic' subversion, with a view to demonstrating that the project of a Jewish republic in Crimea had been pursued in close contacts with American agents, who were interested in a kind of bridgehead in the Black Sea region – maybe in the perspective of a possible attack against the Soviet Union. The issue was no more the censure of 'Jewish nationalism', but espionage and an attempt against the security of the state.

 Shortly after the conclusion of this process, the case of the so-called 'doctors-saboteurs' broke out, an alleged plot revealed by Tass and the Pravda on 13 January 1953[30]. The news was that the security services had discovered a terrorist organisation that wanted to make an attempt on the life of high-ranking Soviet leaders and was already responsible for the death of leading members of the party like A.A. Zhdanov and A.S. Shcherbakov. Nine physicians were said to be involved, six of them with clearly Jewish names, who were arrested with the charge of having operated at the behest of an international Zionistic agency, as well as the U.S. and British secret services. It was the beginning of a new step in the anti-Semitic campaign, with the alleged 'plot' used in order to engender an atmosphere of violent and explicit hostility with respect to the Jews. Up this moment state anti-Semitism had been evolving basically as an underground dynamic, as shown also by the secrecy that had surrounded the last trial against the EAK. During the fight against 'cosmopolitism' the very term 'Jew' had been rarely used, as well as this the press had not reported any information about the sentence and the shooting of many representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia. Instead, beginning with January 1953, both denigration and persecution of the Jews became apparent.

Shortly after the sudden death of Stalin (5 March 1953) came the

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[29] "Ob odnoi antipatrioticheskoi gruppe teatral'nykh kritikov" [About an Anti-patriotic Group of Theatre Critics], *Pravda*, 28 January 1949; *Stalin i kosmopolitizm*, 232-241.
[30] See also *Stalin i kosmopolitizm*, 651-654.

acknowledgement that the 'plot' had been merely a provocation of the security services. Indeed on 4 April 1953 Pravda's front page reported a communiqué of the Ministry of Interior informing that the charges against the physicians were groundless and obtained with "means of investigation that are unacceptable and rigorously forbidden by Soviet laws". No explicit mention was made to the anti-Semitic dimension of the issue, but the charges were dropped and the arrested people released, almost at the same time as the mass liberation of the Gulag prisoners[31]. No other explanation was given and – in his secret report to the XX Congress of the Communist Party – N. Khrushchev simply laid the whole responsibility for this event on Stalin[32].

Judophobia: a means of political pressure and social intimidation

In spite of the Soviet-era difficulty in pursuing these topics – because of the denial of access to enquiry material, trial proceedings or other archival sources – the Stalinist anti-Semitic campaign has been the subject of growing attention over the years. Only after 1991, however, did the conditions for a thorough analysis of its ways and reasons materialise.

There is a point that made the debate heated up. Since early 1950s, and increasingly as the time went by, it had been said that a mass deportation of Jewry to Siberia was imminent, prepared upon Stalin's direct urging over that period[33]. The trial staged against the 'doctors-saboteurs' – according to several accounts, including the one by high-ranking Soviet officials (though reported indirectly)[34] – would have been openly celebrated and ended up with public executions in

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[31] See some reactions to this announcement in Aleksander Lokshin, "'Delo vrachei': 'Otkliki trudiashchikhsia'" [The "Doctors' Affair": A "Working People's Response"], *Vestnik Evreiskovo Universiteta v Moskve* 5 (1994): 52-62; Mordechai Altshuler, "Otkliki obshchestvennosti na Ukraine na osvobozhdenie vrachei-evreev (1953 g.)", [The Public Response in the Ukraine to the Release of the Jewish Doctors (1953)], *Vestnik Evreiskovo Universiteta* 8 (2003): 311-332.

[32] "O kul'te lichnosti i ego posledstviiakh. Doklad Pervogo sekretaria CK KPSS tov. Khrushcheva N. S. XX s'ezdu Kommunisticeskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza (25 fevralia 1956 goda)" [About the Cult of personality and its Consequences. Report of the First Secretary of the CC CPSU Comrade N. S. Khrushchev to the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (25 February 1956)], *Izvestija CK KPSS*, 3 (1989): 154-155.

[33] See among others Zinovii S. Sheinis, *Provokatsiia veka* [The Provocation of the Century], (Moskva: PIK, 1992); Iakov I. Aizenshtat, *O podgotovke Stalinym genotsida evreev* [On Stalin's Preparations for a Jewish Genocide], (Ierusalim: n. p., 1994); Fedor Liass, *Poslednii politicheskii protsess Stalina, ili, Nesostoiavshiisi genotsid* [Stalin's Last Political Trial, or the Genocide That Did Not Take Place], (Ierusalim: n. p., 1995).

[34] Sheinis, *Provokatsiia veka*, 122-123 (statements of N. N. Poliakov); Iakov Ia. Etinger, *Eto nevozmozhnogo zabyt' … Vospominaniia* [It Is Impossible to Forget...: Memoirs], (Moskva: Ves' Mir, 2001), 103-106 (statements of N. A. Bulganin).

Moscow and other big cities, in order to be followed by a huge wave of pogroms organised by the regime throughout the country. It was only because of Stalin's death that the project was not implemented. In fact, the way the physicians had been arrested, the use of torture to extort their confessions, and the great propaganda campaign that came together with this operation suggest the imminence of a new wide-range 'purge'. Rumours of a possible forced movement of Soviet Jewry to Birobidzhan or other areas in the Far East had already begun circulating in early 1948, after the mysterious death of Mikhoels. They strengthened at the end of the same year, at the time of the EAK dismantling and the arrest of its leaders. Later on they found confirmation in statements that reported even the construction of special camps and the preparation of trains in order to move the deportees[35]. Still, no document has been found in support of the existence of such a plan. Thence the issue has always been controversial.

The existence of an actual base for such deportation is undeniable in a country where forced mass movement of population, for reasons of either class or nationality, had been common practice in both the 1930s and 1940s[36]. But the implementation of this threat against the Jews would have encountered significant hurdles. According to Gennadii Kostyrcenko, unlike the case of geographically localised populations, the deportation of hundreds of thousands of people who did not live in specific areas, rather in densely populated urban centres, could not be executed swiftly and in secret; all the more if one consider that these people were deeply integrated with the rest of the population, up to the point of holding prominent position in the public life. Even more important for a country that did not present the ethnic homogeneity of Germany, any institutional anti-Semitism in the multi-national Soviet Union could not match Nazi radicalism, rather it had to develop gradually and discreetly, most of all without formal legitimacy. Otherwise anti-Semitism would lead to a substantial departure in the communist ideology "that was still keeping a small but crucial element of Bolshevik internationalism, in spite of the Stalinist mark of chauvinism"[37]. Thus confidentiality, gradualism and multi-ethnicity placed out of question the possibility of adopting short-term, coercive mass measures regarding the Jewry in peacetime. If any, Stalin's project

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[35] Lidiia A. Shatunovskaia, *Zhizn' v Kremle* [Life in the Kremlin], (New York: Chalidze Publications, 1982), 335-339; "Evreiskii antifashistskii komitet u M. A. Suslova (Iz vospominanii E. I. Dolitskogo)", *Zven'ia: Istoricheskii al'manakh* [Chains: A Historical Almanac], vol. 1 (Moskva: Progress, 1991), 535-554. See Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 330-331.

[36] See Nikolai F. Bugai, "20-50-e gody: pereseleniia i deportatsii evreiskogo naseleniia v SSSR" [Resettlement and Deportations of the Jewish Population within the USSR in the 1920s-50s], *Otechestvennaia Istoriia* 4 (1993): 175-185.

[37] Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 333.

consisted in the assimilation of the Jews by 'fostering' even through repressive actions – first of all against Jewish culture and intelligentsia (responsible for resisting the process of denationalisation) – a development once considered natural and objective.

 Part of the post-Soviet debate focused on the project of a collective letter to be published in Pravda in the name of a sizeable number of leading members of Soviet Jewry; they would condemn the 'treacherous' physicians and suggest a voluntary deportation of the Jews in order to escape popular wrath. None of the known versions of the letter, however, speaks explicitly of such a plan[38]. In 2003 the publication of the book edited by Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Naumov, which drew on new archival material, has reignited the debate. The volume allows a deeper knowledge of the means and reasons that led to the physicians' involvement in an alleged 'conspiracy' against the Soviet power[39]. The editors allude frequently to the building of new camps in Kazakhstan, at Irkutsk and in the autonomous Komi Republic, which were supposed to receive the Jewish deportees. Nevertheless, it has been remarked that in giving details about the specific places of internment the reference documents speak only of detention areas for "Germans, Austrians and other criminals"; moreover, in the lack of any specific directive, the only other supporting sources are still the accounts of the people concerned[40].

Thereupon it seems fair to say that the deportation of Soviet Jews is a 'myth', which was the product of 'social hysteria' and panic permeating the Jewish community in the years immediately after the war and the Holocaust, later on purposely fomented in the peculiar context of the cold war[41]. It follows the urgency in the post-Soviet era not merely to fill in the gaps and the voluntary omissions thanks to the archival declassification, but also to redeem the Russian society's 'historical conscience', which was deformed by both the ideological control of the Communist Party and the circulation of 'popular' myths created as an alternative to the official interpretation[42].

The enquiries made at Union, republic, regional, and provincial level offer a promising research perspective, since they let us better ascertain

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[38] See Kostyrcenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 364-374.
[39] Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot against the Jewish Doctors, 1948–1953*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).
[40] See David Brandenberger, "Stalin's last crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Soviet Antisemitism and the Doctor's Plot", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 6/1 (2005): 198-199.
[41] As thoroughly shown in Gennadii V. Kostyrchenko, "Deportatsiia – mistifikatsiia (Proshchanie s mifom stalinskoi epokhi)" [Deportation – mystification: farewell to a myth of the Stalinist era], *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 1 (2003): 92-113 (*Lekhaim*, 9 (2002), www.lechaim.ru/ARHIV/125/kost.htm); Id., *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 329-374.
[42] Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov"*, 329.

the soundness of the 'collective psychosis' that overwhelmed the Soviet Jewish community during the post-war years. In particular the period January-March 1953 was a sign of insecurity, distrust, suspicion and hatred. Ongoing investigation not only confirm the re-launch of the anti-Semitic campaign between the end of 1952 and the beginning of 1953, but they also prove the existence of an organised plan for mobilising the population through Judophobia. The regime used the latter as an effective means of political pressure and social intimidation – and as an excuse to give new strength to the anti-religious struggle, so obtaining the closure of several synagogues and the confiscation of their properties[43]. Confidential reports for the Central Committee of the Republic of Ukraine regarding popular reactions to the Tass press release on the arrest of the 'doctors-saboteurs' explain both the means and content of anti-Semitic propaganda, and the growing misgivings of the Jewish community. The reports suggest that the authorities, though having actively instigated Judophobia, were remarkably anxious at the possibility of spontaneous manifestation of popular violence. Indeed the population gave proof of a high level of anti-Semitism, calling most often for the expulsion of the Jews from their positions, but also their execution or deportation to Siberia[44]. In some cases, even Stalin's death was ascribed to the Jews and somebody explained the liberation of the physicians by resorting to the alleged Jewishness of Lavrentii P. Beriia[45]. The same situation occurred in Byelorussia where – by means of any possible media of communication – a major press campaign was orchestrated with the support of party propagandists in assemblies, in workplaces and particularly in schools of every kind and level. The campaign led to the almost complete expulsion of the Jews from any position of responsibility in the whole republic, with people calling for their dismissal, but also their internment and deportation[46]. It is

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[43] Mordechai Altshuler, "The Synagogue in the Soviet Union on Passover 1953", *Jews in Eastern Europe* 3 (2001): 58-76; Semen Charnyi, "Evreiskie religioznye obshchiny Gruzii v period 'dela vrachei'", [Jewish Religious Communities in Georgia at the Time of the 'Doctors' Plot' Affair], *Judaica Rossica* 3 (2003): 118-123.

[44] "The Party and Popular Reaction to the 'Doctor's Plot' (Dnepropetrovsk Province, Ukraine)", ed. Mordechai Altshuler and Tatiana Chentsova, *Jews in Eastern Europe* 2 (1993): 49-65; "More about Public Reactions to the Doctors' Plot", ed. Mordechai Altshuler, *Jews in Eastern Europe* 2 (1996): 24-57. See also Shimon Briman, "Zimnii psikhoz: Kharkov i 'delo vrachei' 1953 goda" ['A Winter Psychosis': Kharkov and the 'Doctors' Plot Case' of 1953], *Istoki*, 8 (2001): 25-42.

[45] Mikhail Goldshtein, "Poltava vo vremena 'Dela vrachei'" [Poltava at the Time of the 'Doctors' Plot Case], *Istoki*, 2 (1998): 96-107; Id., "The 'Doctors' Plot' in the Poltava Region: Excerpts from the Poltava Press and Archives", *Shvut*, 9 (2000): 93-101.

[46] Leonid L. Smilovitsky, "Belorussian Jewry and the 'Doctors' Plot'", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 27/2 (1997): 39-52; Id., "The Non-Jewish Reaction to the 'Doctors' Plot' in Belorussia: in Light of New Documents (January-March 1953)", *Shvut*, 9 (2000): 67-92; Id., "Evrei Belorussii v pervoie poslevoennoe desiatiletie" [The Jews of

remarkable that among the most frequent charges (parasitism, economic offences, links with the West and Israel) there was the recurring idea of the Jews as a 'nation' apart, which was not able of being loyal to the motherland.

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Belorussia at the First Postwar Decade], *Vestnik Evreiskogo Universiteta*, 9 (2004): 213-236; Id., "'Delo vrachei' v Belorussii: politika vlastei i otnoshenie naseleniia (ianvar'-aprel' 1953 g.)", *Repressivnaia politika sovetskoi vlasti v Belarusi. Sbornik nauchnykh rabot*, 2 (Minsk: Homo Liber, 2007), 269-314.

"Prisoners of Hope" or "Amnesia"?

The Italian Holocaust Survivors and Their *aliyah* to Israel.

by *Arturo Marzano*

"You have to come to Palestine", the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade told me.
"There are so many Jews over there. A Jewish State will soon be created".
I was lured. But then I felt so homesick, maybe because of the Roman dialect songs
we were singing. "Before that, I have to see Rome again" I said.
They replied: "Rome? After what they did to you?"
"Rome is Rome… it has nothing to do with Italy. It's something peculiar. It's
Rome.[1]

Abstract

Out of the 38.000 Italian Jews residents in Italy in 1938, more than 4,148 were deported. Of these, only 312 survivors returned. This paper deals with the Italian Holocaust survivors' migration to Israel, and investigates the reason why only a very small percentage of those who returned from the Nazi camps migrated to Israel, compared to a much higher percentage of Italian Jews who were not deported and made aliyah. Were they "prisoners of hope"? Did they decide to reintegrate into the Italian political, social, and economic context hoping that their relationship with Italy could be the same as if nothing had happened? Or was it a question of "amnesia"? Was the lack of memory of the Fascist persecution a price they had to pay in order to succeed in their request of a full reintegration or was it due to the attitude of forgetting the past that Jews shared with the entire Italian society?

Introduction

Out of the 38.000 Italian Jews[2] who were residents in Italy in 1938, 4,148 were deported between September 16, 1943 and February 24,

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[1]   The meeting between Settimia Spizzichino from Rome and soldiers of the Jewish Brigade took place in the countryside near Bergen Belsen in May 1945. In Settimia Spizzichino and Isa Di Nepi Olper, *Gli anni rubati*, (Comune di Cava de' Tirreni, 1996), 61.

[2]   Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1993), 5.

1945.[3] Out of them, only 312 survivors returned.[4]

Historiography has not focused on what happened to them after their return, and no one investigated whether they emigrated to Israel or elsewhere, or whether they remained in Italy. At the same time, only limited studies have investigated on the post-war Italian *aliyah* [migration], which started in March 1945, even before the entire Italian territory had been liberated.

This paper deals with the Italian Holocaust survivors' migration to Israel, and wants to investigate the reasons why only a very small percentage of those who returned from the extermination camps migrated to Israel, compared to a much higher percentage of Italian Jews who were not deported and who made *aliyah*. Actually, the former were not an exception, whereas the latter were. In fact, the vast majority of Italian Jews did not leave the state that had betrayed them in 1938 and that had contributed to their deportation in 1943-45, but decided to remain in Italy.

Were they "prisoners of hope"?[5] Did they decide to reintegrate into the Italian political, social, and economic context hoping that their relationship with Italy could be the same as if nothing had happened, as if the Italian Government had not adopted the Racial Laws in 1938, and as if Italians had not played any role in their deportation? Or was it a question of "amnesia"?[6] Was the lack of memory of the Fascist persecution a price they had to pay in order to succeed in their request for a full reintegration or was it due to the attitude of forgetting the past that Jews shared with the entire Italian society?

While recent studies have aimed at replying to these questions, by focusing on the general picture of Italian Judaism, this paper intends to analyse the specific behaviour of that small group of Italian Jews who were deported and survived.

The post-war Italian *aliyah*. Some data.

Only five of the 312 survivors we have referred to in the Introduction made *aliyah*: Anna Di Gioacchino Cassuto left Florence in November

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[3]   Liliana Picciotto Fargion, "La ricerca del Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea sugli ebrei deportati dall'Italia", *Storia e memoria della deportazione*, ed. Paolo Momigliano Levi, (Firenze: Giuntina, 1996) 51.

[4]   6806 Italian and foreign Jews were deported from Italy. 837 of them survived. In Liliana Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)*, 3rd ed. (Milano: Mursia, 2002), 28.

[5]   I draw the expression from Henry Stuart Hughes, *Prisoners of Hope: The Silver Age of the Italian Jews (1924-1974)*, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[6]   I owe the expression to Ilaria Pavan, *Persecution, Indifference, and Amnesia. The Restoration of Jewish Rights in Post-war Italy*, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006).

1945 to move to Jerusalem;[7] Martino Godelli and his wife Gisella Kugler, both from Fiume, moved from Trieste in 1954 to the *Nezer Sereni* kibbutz; Hanna Kugler Weiss, Gisella's sister, moved to Israel in 1949 and went to Nazaret Illit; finally, Giacomo Marcheria, originally from Trieste, went to Israel from Rome. This means that 1,6% of the Italian Jews who had been deported and had survived decided to migrate to *Eretz Israel.*

On the contrary, out of the 30,000 Italian Jews[8] living in Italy after the war, a much greater number moved to Israel. There are no definite figures, because in-depth research on that topic is still lacking, and different numbers are presented: according to Bernard Wasserstein, between 1948 and 1951 1305 Italians made *aliyah;*[9] Sergio Della Pergola affirms that between 1944 and 1951 2084 Italian Jews moved to Israel.[10] According to the latter data, a percentage of almost 7% of non-deported survivors left Italy to make *aliyah.*[11]

Why is there such a discrepancy between the two percentages? Is there a correlation between the fact that the great majority of people who had experienced deportation decided to remain in Italy, and therefore tried – more or less successfully – to reintegrate into the Italian

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[7]   She tragically died in the Arab terrorist attack against a Jewish convoy that was travelling from Jerusalem to the Hadassa Hospital on Mount Scopus, on April 14, 1948. See Massimo Longo Adorno, *Gli ebrei fiorentini dall'emancipazione alla Shoà*, (Giuntina: Firenze, 2003), 146-7.

[8]   Guri Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi. Gli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2003), 5. See also Guri Schwarz,"The Reconstruction of Jewish Life in Italy after World War II", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 8/3 (2009): 360-377.

[9]   Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora*, (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 92.

[10]   Sergio Della Pergola and Amedeo Tagliacozzo, *Gli Italiani in Israele*, (Roma: Rassegna Mensile di Israel – Federazione Sionistica Italiana, 1978), 33. Most probably, Wasserstein took the number 1305 from this book, as this is the figure provided for the 1948-51 period. Fano gives different numbers: 621 Italian Jews left Italy between 1948 and 1955. If we add 158 people (who made *aliyah* in 1944-45) and 273 people (who went to Israel between 1945 and 1948), we obtain the much lower number of 1052 Italian Jews. See Angelo Fano, "L'aliah dall'Italia dal 1928 al 1955", *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 21/7 (1955): 270. Therefore, according to Fano, the percentage of Italian Jews who migrated to Israel is lower, 3,5%.

[11]   An interesting comparison can be done with France. Between 1944 and 1949, there were around 225,000 Jews living there. According to Sergio Della Pergola, 2000 of them made *aliyah*. See Doris Bensimon and Sergio Della Pergola, *La population juive de France. Socio-démographie et identité*, (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry – CNRS, 1984), 36. Wasserstein presents a higher figure, as according to him, 3050 French Jews left France. See Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora,* 92. This means that only 1,2% of French Jews made the Zionist choice. As far as I know, there are no statistics about how many French deportee moved to Israel. Telephone interview of the author with Serge Klarsfeld, July 29, 2008.

context, while a significant minority of people who had certainly lived a very difficult period – not the Nazi camps, though – decided to answer to the Zionist call, and to abandon their previous life for a new one in the Jewish State?

The return from extermination camps.

In order to reply to this question, let us start with what the deported victims found once they were back home.[12] Were they welcomed? How did Italy receive them? Did the Jewish communities support them and provide them with what they needed to overcome the tragedy they had been through? Or, at least, did their relatives – if still alive - and friends welcome them?

When the deportees came back home, their Jewish communities were slowly trying to recover, go back to their everyday lives and carry out the same activities they had been used to before the Shoah. The first communities to pass through this process were those located in the centre of Italy,[13] like Rome or Florence, which had been liberated in the summer of 1944. In those cities, almost everyone – Jews included – were trying to forget the past, overcome the tragic experience of the war, and go back to life, looking forward to the future.

This is how Giulia Sermoneta Cohen describes her life in Rome in an interview she gave in February 1996:

We had a great will to live, to dance, to travel, to experience our first love stories. Our past was there, but we had to go on. We crave to be young. I knew some of those who had come back from the camps. They did not speak. And we did not ask them anything in order to respect them.[14]

Also Annamarcella Falco Tedeschi confirms that this was the situation

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12   On the topic, see *Il ritorno dai Lager*, ed. Alberto Cavaglion (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1993); Mario Toscano, "The Abrogation of Racial Laws and the Reintegration of Jews in Italian Society (1943-1948)", *The Jews Are Coming Back. The Return pf the Jews to Their Countries of Origin After WWI*, ed. David Bankier, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 148-68.

13   In the south of Italy, the first part of the country to be liberated, there were no Jewish communities, but only foreign Jews who had been placed in the Ferramonti di Tarsia concentration camp, or who had been able to find safety in the Allied occupied territory.

14   Federica Barozzi*, "*L'uscita degli ebrei di Roma dalla clandestinità", *Il ritorno alla vita: vicende e diritti degli ebrei in Italia dopo la seconda guerra mondiale*, ed. Michele Sarfatti, (Firenze: Giuntina, 1998), 44.

in Rome at that time.[15]

When survivors came back from the extermination camps long after Rome had been liberated,[16] everyone else wanted to go on with his/her own existence. Piero Terracina came back to Rome in December 1945, one and a half years after the liberation of the city in June 1944. Although he received much love and care from his friends, he understood that he could not share his experience with them.[17]

With [my friends] and my relatives for many years I did not talk about what had happened to me. I was afraid they could ask me how I survived…. I was terrified by the possibility of somebody asking me "why did you survive, while my son and my husband did not?". At the same time, I thought that if I had spoken about something, many people would have got annoyed, or at least some of them would have thought: "What is he saying? It is not possible".[18]

The same happened to many others. Liana Millu describes two episodes that may explain the feeling most of the survivors felt after their return.

In October [1945] I decided to accept my aunt's proposal to go to live with her in Pisa. (…) Later, I started to tell her. I wanted to talk, I needed to talk, to let people know, and my aunt sometimes was moved. But she was always interrupting me, overlapping her memories with mine. Her stories were those of an evacuee; she thought they were terrible, but to me they didn't seem so. I started to realise that people would not have understood.
(…) A cousin wanted to meet me. Her daughter (…) had been deported in

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[15]   "If I think that in June 1944 Jews were still being massacred, while we were celebrating, I feel guilty. But at that time, we only wanted to live, and we were eager to enjoy ourselves, to relax, to dance, after so many years of deprivation". Interview of the author with Annamarcella Tedeschi Falco, Milan, February 1998. Annamarcella, her mother (widow of Mario Falco), and her sister made *aliyah* in March 1945. Her sister remained in Israel, while she and her mother came back to Italy a few months later.

[16]   According to the Zionist weekly *Israel*, which started to host an "Information Bulletin", a total number of 75 survivors had come back by August 3 (Bulletin n. 2); 226 by August 31 (Bulletin n. 6); 395 by September 20 (Bulletin n. 9); 426 by September 28 (Bulletin n. 10); 477 by October 12; 579 by January 11, 1946 (Bulletin n. 25).

[17]   "When I arrived in Rome, I found a group of friends who protected me, who never treated me as being different. And I was different, indeed, because whoever goes to hell and comes back, cannot be normal any longer. (…) Probably I wanted to talk, but the others did not care. There was indifference, or even intolerance. People said: What do you think? That in Italy it was a bed of roses? We were hungry; it was cold. As if that hunger and that cold could be the same we suffered in Auschwitz". Interview of the author with Piero Terracina, Rome, September 19, 2008.

[18]   Barozzi, *L'uscita degli ebrei di Roma dalla clandestinità*, 45.

1944, and she knew nothing of her. She started asking me questions I could only vaguely reply to. In the event, she stared at me angrily: "You came back. You, who did not have parents or a husband; you who always gave problems to your family. Why didn't she come back? She had a child, she was good, she deserved to come back! She had to come back! Is this God's justice?" (…) I said nothing, but I did not feel guilty.[19]

Actually, in the northern Italian communities – which were liberated in the spring of 1945 - the exact same thing happened just a few months later.
Israel De Benedetti, in his autobiography published in 2003, wrote:

During the first weeks of the summer of 1945, my friend Franco, with his father and mother, came back from Buchenwald. After a few days, Gegio Ravenna came back from Auschwitz. Only four out of the almost one hundred who had been deported came back. Four mute people, who said nothing, not a single word about what they had seen and had gone through, for days, months, years.[20]

When Martino Godelli, from Fiume, spoke about the camps, he was not believed and therefore he decided not to speak any longer about them.[21] And Primo Levi also described those years in the same way:

At that time, people had other things to do. They had to build their houses, they had to look for a job. The food was still rationed; cities were in ruins, Allies were still occupying Italy. People did not want to listen to this; they wanted something else, they wanted to dance, for example, to have parties, to have children. A book like mine, and like many others after mine, were almost an insult, a way to ruin the on-going party.[22]

Generalising the way Elsa Morante describes Rome in her novel *La Storia*, which was published much later, it is possible to have a clear picture of the situation in those years:

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[19]   Liana Millu, *Tagebuch. Il diario del ritorno dal Lager*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2006), 98-9.

[20]   Corrado Israel De Benedetti, *Anni di rabbia e di speranze 1938-1949*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2003), 113.

[21]   "Once, three months after I had come back from the camps, I was on a train. A guy asked me what my tattoo represented. I started telling him about what had happened. When I went out of the train compartment, probably in order to smoke, I heard him saying: «how many tall stories is that guy from Trieste telling?» I decided not to talk any more. When people asked me what my tattoo represented, I used to say: it is my girlfriend's telephone number". Telephone interview of the author with Martino Godelli, October 23, 2008.

[22]   In Schwarz*, Ritrovare se stessi*, 116.

Soon they [the Jews] understood that no one wanted to listen to their stories: there were those who did not pay attention from the beginning, those who interrupted them with an excuse, and those who even avoided them, as if they meant: "Brother, I really understand, but in this moment I have other things to do". (…) People wanted to remove them as dead or mad relatives are removed from normal families.[23]

When Geo Josz, the main character of Giorgio Bassani's short story *Una lapide in via Mazzini* [A headstone in Via Mazzini], returned to Ferrara in August 1945, the community had already made a headstone to commemorate Ferrara's deported victims. Josz found his name among the dead and it took him a while to make other people accept he was alive and back. The difficulties he met in making other people listen to him, as everybody wanted to look forward to the future and to a better life, convinced him that it was better to leave Ferrara again.

This confirms that the setting and the atmosphere survivors found in Italy once they were back did not represent a reason to remain. It is pointless to highlight that the situation of Judaism in Italy cannot be compared to what had happened in Poland, where the virulence of anti-Semitism made it impossible for the survivors to stay.[24] But it is important to remember that – as we have seen - the reception in Italy was not warm. Moreover, as research has recently highlighted with regard to restoration of rights, restitution of personal property and real estate, and professional reintegration, Italian legislation was very poor, especially if we compare it to the rest of Western Europe.[25]

The "return to life" of the Jewish communities. The "victory" of Zionism.

When the survivors returned home, not only did they meet people who wanted to go on with their lives without listening to survivors, but they also encountered Jewish institutions, which were ready to turn over a new page. The Zionist organisations, in particular, were permeated by

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[23]   Elsa Morante, *La Storia*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1974), 376-7, quoted by Cavaglion*, Il ritorno dai Lager*, 154.

[24]   See the bibliography included in Fabio Maria Pace, "L'impossibile ritorno: gli ebrei in Polonia dalla fine della guerra al pogrom di Kielce", *Il ritorno alla vita e il problema della testimonianza. Studi e riflessioni sulla Shoah*, ed. Alessandra Chiappano and Fabio Minazzi, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2007), 127-53.

[25]   Ilaria Pavan, *Persecution, Indifference, and Amnesia*. On the same topic, see Ilaria Pavan, *Tra indifferenza e oblio. Le conseguenze economiche delle leggi razziali in Italia (1938-1970)*, (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2003) and Giovanna D'amico, *Quando l'eccezione diventa norma. La reintegrazione degli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2006).

lively energy and were looking forward to the future, more than to the past.

If one reads the issues of the re-born Jewish-Zionist weekly *Israel* published between 1944 and 1948, it is interesting to note that there are only a few articles related to the Shoah. The names of those deported were published in several issues, but, apart from that, not much else appeared in the press. The revival of Jewish life – which in Italy meant a Zionist life – was given much more space in the press: a huge quantity of activities and many newly created groups and associations were mentioned. But the *Yishuv* [the Jewish community resident in Palestine] - and later the state of Israel – was the principal topic of most of the articles published, which discussed the activities of the *chalutzim* [pioneers], their hard work, and their great achievements.

This is not a surprise. Italian Jewish communities had been almost completely "conquered" by Zionism, which had been first brought by the *chayalim* [soldiers], the Palestinian Jewish soldiers who were embedded in the British army, and later by the Jewish Brigade.[26] It was a question of timing. When the Jewish communities could finally celebrate the departure of the Nazi troops, and could start living again, they met the Jews from the *Yishuv*, who contributed greatly to their recovery. This contribution was both practical – for example water delivery to the local population[27] – but also ideological.

In Rome, their presence was extremely important, as evidence clearly demonstrates:

The Palestinian soldiers (…) soon began to centre their efforts around the work for children and youth. A school was opened in Via Balbo with the intention of (…) helping their physical and moral rehabilitation. The syllabus was based mainly on Hebrew lessons and bringing the children into contact

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[26]   Created on September 19, 1944, it sailed towards Italy from North Africa on November 3, 1944. On the shoulders of the members of the "Fighting Jewish Brigade", there was a tag consisting of a yellow Star of David against a blue-white-blue background. For the activity of the Jewish Brigade, see Hanoch Bartov and Yoav Gelber, *The Living Bridge. The Meeting of the Volunteers from Eretz Israel with the Holocaust Survivors*, (Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth, The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, 1983); Morris Beckman, *The Jewish Brigade. An Army with two masters (1944-45)*, (London: Spellmount, 1998); *La Brigata Ebraica in Italia (1943-45). Attraverso il Mediterraneo per la libertà,* ed. Bice Migliau and Ghila Piattelli, (Roma: Centro di cultura ebraica di Roma, 2003); Michael Tagliacozzo, "Attività dei soldati di Eretz Israel in Italia (1943-46). Il corpo ausiliario dei soldati palestinesi nell'armata di liberazione inglese", *Saggi sull'ebraismo italiano del Novecento in memoria di Luisella Mortara Ottolenghi*, ed. Liliana Picciotto Fargion, Numero speciale de *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 59/1 (2003), 575-87.

[27]   Leah Dana met the Jewish soldiers in Florence, after the liberation of the city. She was looking for water, and she saw a truck with a water-tank and the Star of David painted on it. She was very impressed by the fact that the soldiers could speak Hebrew. Interview of the author with Leah Dana, Kibbutz *Magaan Michael*, October 5, 2007.

with Modern Palestine. (…) After the school moved away from Via Balbo, the work there was concentrated upon (…) teenagers. The soldiers working there devoted all their soul and energies but the results of their work would have been far greater, if they had been able from the beginning to understand and to adapt themselves to the particular mentality and outlook of Roman Jews. (…) Here in Rome Jews argued that Anti-Semitism never had struck root in the Italian people – and they are right at his regard – and that the only thing they could do was to return to their pre-1938 way of life. And many of them who had begun to doubt and to look for new ideas and ideals were not attracted to the particular views and habits exhibited by many of the Palestinians. (…) Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that in the Youth centre as well as in the Zionist Movement and in the Hakhsharah that have been recently established in Rome, the majority are Italian Jews and I have no doubt that in time many of them will find their way to Palestine and help to re-establish more intimate contact between Italian Jewry and their new Homeland.[28]

Also the northern communities took advantage of the presence of the Jewish Brigade, which in April 1945 reached Milan, where a centre for Palestinian soldiers was opened in Via Cantù.

At first the Palestinian soldiers were very helpful. Their work in the North was not as flashy as in the Centre and the South (…). Yet in the North, and in particular in Milan, the *chayalim* (…) supported the reconstruction of the Jewish institutions, transported the *olim* to the harbours, and helped their brothers to find the strength and will to live.[29]

The First post-war Zionist Congress[30] was held in Rome in January 1945;[31] it was the demonstration that Zionism had "conquered" the hearts and minds of the Italian Jews. An article which appeared in *Israel* is worth quoting, as it makes a comparison between the *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane* (UCII) and the newly established *Federazione Sionistica Italiana* (FSI).

The UCII (…) does not seem willing to decide whether to start acting again.

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[28]   Unsigned letter sent to S. Wechsler, c/o Jewish Chaplain, Rome Allied Area Command, 3 October 1944, 0.31 Collection Italy, JM 1131, File 1, Yad Vashem Archive, Jerusalem.

[29]   Alfredo Sarano (Secretary of the Milan Jewish Community), "Sette anni di vita e opere della comunità di Milano", April 1945 – May 1952, 0.31 Collection Italy, JM 1716, File 1, p. 8, Yad Vashem Archive, Jerusalem.

[30]   In particular, the Congress was calling for the active participation of "the vigorous and promising youth communities that have already organized themselves in the preparing-for-agriculture camps, and in the first nucleus of *He-Chalutz*". "Un nuovo aspetto della vita ebraica in Italia", *Israel*, January 18, 1945.

[31]   "La prima iniziativa sionistica dell'Europa liberata", *Israel*, January 18, 1945.

(…) Until it can carry out its duties again, it will have to recognise that the FSI – as created in the recent Congress – represents Italian Judaism much more than the Union.[32]

The "victory" of Zionism explains why a relevant number of Italian Jews – clearly a minority, yet significant[33] - decided to leave Italy and to settle in Israel. It is as if a sort of "fever" had spread throughout Italian Judaism, in particular among its younger members. It was mainly these who migrated; because of their age, they had not experienced the successful Jewish integration into the Italian civil, political, socio-economic and cultural context in the decades preceding the Racial Laws. Unlike the older generations, it was much more difficult for them to consider the 1938-45 years as a parenthesis in an experience of full equality of rights, integration and identification with the Italian nation.[34] While their parents and grandparents had experienced those earlier years, and did remain "prisoners of hope", the younger generations could not. Zionism – which they joined thanks to the *chayalim* who arrived along with the American and British liberators – represented the ideological framework they needed in order to escape from such a "prison", and *aliyah* was the main tool for this.

The question that has to be answered, then, is why did not the survived deportee – the vast majority of whom was made up of young people - make *aliyah*?

The Zionist propaganda from *Eretz Israel.* **Which was the impact on the deportees?**

Despite being the main reason for the spread of Zionism among Italian Jews, the *chayalim* were supported in their task by the Italian Jews who had already migrated to *Eretz Israel* before the war. In fact, the latter started to send appeals to the Italian Jews to convince them to migrate. All of the messages sent to Italy shared the same idea: the duty of Italian Jews was to build Israel through the hard work in the

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[32]   "Un nuovo aspetto della vita ebraica in Italia", *Israel*, January 18, 1945.

[33]   Before the war, 500 Italian Jews had migrated to British Palestine: 100 between 1920 and 1938, and 400 after the Racial Laws. See Arturo Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere. Gli ebrei italiani e l'emigrazione in Palestina prima della guerra (1920-40)*, (Milano: Marietti, 2003). Compared to these numbers, the post-war *aliyah* seems huge.

[34]   Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 82-85.

kibbutzim[35]. Many of the articles and newsletters sent to Italy dealt with the activities that needed to be carried out in *Eretz Israel*, such as agricultural projects, water canalization works, the foundation of new *yishuvim* [settlements], the enhancement of industrial activities.[36]

Also the first group of people leaving Italy in March 1945 - mainly Roman Jews - was involved in propaganda activities, in order to convince the Italian Jews to migrate. The main aim was to support the creation of a fully structured *chalutz* movement in Italy in order to carry out a mass migration from the country, as part of the gradual dissolution of the Diaspora.[37] The description of life in the *kibbutzim* represented the main topic of the newsletters written by the *italkim*, with all the details related to the hard work needed to *livnot ve lehivanot* [build and be built].[38]

Was this message successful? Given the numbers of those who migrated, we could state it was. Certainly, one of the main differences with the less successful pre-war *'aliyah* was the presence in *Eretz Israel* of a structured community of Italian Jews, which made the settlement there simpler for the new *olim*. Was this approach successful with the deportees, as well? Given the numbers of the few who migrated, we could assume it was not.

This type of message could work with those Italians who had not been

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[35]   "You have just started to do something very important, you are at the beginning of a new life and it seems that you have already put forth a lot of effort; you have already overcome the highest obstacle. (…) Like you, we came from the same country, from the same social classes and we have been through a radical transformation, but none of us could think of living a different life. Hard work under the sun for those who are not used to it requires a strong will and one has to be ready for huge material and intellectual sacrifices. (…) We have been waiting for the Italian Jewish youth to walk along the path of reconstruction of *Eretz Israel* for a long time; now you are here and we are welcoming you as our future *chaverim* [*kibbutz* members] and we can only hope you might grow in number. After the massacre of five million Jews, each of us has to realize that his own contribution is of outmost importance: *Eretz Israel* will be built again only if each of us will be ready to give all of himself". "Letter to the young Jews of Italy who prepare themselves in the hakhsharoth to come to Eretz Israel", Kibbutz *Givat Brener*, 3 September 1944, P 192, Box 63, Bag 5, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.

[36]   Message of the *Irgun Olei Italia* [Organization of Italian Immigrants] to the Italian Jews, January 1945, P 192, Box 9, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.

[37]   Gershon Calò and Tullio Segre to the Italian Jews, Degania Alef, 18 April 1945, P 192, Box 15, Bag 9, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.

[38]   Tullio Segre, "Aspects of our group life", *Le iedideinu*, September–October 1945, 5-6, located in P 192, Box 15, Bag 9, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.

deported, and had been able to hide: they were ready to act after so many years of passiveness; they had met the *chayalim* who had concretely demonstrated to them that Zionism was the best way to transform that passiveness into activism; they had been involved in several Zionist activities in Italy and had taken part in the reconstruction of Italian Jewish life. But it could not work with those Italians who had just returned from the death camps: they were "destroyed" in their bodies and in their soul; they were desperate to collect information about their families; they could not and did not want to think about anything else other than coming back slowly to life; they could not even conceive the possibility of making sacrifices and facing the harsh conditions of building a new state, after so many months in the Nazi camps.

At this regard, it is interesting to focus attention on what Hanna Kugler Weiss states in her memories. She wanted to move to *Eretz Israel*, but she thought that in Israel there were only *kibbutzim*, and when she saw a documentary showing what a *kibbutz* was like (with a tower and a wooden fence for self-defence), she was shocked by the similarity between the death camps she had experienced and the *kibbutzim*.[39]

The *aliyah* of the deportees. Reasons to leave. Reasons to stay.

Why, then, had the five deportees who migrated to Israel made such a decision?[40]

Anna Di Gioacchino moved to Israel because her children were already living there. After she returned from Auschwitz – while her husband Nathan Cassuto did not survive - she discovered that her sister-in-law had brought the children to Palestine and a few months later she migrated there. She belonged to a Zionist family, and she would have probably left Italy before the war, with other relatives, had her husband not been the Chief Rabbi of Florence. Zionism was a reason to leave, but the main cause is probably to be found in the fact that her children were already living in *Eretz Israel*.

Hanna and Gisella Kugler came back to Fiume even though they knew their mother had not survived. They were looking for Peppina, the old lady who had taken care of them. She was not Jewish, so they were sure she was still alive. When they discovered that she had been killed in a Nazi retaliation, they "lost all hope. [Their] dreams were destroyed. With the loss of Peppina, [they] realised that the past had gone, and

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[39]   Hanna Kugler Weiss, *Racconta! Fiume-Birkenau-Israele*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2006), 110. Telephone interview of the author with Hanna Weiss, October 22, 2008.

[40]   Unfortunately, I do not have any information about one of those five. I have not been able to reach Giacomo Marcheria. His sister Ida, who is also a survivor, told me he does not want to speak about his experience. Telephone interview of the author with Ida Marcheria, October 23, 2008.

[they] had to start a new life".[41] When Gisella married Martino Godelli, Hanna remained alone and decided to leave. Why did she make *aliyah*? Was Zionism the main reason for her moving to *Eretz Israel*? Hanna's brother, Turi, was already in Palestine. He had migrated in January 1940, with the *'aliyat ha-noar* [youth migration]. Once her sister got married and moved to Trieste, Hanna decided to join him. Did Hanna Weiss choose to make *aliyah* for family reasons? Most likely it was for both reasons. After the adoption of the Racial Laws in 1938, she had become Zionist, she had started thinking of the possibility of migrating to Palestine, and this idea remained in her mind until 1949, the year she went to Israel. When her older sister moved to Trieste to live with her husband's parents, Hanna decided to reach her younger brother, still unmarried.

Martino Godelli was already a Zionist before the war. He had applied for an entry permit in 1939, while he was in the *hakhsharah* [agricultural institute] of Cevoli, near Pisa. On May 31, 1940 the Fascist government closed the *hakhsharah* and his permit arrived on June 16, 1940. But Italy had entered the war six days earlier, and he could not migrate. After his deportation, he still wanted to migrate to a *kibbutz*, but his father, sick with Parkinson's disease, would have not been accepted. This is the reason why he postponed his *aliyah* until 1954, when he moved to Israel with his parents, his wife Gisella, and their child.[42]

Family reasons explain why Fausta Finzi did not leave Milan, where she returned after being in Ravensbrück. Her mother was still alive; she was Catholic and therefore she had not been deported; she was old and it would have been too difficult to bring her to Israel.[43]

Finding their relatives, in particular their brothers and sisters, was the main reason why the deportees wanted to return home as soon as possible. For a long time Nedo Fiano hoped that his older brother Enzo might still be alive. Only after some time, when he was already back in Florence, he understood that his brother was dead.[44] Throughout her period of deportation, Goti Herskovitz Bauer hoped that her younger brother Tibor could survive. After her liberation, she met a group of Hungarians on their way to Berehovo, her parents' hometown, where she thought she might find some relatives; but she decided not to follow them in order to go back to Fiume, where she hoped she might meet her brother. And when she realised her brother had not survived, her desire was to move to the United States, in order

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41   Kugler Weiss, *Racconta!*, 108.

42   Telephone interview of the author with Martino Godelli, October 23, 2008.

43   Telephone interview of the author with Fausta Finzi, October 9, 2008.

44   Interview of the author with Nedo Fiano, Milan, September 26, 2008.

to look for her mother's brother.[45] Dora Venezia came back to Genoa to stay with her sister Flora, the only member of her family who had not been deported.[46] Virginia Gattegno, deported from Rhodes where her family had moved in 1936, decided to go back to Rome to look for some relatives who had not been deported.[47] Gilberto Salmoni wanted to migrate to Israel during the summer of 1945, but his brother did not allow him to leave. He remained in Italy.[48]

Therefore, family reasons had a fundamental role in the deportees' decision either to move to *Eretz Israel* or elsewhere.

But what happened to those deportees whose family members had all died? Piero Terracina's parents and his brothers and sisters did not survive. Nedo Fiano was in the same situation. In 1945, they were very young: Piero was 17 years old and Nedo was 20. They perfectly fit into the category of young people who were responding to the Zionist appeal to migrate to Israel. Why, then, did not Piero Terracina and Nedo Fiano leave?

Liana Millu had an aunt who was still living in Italy. But the main reason why she did not go to Israel was that she was not a Zionist, and she had no particular attachment to Judaism. The deportation had not changed her; although some of her relatives had made *aliyah*, she was not interested in moving to Israel, as she recognised Italy as her true homeland, despite a kind of "special relationship" with Israel.[49]

The question we need to answer is, then, why did the Zionist message not "conquer" the deportees while it was "conquering" many non-deportees? As we explained earlier, once people returned home from the death camps, they were not able to think about planning their future lives. The experience of the camps had taught them not to think about the future, because in the camps there was no future. They needed time to go back to life, slowly and gradually. They could not make radical decisions. Nedo Fiano continued to feel stunned long after returning home. He started working, and work was his real refuge, which allowed him to go on with his life. Any other idea, anything more complicated than living was too much for him. When Piero

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[45] Interview of the author with Goti Bauer, Milan, October 18, 2008.

[46] Interview of the author with Dora Venezia, Genova, October 16, 2008.

[47] *Meditate che questo è stato*, ed. Federazione Giovanile Ebraica d'Italia (Firenze: Giuntina, 2006), 61.

[48] At that time Gilberto was 20 years old, and he was under the care of his brother Renato, who did not allow him to leave. "I could not tolerate the idea that deportees might be killed in the war for independence. I wanted to join them in order to give my contribution. When the war was over, there was no such need any longer". Telephone interview of the author with Gilberto Salmoni, October 16, 2008.

[49] *Meditate che questo è stato*, 79.

Terracina came back to Rome, working was the first thing he had to do, in order to be able to pay the rent for the room where he was living. He started working and kept on working, because work became a means to start living and getting on with his life.[50]

At the same time, Israel was perceived as too difficult a place to live in. Israel lacked those quiet living conditions the deportees had been dreaming about for so long. Lina Navarro met a friend in Venice, after she had returned from Theresienstadt; they talked about the possibility of going to Israel but she decided not to, because she "did not feel like going" due to the difficulties of living there.[51] And also Goti Bauer did not go to Israel in 1952, because of the hard life she and her husband knew they would find there.

Finally, two more issues have to be taken into consideration.

Did the perception of Italy as a country that had betrayed the Jews - expelling them from schools, depriving them of their rights, deporting them or not preventing their deportation - have any role in the decision to migrate? Miriam Benedetti and Yacov Viterbo, who were hidden in Italy during the war and were among the leaders of the Italian *chalutz* movement between 1945 and 1948, never forgave Italy for its behaviour. They never asked for Italian citizenship when, years later, in Israel, they were given the possibility of acquiring dual nationality.[52] Also Fausta Finzi thought that Italy was responsible for her deportation and for her father's death: she never considered Italy as her homeland and yet this was not enough for her to move.

Physical problems were also relevant in the decision not to leave. Shlomo Venezia, a Thessaloniki Jew with an Italian passport, was ready to move to Palestine with some friends, after his liberation. But he was affected by tuberculosis. He could not afford the trip; he was brought to the Forlanini Hospital in Udine, later to Merano, later again to Grottaferrata, near Rome. There he met the woman who would later become his wife and they both settled in Rome.[53] Piera Sonnino did not come back to Genoa until 1950, after almost five years of hospitalization. By that time, the situation was quite different and the Zionist boost had already started to decline.[54]

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[50]   Interview of the author with Piero Terracina, Rome, September 19, 2008.

[51]   *Meditate che questo è stato*, 113.

[52]   Interview of the author with Yacov Viterbo and Miriam Benedetti, *Givat Brener* Kibbutz, May 1999.

[53]   Shlomo Venezia, *Sonderkommando Auschwitz* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2007), 171.

[54]   Piera Sonnino, *Questo è stato. Una famiglia italiana nei lager*, ed. Giacomo Papi, (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2004).

Conclusion

After the war, the Italian Jews decided to re-establish their relationship with Italy, which from the 1848 *Statuto Albertino* until the Racial Laws of 1938 had allowed for their successful integration. The vast majority chose to remain in Italy, while a relatively significant minority decided to make *aliyah*. This was not the case for the deportees, that – unless for family reasons or for a pre-war adherence to Zionism – did prefer to remain in Italy.

As we have tried to demonstrate, the experience of the deportation was too much a burden to allow a reflection that might lead to a radical decision, such as the *aliyah*; instead, other European Jews did so because their world had been destroyed and there was no chance to recreate it. But Italy gave the deportees the possibility of gradually getting back to life, even if the return was not as warm as they had hoped.

The majority of Italian Jews remained "prisoners of hope" and passed through a process of "amnesia". They preferred to forget what had happened, making the re-integration process as quick and smooth as possible. And almost all the deportees made that decision.

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Presence of Antisemitism in the Catholic world. The case of the «Enciclopedia Cattolica» (1948-1954)

by *Elena Mazzini*

Abstract

This paper enquires into the survival of the nineteenth-twentieth century anti-Jewish culture in Italy following the Shoah, in a specific cultural milieu, that of the «Enciclopedia Cattolica», published in twelve volumes from 1948 to 1954. While the more overt features of traditional anti-Semitism disappeared in Italy following 1945, avoiding its extrinsic characteristics, anti-Jewish stereotypes and images were practically untouched by a critical reappraisal, at least until the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, and were instead even proposed anew in theological, religious and cultural circles. This anti-Jewish 'survivor' will be investigated in the course of the paper by examining several entries contained in the «Enciclopedia» project.

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the positions that several Catholic institutions in Italy took towards the tradition of anti-Semitism in the years following World War II. The investigation is limited to the first decade after the war, a period that witnessed the birth of a new type of cultural production – the «Enciclopedia Cattolica» –between the late 1940s and the early 1950s.

When introducing a study on the forms of anti-Semitism in the aforementioned period, a methodological clarification is needed: the Catholic Church did not assume a significant position regarding the issue of anti-Semitism until the Second Vatican Council, with the promulgation of *Declaratio Nostra Aetate*[1] in 1965. In addition to doctrinal motivations, the document responded to the necessity of the Church to publicly express its rejection of anti-Semitism and of all the persecution perpetrated against the Jews; however, it did not conflict with the theorization, legitimation and the preaching of anti-Semitism during centuries of Christian tradition[2].

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[1] For reasons of space, I shall abstain from examining the long tradition of Catholic anti-Judaism, taking for granted that the reader is already familiar with the principal theoretical and historical features of the phenomenon. The text of the document issued by the II Vatican Council can be found in "Declaratio Nostra Aetate. Dichiarazione sulle relazioni della Chiesa con le religioni non cristiane", *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, vol. I (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1993), 853-871.

[2] The fundamental problems underlying the Council document, along with the

Which forms did the issue of anti-Semitism take before 1965 in the institutions charged with the formation of the Catholic culture? Which brakes or continuity take place on the issue of racism and anti-Semitism in cultures like the Catholic culture in a period when anti-Semitism ceases to be a legitimate policy and political practice throughout contemporary Europe, and was officially banned in post-1945 democratic societies?

The article deals with these questions by examining two definitions *ad vocem* – «Racism» and «anti-Semitism» – published in the «Enciclopedia Cattolica», one of the most important educational instruments promoted by the Catholic Church in post-World War II Italy.

2. The «Enciclopedia Cattolica»: Context and Structure

The «Enciclopedia» is dedicated to Pius XII and consists of twelve volumes published from 1948 to 1954. It was presented as a comprehensive cultural project and aimed at endowing the Catholic world with a general knowledge capable of orienting and informing Italian Catholics about the various cultural, political and social aspects of the entire history of humanity.

The steering committee, headed by cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardo[3] as honorary president and Monsignor Pio Paschini[4] as president, consisted of two vice-directors, the Jesuit Celestino Testore[5] and Pietro Frutaz[6]; the editorial office covered thirty-seven thematic sections – from the «Apologetics» to the «Universities and Academies» – each headed by an editor.

The two encyclopaedia entries, «Racism» and «anti-Semitism», were found in the «History of non Christian Religions» section, entrusted to Nicola Turchi, professor of the History of Religions at the University

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somewhat bumpy course of its drafting, are effectively outlined and discussed by Giovanni Miccoli, *Due nodi: la libertà religiosa e le relazioni con gli ebrei*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II. La Chiesa come comunione, settembre 1964 - settembre 1965*, vol. IV, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 119-219.

[3] Giuseppe Pizzardo (1877-1970), secretary of the Congregation of the Holy Office from 1951 to 1959, was among the exponents of Italian Catholic intransigentism. For a synthetic biographical profile, see. "Giuseppe Pizzardo", *Panorama biografico degli italiani d'oggi*, (Roma-Firenze: Vallecchi, 1956), 360.

[4] Pio Paschini (1878-1962), scholar of the history of the Reformation and the aspects of the Counter-Reformation in Italy, taught at the Pontifical Lateran University of which he was also rector. See "Pio Paschini", *Dizionario biografico friulano*, (Basaldella di Campoformido: Ribis, 1997), 840.

[5] Celestino Testore (1886-?) Jesuit and journalist, contributor to the Venetian journal «Le Missioni della Compagnia di Gesù», was also editor of «La Civiltà Cattolica». See "Celestino Testore", *Panorama biografico degli italiani d'oggi*, (Roma-Firenze: Vallecchi, 1956), 360.

[6] Pietro Frutaz (1907-1980) was undersecretary for the causes of Beatification and Canonization of the Congregation of Rites. See "Pietro Frutaz", *Chi scrive? Repertorio bio-bibliografico degli scrittori italiani*, (Milano: Igap, 1966), 347.

of Rome[7].

The clearly confessional intentions underlying the Encyclopaedia project are expressly stated in the *Presentazione* to the first volume, signed by Giuseppe Pizzardo. This entrusted the work with the task of "being the conscious and eloquent expression of this apostolate, at the end of a tragic and bloody armed conflict that has brought so much grief to peoples, and which is nothing other than the natural and sinisterly demonstrative fruit of an even more terrible conflict, which ensued from ideologies in conflict with the Christian Ideal"[8].

The reference to the war fully reflects the view on modernity that the Church had by then developed: the paradigm codified following the French Revolution was the preferred means to interpret, understand and explain the events that had occurred in a temporal dimension considered as "profane". Indeed, for Catholic intransigent thought, the secularisation and laicization of societies, with its claims to replace the model of perfect society – guided by what Pizzardo defines the *Christian Ideal* of the Church –, had caused the outbreak of wars, tragedies, and catastrophes. These were interpreted as the "just" divine punishment for the divorce between man and God that had come about at the end of the XVIII century[9]. Pius XII and his closest collaborators did not diverge much from this interpretation of history, and on various occasions, the massacres perpetrated in the course of World War II were presented as signs of divine punishment inflicted on modern societies, guilty of straying from the only values sanctioned and upheld by the Church of Rome.

When the first volume of the «Enciclopedia» was published, the major European and non-European countries had projects for Catholic encyclopaedias that were mature both in the content and for the systematization and modern specialization of knowledge[10].

Catholic encyclopaedia initiatives began to appear in Italy in the early XIX century, and in 1840, Gaetano Moroni published the one hundred

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[7] Nicola Turchi (1882-1958), ordained a priest in 1904, taught literary subjects at the Institute for the Propagation of the Faith from 1905 to 1910. He was lecturer in history of religions at the University of Rome from 1916 to 1935, and was tenured professor in this subject from 1935 to 1940 at the University of Florence. See "Nicola Turchi", Dizionario generale degli autori italiani contemporanei, (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1974), 400.

[8] Giuseppe Pizzardo, *Presentazione*, «*Enciclopedia Cattolica*» (hereinafter «EC»), (Città del Vaticano-Firenze: Sansoni, 1948), vol. I, IX-XI. The quotation was taken from page IX.

[9] I shall confine myself to Giovanni Miccoli, "Problemi e aspetti della storiografia sulla chiesa contemporanea", Id., *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione*, (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1985), 1-16; Daniele Menozzi, *La Chiesa cattolica e la secolarizzazione*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1993).

[10] Giuliana Gemelli's essay is quite useful to comprehend the cultural as well as social function of modern encyclopaedias: *Enciclopedie e scienze sociali nel XX century*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999).

and three volumes of the «Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica»[11] and the «Enciclopedia ecclesiastica»[12], works organised on the basis of criteria strictly circumscribed to the study of Christian theology and doctrine. On the contrary, the «Enciclopedia cattolica» possessed features that were not limited to the religious sphere, but instead also embraced fields of general knowledge, an encyclopaedic knowledge, thus assuming a role and function specular to the influence that the «Enciclopedia Treccani» exerted on Italian *lay* society.

Nonetheless, the ideological element that more than any other aspect exemplifies and synthesises the work's principal concept is the absence of the entry «Enciclopedia», while it instead contains that of «Enciclopedia Cattolica»[13]. The fact that under this entry no mention is made of either the French Enlightenment or of the authors of the «Encyclopédie» is symptomatic. On the contrary, ample space is reserved for the history of ancient, medieval, and modern compilations edited by Christian authors.

3. Entries

The criterion that led me to select the two terms hereinafter analysed derives from the theoretical observation that they both plausibly attribute a *stigma* to an abstract and minority group of human beings. Varyingly declined according to different historical contexts of reference, this stigma concerned carriers of elements and "values" considered as negative, disruptive, and inassimilable to the human consortium of the majority[14].

As far as the historical level is concerned, the stances of the Catholic Church toward racism and anti-Semitism were characterised by quite different approaches that show how the relationship between the two phenomena was not so close. The neo-pagan and biology based racism promulgated by the National Socialist regime, condemned by a special encyclical promulgated in 1937, attracted official censure from the Holy See and the Catholic world[15]. Contrarily, as stated at the beginning of this article, the Church took no public stance towards anti-Semitism, expressing itself on the issue only in 1965[16]. These

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[11] Venezia: Tipografia Emiliana, 1840-1878.

[12] Ed. Mons. Adriano Bernareggi, (Torino: Marietti, 1938-1963).

[13] Celestino Testore, *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, «EC», vol. V, 1950, 330-335.

[14] This issue has been debated on the theoretical level more in the sociological ambit than in the historical ambit. For an initial orientation, I refer readers to the classic by Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963, trad. it. *Stigma. L'identità negata*, Verona: Ombre Corte, 2003).

[15] The encyclical letter *Mit Brennender Sorge*, dated March 14, 1937, was read in Catholic churches in Germany on the occasion of Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937. Contrary to the encyclical tradition, the text was first drafted in German and then in Latin. The text is found in «Acta Apostolicae Sedis» 29 (1937): 145-167.

[16] As far as the unsuccessful publication of the encyclical *Humani generis unitas* on

twofold and different stances, as we shall see shortly, are reflected in the definitions attributed to the two lemmas examined.

a. Racism

The entry *Racism,* drafted by the jurist Paolo Biscaretti di Ruffia[17] and published in 1953, departed from considering the historical moment in which the term began to circulate in Italy, and then moved on to set forth the substantial contents of racism.

A term that came into use in Italy as of 1935-38 to indicate a doctrine and political practise concerning race, disseminated by National Socialism that had shortly before become a totalitarian regime in Germany. The doctrine was essentially based on the declared preponderant value that the contemporary existence of inferior races suited solely to manual tasks [...] assumed in the course of historical events and in the consequent development of human civilisation. On the example of Germany, the expression racism soon also assumed a clear anti-Semitic meaning for the reason that the Aryan populations of Europe would find themselves in the imminent danger of being irremediably contaminated by Jewish groups admitted to their territory during the previous centuries.

Biscaretti rightfully ties anti-Semitism to the racist cultural root, but in the following passage stresses the clear contrast that emerged between racist theory and Catholic doctrine. Concerning the racist policies that Mussolini inaugurated after the conquest of Ethiopia and the consequent foundation of the Empire, the author affirms that:

At first extraneous to racism, the fascist government in Italy embraced the creed in 1938 promulgating anti-Semitic laws nationally, and laws prohibiting race-mixing in the colonies, but due to the aversion of the Church and the general population, racism became persecution only during the Nazi occupation. [...] A clear and insuperable rift immediately arose between the doctrine and political practise of racism and the dictates of Catholic morality, which teaches the equality of all

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antisemitism, desired by Pope Ratti and drafted by the Jesuits John La Farge, Gustav Gundiach and Gustav Desbuquois, see Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky, *L'encyclique cachée de Pie XI: Une occasion manquée de l'Église face à l'antisémitisme*, (Paris; La Découverte, 1995, trad.it., *L'enciclica nascosta di Pio XII. Un'occasione mancata dalla Chiesa nei confronti dell'antisemitismo*, Milano: Corbaccio, 1997). For initial reflection on the unpublished encyclical, see Giovanni Miccoli, "A proposito dell'enciclica mancata di Pio XI sul razzismo e l'antisemitismo", *Passato e Presente*, 40 (1997): 35-54.

[17] Paolo Biscaretti di Ruffia, *Razzismo*, «EC», vol. X, 1953, 590-592. About the author, tenured professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Pavia, and his copious scientific production, I refer readers to *Studi in onore di Paolo Biscaretti Ruffia*, (Milano: Giuffrè, 1987), 2 voll.

men in Christ, and of the democratic praxis postulating the equality and freedom of all citizens, independent of sex, race, language or religious beliefs[18] .

Fascist racism is thus considered as a secondary or marginal phenomenon compared to the countries, first and foremost Nazi Germany, in which the theory of the Aryan race as the master race destined to rule humanity, was taking on more definite, ideological and dangerous contours. According to the author, actual persecution in point of fact coincided with the Nazi occupation of Italy. In addition to this *soft* version of Fascist racism, and diluting anti-Semitism in racism, Biscaretti performs an apologia: he indeed associates the condemnation of racism, expressed in the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, with a condemnation of anti-Semitism, which was instead never pronounced by ecclesiastical authority[19].

The absence of either an implicit or explicit pronouncement against anti-Semitism by the Vatican emerges nowhere in the piece of writing, which instead performs conceptual acrobatics aimed at crediting the Church with a denouncement of anti-Semitism that, in reality, it never did[20].

b. Anti-Semitism

The encyclopaedic entry for *Anti-Semitism*, written by Monsignor Antonino Romeo[21], is set out in a diachronic narration that starts from

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[18] Biscaretti di Ruffia, *Razzismo*, 591, my cursive. The bibliography reported at the end of the entry merits careful reading because of its twofold nature: on one hand, it cites the "classic" books by the theorists of European racism, including Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Julius Evola. On the other hand, it mentions contributions like those of Wilhelm Schmidt, Emile Vermeil, and Mario Bendiscioli. Finally, the author inserts in the bibliography, Léon Poliakov's volume, *Bréviaire de la haine*, (Paris: Calmann – Levy, 1952, trad. it. *Il nazismo e lo sterminio degli ebrei*, Torino: Einaudi, 1955). Two aspects concerning the bibliography merit attention: the first concerns the lack of a critical distinction between sources and historiography or, in other words, a clear division between primary sources and secondary sources. The second aspect instead concerns the historiographic references which cite titles of Italian and foreign writings oriented toward reconstructing the racist phenomenon on the basis of not only historical but also political necessities, in the sense that these books openly denounce the racism then extent in most European countries. In comparison to the cultural climate of the time, these rare testimonies give Biscaretti's writing a less ideological veining, one more inclined to reflect on the racist phenomenon in historical terms.

[19] See *supra* note 15.

[20] See *supra* note 16.

[21] Antonino Romeo *Antisemitismo*, «EC», vol. I, 1948, 1494-1506. Monsignor Antonino Romeo – *aiutante di studio* of the Congregation for Seminaries and the University of Rome – in addition to the «EC» entry *Jews*, also wrote *Judaism*, contained in ed. Nicola Turchi, *Le religioni del mondo*, (Rome: Coletti, 1946), 379-458, that I shall return to at the end of this article.

the ancient world, then largely examines the so-called "Christian" epoch – emblematically intended as the Middle Ages – and finally arrives at the modern and contemporary age. The entry ends with a paragraph entitled *Antisemitismo e morale cattolica*, dedicated to a sort of ethical-theological treatment.

For the author, the word *Anti-Semitism* indicates:

The aversion toward the Jews, which occurred in both ancient and modern times, based on social more than religious reasons. The term is quite improper (it should be "anti-Judaism"), also because the Jews are traditionally hated by the largest modern Semitic group, the Arabs; apparently coined by W. Marr in 1880 and spread in Germany and Austria on the basis of ethnical-social antitheses, today the term usually means hostility toward the Jews for whatever reason[22].

Taradel and Raggi have rightly observed that Romeo's definition is similar to what father Raffaele Ballerini wrote in *Della questione giudaica in Europa*, which appeared in «Civiltà Cattolica» in 1890[23]. The reasoning that considered it illegitimate to define the aversion for the Jews with the lemma *anti-Semitism*, remained valid and still usable in the mid XX century, just as it had been in the late XIX century. Moreover, we can also note that the social and political motivation underlying modern anti-Semitic practise is proposed anew, thereby neglecting and avoiding discussion on the non marginal religious aspect of the issue. It is true that to designate anti-Jewish hatred, Romeo introduces the term anti-Judaism to refer to the religious sphere, but he exclusively attributes it to generic and indefinite Arabs. After briefly describing the etymology of the word, in addition to Marr, the author also cites the definition of Catholic scholar Simon Deploige, in which the biological-racial connotation of modern anti-Semitism is evoked with the purpose of emphasising the extraneousness of the Christian doctrine, in every form and perspective, to the anti-Semite and racist cultural family[24].

After synthetically outlining the phenomenon in the ancient world, Romeo expanded on the Medieval-Christian epoch. This time his version develops along a twofold interpretative canon: on one hand, the author refutes the presumed persecution that the Jews were

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[22] Romeo, *Antisemitismo*, 1494.

[23] Ruggero Taradel and Barbara Raggi, *La segregazione amichevole. La «Civiltà Cattolica» e la questione ebraica (1850-1945)* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2000), 177, footnote 99. For the Jesuit father's article, see Raffaele Ballerini, "Della Questione Giudaica in Europa", *Civiltà Cattolica*, 14 (1890): 5-14.

[24] Simon Deploige (1868-1927), Belgian attorney who later became a priest and professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, authored numerous works whose titles and bibliographic details can be found in Otto Lorenz, *Catalogue générale de la librairie française*, (Paris, D. Jordell, 1931), vol. XVIII.

allegedly subjected to by the pontifical authority; on the other hand, he justifies the appearance of anti-Jewish practises and sentiments in the Christian world, motivating these acts with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, committed by the Jews.

Mindful of the precept of charity, Christians had no social prejudice against the Jews, either as a nation or a race; they instead reacted to their particularity with the evangelical universalism of Saint Paul. After Calvary, though, the Jewish hatred against Christians was very active as attested by the sacred books of the New Testament[...] In the Middle Ages, in the pursuit of its moral and religious principals, the Church openly protected the Jews from persecution, as it had always done, but prohibited them from having influence in Christian society [...] The thesis that the Church is responsible for the injustice suffered by the Jews is quite widespread among modern Jews (H. Graetz, T. Reinach, I. Loeb, Bernard Lazare), and Freemasonry denounces antis-Semitism as a "clerical manoeuvre". And yet, they should remember that anti-Jewish hatred existed before the Church. The Rome of the popes was always hospitable to the Jews[25].

The cliché of the Jew's tentacular presence in Christian society, and the affirmation of the charitable and judicious policy inaugurated by the Church toward the Jews suits a binary historical narrative which, on one hand, claims the Jews were protected by the ecclesiastical institution from the persecutions to which they were object of; on the other hand, it presents anti-Judaism as a phenomenon that was not so much tied to Christianity, as hypothesised by several Jewish historians, but was instead a historical manifestation that emerged *ab initio*, from the beginning of time[26].

Regarding the chapter of contemporary history, the text proposes a reconstruction that starts from the French Revolution and its *evil* consequences: this exegetical scheme was recurrent in Catholic current affairs journalism, and is also found under the entry *Ebrei* in the «Enciclopedia» entry edited by Romeo[27].

Concerning emancipation, the author observes:

The civil emancipation of the Jews, begun with Joseph II's edict of tolerance (1782), was promulgated by the French Revolution.

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[25] Romeo, *Antisemitismo*, 1495.

[26] This political stance of the Church is also substantiated by documents specially emanated to support the segregation and contemporaneous protection of the Jews; documents like the *Sicut Iudaeis* by pope Gregory Magnus, act of 568 A.D. For an historiographic discussion on this vast topic, I confine myself to referring to B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental* (430-1096), (Paris: La Haye, 1960).

[27] See *supra* note 22.

"Breaking with the policies of the entire Christian Middle Ages, the French Revolution resolved the Jewish question by granting freedom, that is by negating the Jews' very existence, in practise" (S. Deploige, p. 50). On September 27, 1791, Abbé Grégoire had the Constituent Assembly vote their full equality of civil rights. Emancipation, however, did not make anti-Judaic hatred diminish. Indeed, Jews like H. Heine, I. Zangwill, L. Pinsker and Th. Herzl all lamented the contrary. The cause of this was the intensification of the sense of nation in most of Europe, and the reaction of Catholics and Protestants against liberalism and materialism[28].

Civil emancipation is presented here in adversative terms that have not at all changed with respect to the considerations of late eighteenth-century Catholic intransigent thought. The author places the nineteenth-century emancipation in this traditional and codified system of reactionary culture, with the sole purpose of pointing out the failure of designs put forward by the advocates of emancipation who believed the political and legal equality of the Jewish minority could neutralise and eliminate anti-Semitism from European society. Romeo on the contrary emphasises, *ex-post*, the radicalisation of the anti-Jewish phenomenon in the post-emancipation epoch with the intention of showing how the Christian age had been the only moment in which the Jews enjoyed the protection and tutelage of the Popes.

Nevertheless, the passage that perfectly summarises the opinions and prejudices contained in the piece of writing is represented by the synonymic operation on the terms *liberalism, materialism* and *Judaism*, all placed on the same conceptual and negatively evaluative level[29].

It is also interesting to observe which populations and geographical areas the author identifies as the most inclined to develop anti-Semitic practises and sentiments:

Anti-Semitism is a product of the XIX century inasmuch as it is a doctrinal system that, apart from religious considerations (which remained standing for the Muslims and "Orthodox" Russians), tends to scientifically justify the traditional aversion for the Jews. An anti-Semitic "Weltanschaung" arose in the Slavic and German world, where contacts with Jews were more extensive, and social crises more

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[28] Romeo, *Antisemitismo*, 1499.

[29] Generically placing the emancipated Jews of Western Europe in the currents of thought like liberalism and materialism, the author indeed makes an ideological comparison, considering that these movements were condemned by the Church in the mid XIX century in the «Sillabo», appendix to the encyclical «Quanta cura», promulgated on December 8, 1864 during the pontificate of Pius IX. The encyclical condemned the errors issued and supported by the French Revolution: see R. Aubert, *Il Pontificato di Pio IX (1846-1878)*, ed. it. a cura di G. Martina, (Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni Paoline, 1990), II voll.

frequent. International laws imposed civil equality between the Jews and other citizens (Treaty of Berlin 1878, art. 44), but in practise Russia, Romania, Hungary and Poland applied them only in part. The dissident Russian Church under the tsars fomented a theological anti-Semitism: allegedly the incarnation of evil and satanic powers, the Jews were targeted with a brutal pogrom of 1882, and an even more savage pogrom in 1905. The rise of pan Slavism strengthened this anti-Semitism with political-social motives, considering Judaism the inspirer of anarchic democracy, capitalism, and mechanical industrialism[30].

Romeo's concern is to clear Catholicism from the historical development of anti-Semitism, attributing the responsibility to a racial science that originated outside and against Catholic doctrine. Moreover, anti-Jewish culture and practises are referred, and not coincidentally, to Orthodox Russia[31]. In Romeo's opinion, anti-Semitic culture was typical of a specific area of Eastern Europe, where two anti-Jewish cultures came together, one founded on beliefs of a religious nature – not Catholic – the other on motivations of a political order. The author's political explanation of anti-Semitism presented the denunciations of the Slavic populations against the Jews. They were accused of being exponents of democratic anarchy, unregulated and disruptive capitalism and, finally, fierce industrialism[32].
About the anti-Semitic legislation enacted by Nazi Germany and Austria in the course of the 30s, we read:

As of 1919, through the initiative of the populist deutsch-volkisch party, anti-Semitism spread in Germany where the defeat in World War I and chaos were attributed to Jewish factors. While the Catholic press in the post war period (1919-1924) also protested against the actions of many Jews, anti-Semitism reached increasingly more absurd and fatal levels [...]. National Socialism endorsed anti-Semitism, introducing it into its programme, and justified anti-Jewish hatred with two arguments: 1. the inferiority of the Jewish race as a mixture of two principal races; 2. the ethical danger of the capitalist organisation of society and of the anarchist-subversive push attributed to the Jews.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] See the observations proposed by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, "Le Chiese ortodosse", eds. Daniele Menozzi e Giovanni Filoramo, *Storia del cristianesimo. L'età contemporanea*, (Roma: Laterza, 1997), vol. IV, 261-352.

[32] Romeo fails to note the similarity between the denunciations of the populations of Eastern Europe and those argued in Catholic environments. Read, for example, the numerous articles that appeared in «Civiltà Cattolica» in the late XIX century, as well as the many essays written on the subject for more than a century. As far as the Jesuit newspaper is concerned, the anti-Jewish articles that appeared between 1880 and 1900 were mostly by Giuseppe Oreglia and Raffaeli Ballerini, about whom Taradel and Raggi provide persuasive reflections, *La segregazione amichevole*, 16-57.

This point was taken by Alfred Rosenberg whose work, placed on the Index in 1934, considered Judaism as a disruptive spiritual force; mechanistic-hedonist in morality, liberal-communist in politics, rationalist-atheist in religious matters; add to this, social-economic and historical-national motives[33].

Strong and firm condemnation was expressed of Christians who embraced the Nazi theories of blood and race, and equally clear-cut was the disapproval of all the pamphlets written by the principal votaries of the Aryan race. The condemnatory stance Romeo proposes, responded to the Holy See's decisions which, as already stated, since 1937 had steadfastly condemned Nazi racism because it was animated by anti-Christian principles and consecrated to the neo-pagan deification of the Aryan race. Romeo was in fact prompt to put the accent on the Pontiff's rejection of the growing Nazi threat, declaring that "this absurd and wicked theory was clearly condemned by the Church (Pius XI and Pius XII in many speeches against hatred and violence, and on the respect of the natural rights of every person), and numerous massacres of innocent and peace-loving Jews were the monstrous effect during the war of 1939-1945"[34].

Though only alluded to and not set forth in historical terms, the conclusion of the above sentence is the only allusion to the Shoah in the entire text.

As far as Italy is concerned, attention is entirely focused on underlining the absence of anti-Semitic tendencies and on presenting the anti-Jewish legislation of 1938 as a political move born of the desire to emulate Nazi Germany, rather than a decision founded on specific political and ideological calculations.

The author peremptorily states:

Anti-Semitism has never existed in modern Italy. However, while the international disputes favoured ideological excesses, in 1938 the fascist government posed the issue of "race" in imitation of the Nazi government, which gave rise to the restrictive legislation against the Jews (R.D.L. November 17, 1938). These laws included the prohibition of marriages between Jews (even the converts) and "Aryans", which Pius XI condemned as a vulnus inflicted on the Concordat between Church and State of 1929. The journals "La Difesa della razza" and "La Vita italiana", and the newspapers "Regime fascista" and "Tevere", continued to repeat the commonplace anti-Jewish clichés, but these did not influence the Italian mentality, which was instead generally balanced. During the war, 1940-1945, the Italian

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[33] Romeo, *Antisemitismo*, 1499.
[34] Ibid., 1500.

forces of occupation in France protected the Jews from the harshness of the German and French governments of Vichy[35].

Alongside Italy's irreproachability and substantial innocence for the crimes perpetrated during the war – "balanced" is the term employed to define the stance of the Italians toward the race laws – the issue of the prohibition of mixed marriages, which punished the Jews who had converted to Catholicism, was the only reprehensible and unacceptable aspect of the entire fascist anti-Semitic legislation[36].

The conclusive part of the entry concerns the analysis of Catholic morality toward anti-Semitism, which indicates the usual categories of "tutelage" and "protection" as the proper method to relate to Judaism. We read:

Inasmuch as it implies hatred and foments or even only justifies violence, anti-Semitism is contrary to Christian morality, and implies grave danger for the faith, which many forms of anti-Semitism reject. The Church therefore condemns "odium illud quod vulgo antisemitismi nomine nunc significari solet" (Decretum S. Officii, March 25, 1928). A religion of love, Christianity prohibits that any man be harmed or offended, even if one considers himself harmed or offended. Even less does it authorise the persecution en bloc of a people or a race, which not only violates charity but also the justice due to the many innocent; the masses as such can never be judged responsible. The absolute respect of every human personality, sacred and inviolable, lies at the basis of social and international coexistence. "Justice and charity do not exclude prudent and moderate defence (Civiltà cattolica, 1945, II)[37].

After setting out the programmatic and structural guidelines on which Catholic morality was formed, marked by universal love and charity, and reaffirming the extraneousness of the Catholic religion to discriminative stances based on racist theories, Romeo moves on to indicate the proper position that the Catholic had to assume toward the Jew:

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[35] Ibid.

[36] The well-known polemic between Mussolini and the Holy See in the summer of 1938 on the question of mixed marriages ended in the defeat of the Church: the D.L. of November 17, 1938, no. 1728 defined the marriage of a Jew, even converted, to an Aryan as «concubinage». About the controversy of mixed marriages, see Michele Sarfatti, "Legislazioni antiebraiche nell'Europa degli anni trenta e Chiesa cattolica", eds. Catherine Brice and Giovanni Miccoli, *Les racines chrétiennes de l'antisemitisme politique (fin XIXe-XXe siècle)*, (Roma: École française de Rome, 2003), 259-273.

[37] Romeo, *Antisemitismo*, 1501.

Though imposing respect for the Jews, the Catholic Church recommends Christians not depart from their millenarian tradition of caution, so as to prevent dangers and misunderstandings; "be it in the domain of faith as in that of inner life, the differences between the two religions are such that there can be no reciprocal interpenetration" (L. Escoula). The Holy Office then condemned the "Amici d'Israele" association in 1928, because "rationem agenda inivisse ac loquendi a sensu Ecclesiae, a mente ss. Patrum et ab ipsa sacra Liturgia abhorrentem". The more objective Jews justify this Catholic reserve (Pinsker, Herzl, Lazare) that has nothing in common with the contemptuous "society anti-Semitism" that thrives from Poland to the United States, and tends to exclude the Jew, whether converted or not, from high schools, certain clubs or administrations. A Catholic cannot, for reasons of blood or race, shun the Jews regenerated by Baptism but must instead embrace them as brothers. And as for the others, there can be no moral and religious defence other than that based on understanding and love. Only on these bases, and excluding all hatred for people, is anti-Semitism legitimate in the field of ideas, and aimed at the watchful protection of the religious-moral and social heritage of Christianity[38].

Eight years after the end of World War II and the final solution, *legitimate anti-Semitism* as a remedy to the evil Jewish influence is not only an indication of an anti-Jewish culture still active in some of its reasoning. It is also a more profound symptom of the effective desire to neglect the level of historical phenomena in the name of a preoccupation entirely aimed at preserving the coherence and doctrinal and theological continuity of the Church from the contradiction and errors committed by humanity.

We must, however, point out the shift in concept compared to what had been defined as *legitimate* between the two world wars: at that time, *legitimate anti-Semitism* was the civil discrimination of non-converted Jews, though the persecution of the lives of the discriminated was not fully and clearly pronounced. Silence was persistent and tenacious about the discriminations once recommended and advised by the Church.

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[38] Ibid., 1502-1503, my cursive. Considerations similar to those set forth by Romeo can be read in the already cited article by Raffaele Ballerini of 1890: "though never passing the limits of moral law, Catholic anti-Semitism employs every means necessary for the emancipation of Christians from the arrogance of their sworn enemy", Ballerini, *La questione giudaica in Europa*, 5. This distinction is also found in the entry *Antisemitismus*, written in 1933 by the German Jesuit Gustav Gundlach for the «Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche» as indicated by Giovanni Miccoli, "Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo fra Otto e Novecento", ed. Corrado Vivanti, *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli ebrei in Italia. Dall'emancipazione a oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), vol. II, 1556-1557.

The author also indicates an ambiguous solution to the so-called "Jewish problem", expressing his hope that "anti-Semitic hatred disappear; but we fear that it will remain latent or violent until the Jewish question is settled despite the ingenious, unfortunately discordant solutions proposed by scholars and politicians, both Jewish and Christian"[39].

The end of the text proposes precise conversion strategies as a solution to the aforementioned question:

The solution shall come with the triumph of the Christian brotherhood throughout the world, so that the Jews will no longer be persecuted or humiliated, while awaiting their conversion unto Christ; any other plan appears illusory. As for the past, we must forget the mutual wrongs [...] The principles of violence, however one attempts to justify them, are anti-Christian. The Catholic must want the Jews to convert and live[40].

Finally, the structure conceived for the bibliography merits attention: after recording the books about ancient and medieval anti-Semitism, the modern period is subdivided into one part that cites works by Jewish authors – mistakenly including Jean Paul Sartre for «Anti-Semitism: Reflections on the Jewish Question» – and the other that cites books by Christian scholars. It is worthy of note that the latter contains no reasoning or critical insight into the texts indicated, which range from general historical reconstructions to anti-Semitic pamphlets compiled in the Italian Catholic milieu in the course of the XX century[41].

This article ends with a citation from an essay written by Romeo himself, contained in an anthology dedicated to the history the religions of the world, published in 1951[42]. In this case, too, the subject of the author's interest was Judaism. In a few lines, he summarises the specific features of a mentality steeped in the ancient anti-Jewish *topoi* that continued to inhabit the Catholic vision throughout the 1950s under the form of a "house" language and codified narratives.

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[39] Romeo, *Antisemitismo*, 1503.

[40] Ibid.

[41] The articles of the section dedicated to the bibliography of authors defined as «Christian», mostly come from the writing of anti-Jewish pamphlets that flourished in the Catholic world in the course of the first half of the XX century. The books cited include works by Hilaire Belloc, Enrico Rosa, Gino Sottochiesa, Mario Barbera, Herman de Vries, Giovanni Preziosi. Concerning the Catholic participation in fascist antisemitic propaganda, see Renato Moro, "Propagandisti cattolici del razzismo antisemita in Italia (1937-1941)", *Les racines chrétiennes de l'antisemitisme politique*, 275-345.

[42] Antonino Romeo, "Giudaismo", ed. Nicola Turchi, *Le religioni del mondo*, 422-445.

Antonino Romeo wrote in the anthology:

Many Israelites today, though remaining faithful to the dogma of the Messiah, see His kingdom in modern "progress", or believe that it will be realised with the triumph of the principles of the French Revolution, or they identify it with the "future universal kingdom of justice, truth, goodness and peace, when all men will form a single family and recognise a single God, the God of Israel"[43].

Once again, the schema of Catholic intransigence reappears with all of its force to propose a totally negative interpretation of the historical parabola of post-war, Diaspora Judaism marked by the resolve to introduce the subversive and anti-Christian principles promoted and supported by the French Revolution into society and, on the religious level, to create a single kingdom in the name of the God of Israel.

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Recent publications: "Chiesa ed Ebrei al Vaticano II (secondo due riviste ebraiche italiane)" [The Church and the Jews during the Second Ecumenical Council through Two Italian Jewish Journals]*, in *Rivista di storia e Letteratura religiosa*, 1 (2008), 22-56; "La memoria del 1938 nella stampa periodica ebraica: come ricordare?" [The Memory of 1938 in the Jewish Press. How to Remember?], in *XXI secolo*, monographic issue devoted to "Nel settantesimo anniversario delle leggi razziali in Italia", edited by Tommaso Dell'Era, a. VII, 17 (2008), 21-45. Forthcoming: *Terra santa o Israele*? *Stampa cattolica e tradizioni antiebraiche nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra (1945-1974)* [Holy Land or Israel? Catholic Press and Anti-Jewish Traditions in post-War Italy (1945-1974)], Brescia: Morcelliana.

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[43] Ibid, 425.

David Bidussa, Giovanni Filoramo (edited by), *Le religioni e il mondo moderno II - Ebraismo,* **Torino: Einaudi Editore, 2008, pp. XL-624.**
 by *Anna Foa*

The volume *Ebraismo* (Judaism), edited by David Bidussa for Einaudi's series *Le religioni e il mondo moderno* (Religions and the Modern World), directed by Giovanni Filoramo, is a large collection of essays, as always in these cases, they are different in their approach and in their character. Some are decidedly historical, while others are more theoretical and philosophical. But this book is an attempt at something else, as Bidussa states on the very first page of his important introduction, i.e. a "strong" interpretation of the history of Judaism, and the Jews, in the contemporary era or, to be more exact, at the moment of its approach to modernity.

There are two assumptions on which Bidussa bases his interpretative approach. The first is that the history of the Jews can in no way be identified with that of anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish practices. This is a fundamental and extremely important axiom that I believe has by now been widely accepted both in historiographic theory and practice, normally accustomed to distinguishing between the perception of the Jew and Jews, between the Jewish world and the policies of the Catholic Church and nations towards (or against) the Jews. The other assumption, much less established except at the level of the most recent and innovative historiography, is that the Jewish world has survived throughout time not due to its alleged immobility, in other words its closure to the external world, but thanks to a continuous process of transformation, of relations with the outside world and its culture, and of remodelling its own culture in relation to that surrounding it. As David Myers expresses it, "the creative capacity of minority groups like the Jews not only to adopt, but to adapt cultural norms from the host society to their own needs. In this regard, adaptation is not the term of cultural activity. Rather, it is a midpoint in a process of give and take that continually redefines the malleable boundaries of Jewish history" (D. Myers, *Resisting History. Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, Princeton 2003, p. 10).

Depending again on Bidussa's words, who in turn quotes Foucault, "one might say that Judaism is a progressive 'Jewish archive', a set of recommendations of practices, and texts, none of which are necessarily homogeneous or unbroken. It is partly for this reason that there is not only one Judaism, but many versions of it, often in conflict with each other" (p. XIV). This pluralistic nature of Judaism emerges forcefully in these essays and their organization. Attention is given to the differences, the heterodox tendencies, and the conflicts, as demonstrated by the ample space dedicated to the pathways of Reform and Conservative Judaism in the European and American Jewish world.

At the same time, Bidussa is careful to remain consistent with his assumptions even in his linguistic choices, so that he refuses to use the term "identity", preferring to use the term "pathways of identity". In the same way, in place of the term "memory", he chooses "places of memory". This is a forcefully historical approach that emphasizes the moments of construction and transformation of identity and memories, both of which are far too often taken – even by historians – as motionless and absolute.

These two assumptions seem to me to be fundamental for any historical reconstruction of the Jewish world, in any period or form. And it seems even more important in the context of the approach to modernity, a context which, in itself, had a notable effect of accelerating the change and fragmentation of tradition. For the Jewish world, modernity obviously represented a radical change. But it did not intervene in an immobile world, distinguished by an untouchable tradition, but rather in a world which had always accepted exchange and transformation in its relations with the majorities with whom it lived.

We might ask ourselves whether, in Jewish modernity, there is a different way of changing with respect to the pre-modern period, a qualitative difference in the pathways of change. Or, instead, is it only a quantitative acceleration, an increased number of relations with the outside world, a greater predisposition to it?

But first, what do we mean by modernity? In his essay on Italy in this volume, Alessandro Guetta, for example, gives a very broad interpretation of the term "modernity", seeing it primarily as the progressive change in the perception of the world that concerned Europe between the 16th and 20th centuries, and then posing the problem of the possible existence of a "Jewish way to modernity." If we expand this category excessively, however, don't we run the risk that everything holding change is defined as a prelude to modernity? And wouldn't the result be to make change entirely a category of modernity and resistance and orthodoxy a category entirely pre-modern? If, instead, we consider change as a component that moves through time, and does not in itself define modernity, even though it is certainly an important part of it, perhaps we should consider some of the changes discussed here as belonging to a phase where modernity was still distant, where at the most "seeds of modernity" were scattered to the wind.

This is the case, in my opinion, of Guetta's essay, which introduces us to a world rich and open to transformation and that, in a very innovative interpretation, sees the case of Italy, along with Holland, Germany and Poland, as a founding moment of Jewish modernity. The Italian Renaissance culture, the role of Kabbalah in Italy, which we should recall was forbidden for centuries from reading the Talmud, the relationship between Italian Jewish culture and science, have special

aspects so that the scholar, Isaac Barzilay, could speak of Renaissance Italy as a first Haskalah. That made Italian Jews, three centuries before the German Haskalah, the first to embark along the pathway to modernization. But that the role of the mystic was a role of fragmentation and openness to the new, and was also a distinctive element in Spain and Provence in the 1200s and 1300s. According to Maurice Kriegel (*Les Juifs à la fin du Moyen age dans l'Europe Méditerranéenne*, Paris 1979), the potential destruction of Jewish life included in Spanish Jewish mysticism was not, despite its apparent alliance with tradition, less than that contained in the philosophical and skeptical tradition that conflicted so fiercely with mysticism. For that reason, to avoid extending the concept of "modernity" too far, I am not sure that the transformations of Jewish culture and religious changes introduced by the spread of Kabbalistic thought were enough to turn the era of the Italian ghettos into a sort of prelude to modernity, also because they in no way endangered the community structure.

I am more inclined to fully consider Amsterdam analyzed by Silvia Berti, with the phenomenon of a return to Judaism by the Spanish and Portuguese Marranos escaping the Iberian Peninsula, as one of the fundamental moments of the modern transformation of the Jewish world. Because this is when communities were created that originated from fragmented Jewish groups and individuals, with all that it meant in terms of influence on community structure. These pathways were also forged in the most radical forms of encounter with the outside world, that of conversion and living as Christians for one or more generations. What was created through this syncretism was something radically different from previous Jewish life, even when it devolved into a new form of Orthodoxy. From its point of view of cultural history, Silvia Berti's essay analyzes the case of Spinoza in particular. However, I would like to recall less illustrious examples studied years ago by Yosef Kaplan, since they left the community without uproar, adopting the life of "Jews without a synagogue", to use Kolakowsky's charged expression, *Cristiani senza Chiesa* (Christians without a Church). According to Kaplan, their choice forced the Portuguese community into a situation that the rest of the Jewish world faced only much later, with the Emancipation.

Together with Renaissance Italy and *Portuguese Amsterdam*, the Jewish pathways to modernity analyzed in the book edited by Bidussa are on one side of the main road, wide and visible, of the Haskalah of Berlin, and on another side the road, narrower and less clear, of Polish Chassidism. Again, we find ourselves returning to the two pathways, both leading to disaggregation of traditional life: the mystical, an ally of tradition, and the rationalistic, hostile to tradition, but both equally subversive. The Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah, is obviously the

main road, and it is discussed here by Paolo Bernardini in a stimulating essay on Mendelsohn, where he briefly touches on the problem of the so-called "Jewish-German symbiosis". On the contrary, the narrow road is the one running, according to Scholem, from Sabbatai Sevi to Dönmeh and that Laura Quercioli Mincer in her admirable essay identifies as Chassidism. Here too, as in the case of Spanish Kabbalistic thought, the Chassidism appears as a "niche of modernity", a "revolution", and a "way out of passivity and melancholy" peculiar to Ashkenazi Judaism. "Thanks to the movement founded by the Baal Shem Tov, the "people of the book" became once again, from some points of view, the "people of the body", i.e. the people able to act in the real world" (p. 86).

After these different "models" of the road to modernity, the second section of the book analyzes the conflicts, coexistence and transformations of the Jewish world during its meeting with modernity. So, on one hand, the space given to Judaism and its internal transformation – the Reform and Liberal Judaism, education and its connection with the idea of the nation, analyzed in a very stimulating essay by Saul Meghnagi, the influence of the Messianic spirit that some very striking pages by Michael Loewy call "the elective affinities between the Messianic and social traditions" – brings us to a stance programmatically centred on the Jewish view. On the other hand this view is turned not inward but to the outside world in transformation and its intertwining with the Jewish world.

In the first of the two essays dedicated to what is commonly known as the Emancipation, Francesca Sofia analyzes the Sanhedrin set up by Napoleon, stressing the role of Napoleon's policy toward Jews, which in its double attempt to discriminate and integrate ultimately reconstructed a Jewish collective identity after the French Revolution had reduced the Jews simply to individuals. This is an important problem ignored by historiography, more concerned with evaluating the degree of hostility Napoleon showed to Jews than analyzing the result of it for the Jewish world, that these pages analyse, moving masterly through memory, Jewish perception and political history. "If the Sanhedrin can claim to have any significance," Sofia concludes, "it is not because Judaism passively subjected itself to the laws of the State; but rather it is because this doubly equal inclusion – of the general equalitarian law from the Jews and of the Jews from European culture – that, beyond its first motivations, the event can even today be read as a turning point deserving to be remembered" (p. 123). This is a refutation of the very idea of assimilation that, in a wider perspective, conflicts with the image, widespread in historiography, of a one-way Jewish-German symbiosis, and French "assimilation" as well, where Judaism was the loser.

In his extensive essay, Mario Toscano compares integration,

emancipation and the transformations of identity in Italy, France and Germany, not without critically analyzing the use of the term "assimilation" to contrast identity. The comparative approach he uses is, I would like to underline, very successful in highlighting the different pathways of Emancipation among European Jews. In addition, it is also in keeping with the comparative stance taken by the main studies of the last twenty to thirty years, from the 1987 volume *Toward Modernity* by Jacob Katz to the subsequent volumes, among others, by Sorkin, Edelman, Birnbaum-Katznelson, and Frankel-Zipperstein, all engaged not only in distinguishing the process of acculturation from that of political emancipation and insertion in the society, but also in comparing the various European models, both in the West and in the East, where emancipation was denied. I would again like to highlight how Bidussa's volume is a radical revision of the contrast between assimilation and identity that has long marked the Italian discussion, which stuck to an anti-Emancipation tendency that developed after the Shoah and tended to read the Emancipation though the lense of the Shoah, as a failure and a loss of identity that led to the slaughter as a forced pathway, even when French and Anglo-American studies questioned that premise. That even in Italy this obsolete, insular paradigm was abandoned in favor of a more detailed vision of the process of integration with the outside world is an important result that opens vast prospects of research and is utterly in keeping with editor's premise. The idea of an intense, manifold relationship with the outside, transformations and cultural intertwining.

Thus, the way that the book deals with Zionism is very innovative. There is no specific essay devoted to the subject but it is present throughout and is absorbed in a more general notion of identification with the national idea in its various formulations: the Jewish State, nations States of which one can become citizens, the idea of the Jewish people, and history as support for national identity.

Also included in the book's historical approach is the theme of transformation of religion: from an analysis of the Reform and the development of the reform movement between the 19th and 20th centuries in an essay by Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, to "liberal" Judaism analyzed by Cristiana Facchini, to religious and secular Jewish thought after the Shoah analyzed by Massimo Giuliani. These essays are closely tied to those dealing with the civic Israeli religion by Bidussa himself, the essay on Jewish catechisms by Gadi Luzzatto, and the wide analysis of the Conservative movement in America by Giuliani. It is an important group of studies that I will refrain from discussing for lack of specific knowledge but that gives the Jewish world on the whole an image of great openness to modernity and great plurality. There are the rabbis and not the rabbinate, Jews and Judaisms and not the Judaism, identities and not the identity and, finally, traditions rather than

tradition. And, most of all, everything is in continuous transformation and cultural mediation with the outside world.

Based on the categories proposed in the comparative analysis of Israel and the United States in the book by Samuel N. Eisenstadt, *Jewish Civilization*, to which *Ebraismo* often refers, the sections on America and Israel rest upon radical thematic choices which include, for Israel, the civic religion, the law, and cinema. For the American Jewish world they include the internal history of Judaism on one hand – the American Conservative world, its inner choices, the Re-constructionist movement, and the acceptance of women rabbis – and, on the other, the parabola of the encounter-withdrawal of American Jews with the civil rights movement, the radical movement of the Sixties, the transformation of American society between the war in Vietnam and the Bush era, McCarthyism, Communism, the return of conservative politics and the intense relationship with the state of Israel. It is a very lively picture, little known in our culture except through literature, that is an extraordinary framework to the novels of Philip Roth and the great Jewish-American literature in general.

If the picture given by that volume on Judaism in modernity is extremely rich, there are also some things missing, as in every study with multiple voices and contributions. The subjects lacking are the result of well pondered choices. But I regret that greater attention was not paid to Russian Judaism. Theirs was a very radical model of entry into modernity without prospects of political emancipation, and is only briefly mentioned in the essay by Lowy.

But ultimately, to what prospects do these analyses lead? "Making a tradition contemporary" is the title of the admirable article by Amos Luzzatto in the last part of the book. It discusses this problem, that of the endurance of Jewish tradition in the face of modernity and of the need to make it contemporary. It is a wager on identity, a need for redefinition in the light of the world's social, historical, political transformation, made urgent by Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel.

In this entire set of problems, questions, and contradictions suggested by Amos Luzzatto as well by the other essays in the final part devoted to the questions of today, one conclusion seems important because it extends and does not restrict the creativeness of the Jewish world: we are now in the presence of new methods for defining Jewish community and new ways of making the tradition our own and confronting it with the world and its increasingly rapid changes. That is where we can start again, and that seems to me to be the wish of the book and the hope it offers the reader.

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David Bidussa, Giovanni Filoramo (edited by), *Le religioni e il mondo moderno II - Ebraismo,* **Torino: Einaudi Editore, 2008, pp. XL-624.**
by *Giovanni Levi*

"No people are more difficult to understand than the Jews. … Fools may tell stories of their sameness everywhere, but anyone who knows them well will be inclined to think that there are more varied types among them than among any other people. … One is driven to ask in what respect these people remain Jews; who makes them into Jews, what is the ultimate nature of the bond they feel when they say 'I am a Jew'."[1] This volume on Judaism intends to ask the question of Judaism in modernity, especially in front of the progressive secularization of Judaism. Amos Luzzatto in his chapter *Attualizzare una tradizione* (Modernizing a Tradition) concludes in regards to this question that "as far as priests have lost almost all their prerogatives, and there is the possibility of making *everybody* take part in traditional culture, even if each is according to his or her own point of view, traditional Jewish society itself gets closer to being a structure that can be rightly called secular" (p. 482). He shows this with an overview of the whole history of Jewish hermeneutics, which has actually always been open to new interpretations. I understand his analysis as a history always potentially open to modernity, always liable to be made relevant to current times, stretching from the canon of the Torah to the oral tradition through a continued search for meanings carried out by the sages, the authorities to whom interpretation is entrusted, up to the Enlightenment, that opened the way both to a rigid orthodoxy and to individuals taking direct responsibility. Since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the configuration of Judaism has faced three possible paths, assimilation, the community of faith within the various national entities, or, after the birth of Zionism, the creation of a national community with its own real, no longer virtual, territory. Therefore, we witness increasingly a Jewish identity not of those who believe in religious principles, but rather of those who are of Jewish nationality even without any return to religion. Today, not only in Israel but also in the Diaspora, Jewish identity is no longer based on religion, but on a cultural, rather than national or ethnic, tie with a tradition in which different types of religious Jews and equally complex forms of non-religious Jews live together.

Published in the Einaudi series titled *Le religioni e il mondo moderno* (Religions and the Modern World), this second volume *Ebraismo* (Judaism) was bound to aim at an image of Judaism in its relationship with religion, with its various declinations in time and space, to define

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[1] Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984; or. ed. 1960) 178.

the Jews' current identity in the modern world: an image I can hardly identify with. I have to confess right at the beginning that it seemed to me that something was missing. A culture that has grown in a plurality of identities, and to which one can only apply the Assmannian concept of cultural memory[2], is also made up of a specific characteristic: by accepting the break caused by secularization, which resulted in the separation from faith and religious practices, Judaism has tried to build a Jewish identity even without faith in God. "In fact – writes Mendes-Flohr – a large part of modern Jewish thought is devoted to imagining strategies to promote an idea of Jewish identity that defines it simply as membership of the Jewish people."[3] And this seems to me a central problem in the history of Judaism in the modern world. If in the pre-modern world identification with a community and acceptance of its rules, values and models was an automatic process, required and imposed by a society segmented and divided into groups and bodies, the problem changes with modernity, with the birth of nation-states, which allow the Jews – on condition of assimilation – to participate with the same legal rights of all other citizens. The problem is no longer that of belonging to a single community, but to participate in many, to integrate into the social and political structures of the many different nations and cultures where they live, a diversity that characterises also the Jewish presence in Israel.

It is from this moment, from the twentieth century, that the history of Judaism fragments into large areas, western Europe, where there is a strong cultural transformation of Judaism around the German model, with a strong push towards integration, eastern Europe, where Jews are Jews rather than citizens in Tzarist society, and the United States, after the great migration of the 1880s. And inside these areas cultures, groups and attitudes multiply, according to internal conditions and the relationships with the cultural and social world of the various nations.

Therefore, a history of Judaism in the modern world should have taken into greater account this foundational and specific characteristic: the existence of a non-institutional Jewish perspective without religion next to it, and in dialogue with, an institutional religious Judaism, itself divided along a vast array of positions.

It seems to me that it would have been useful to resume the discussion between Gershom Scholem and Leo Strauss on Jewish modernity: they were both the product of German Jewish society and culture, both Zionists, even if in different ways, they denied that the only possible solutions were liberal assimilation or the simple return to Jewish

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[2] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck 1992).

[3] Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Identitades judìas postradicionales", in Paul Mendes-Flohr, Yom Tov Assis and Leonardo Senkman (eds.), *Identitades judìas, modernidad y globalizaciòn* (Buenos Aires: Lilmod, 2007) 517.

tradition. But if the Kabbalah was for Scholem the modern and innovative element, full of potential, of a dynamic and anarchic religious Judaism, whose basis is religion rather than philosophy, in the thinking of Strauss, always attached to his own Jewish culture, philosophy was the only perspective, to be understood as a free endless search for truth, and there was no solution for modernity in religion, as shown by his reading of Spinoza, Hobbes and Kelsen.[4]

I will start with some observations on Alessandro Guetta''s essay *L'Italia e la "via ebraica alla modernità* (Italy and the "Jewish way to modernity"), a detailed portrait of Italian Judaism between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, some of whose observations, though, I do not share. To begin with, his choice of the main steps on the Jewish way to modernity: I would not have started with Amsterdam and Spinoza but rather, following Sylvie Anne Goldberg[5], with the sixteenth century return to history in Azariah De Rossi and David Gans, who discussed and resumed the theory about the calendar proposed by De Rossi himself (and it is thus not true that the latter "had no real following" (p. 9)). It is the discussions about the calendar that reopened Jewish interest in the historical events following the destruction of the Temple. But my main disagreement is different: in the history of Judaism and especially Italian Judaism the Kabbalistic tradition has often been portrayed negatively, as a crucial delay of Judaism compared to modern scientific and philosophical culture. My opinion is different. One of Judaism's great achievements is to have preserved and re-launched Plato and Neo-Platonism in a Catholic culture completely dominated by Aristotelian thought. If then the only merits of the Kabbalah were its contribution to the demise of medieval culture, I cannot see how to explain the "curious phenomenon" that "some aspects of scientific logic, that were not cultivated for their own sake, appeared within the new anti-rationalist culture itself" (p. 19). The consequences of this underestimation, that would have, no doubt, displeased Scholem, is that according to Guetta adaptation to the dominant catholic culture represents modernity. I provide two examples from Guetta's essay: on the seventeenth century "Jews and Christians … start to form a common front against atheism … Evidently, the theological gap between Christianity and Judaism had ceased to be interesting" (p. 17). And in the eighteenth century "the synagogue came nearer to the church, and this was an element in the convergence of Jewish and Christian religious behaviours, an element

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[4] Carlo Altini, "Berlino, Atene, Gerusalemme. Filosofia, politica e religione nel mondo moderno tra Gershom Scholem e Leo Strauss", in Gershom Scholem e Leo Strauss, *Lettere dall''esilio. Carteggio* (1933-1973), ed. by Carlo Altini (Firenze: Giuntina, 2008)

[5] Sylvie Anne Goldberg (2000), *La Clepsydre. Essai sur la pluralité des temps dans le judaisme*, vol. I (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000) 318-21.

that can be read as 'modern'" (p. 19). This opinion – that I think is time to abandon – is not only Guetta's, but is also to be found in much of the historiography about Italian Renaissance Judaism; here it will suffice to quote Roberto Bonfil: "One cannot but admit that those last century's enlightened spirits were right, who saw in Kabbalah's success one of the main causes of the obscurantism that took hold of Jewish culture."[6]

But surely the complex world of the former Marranos in Amsterdam - as Silvia Berti shows in *Amsterdam: conflitti, ricomposizioni, neo-ortodossia* (Amsterdam: conflicts, rapprochements, neo-orthodoxy) – is a fundamental stage of the Jewish contribution to modernity. Berti puts the character and role of Spinoza in the context of the multi-faceted world of the Jewish community, in which the fights between orthodox and innovators, that held different opinions, from the validity of only the written law to the denial of the holiness of the Bible – from David Farar to Isaac Aboabab de Fonseca, from Uriel da Costa to Juan de Prado and Spinoza – reveal an extraordinary array of ideas that form the significant preamble to radical Enlightenment and "the anti-Christian arsenal of early eighteenth century deists" (p. 48).

The essay by Bernardini *Moses Mendelssohn e la sua Berlino* (Moses Mendelssohn and his Berlin) analyses the most significant figure of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, and one of the proponents of that German-Jewish symbiosis who dreamt of an integration of Judaism in Germany, an integration, though, that did not imply a renunciation of culture and religious tradition. Prussian society, with its enlightened despotism, seemed to promise equal citizenship to the Jews, and their progressive integration, on condition of adherence, an adherence that in Mendelssohn was very explicit, to the supremacy of the state in social life and judicial forms. And it seems to me anachronistic to judge negatively the hope that the new atmosphere had created within Judaism, and to imagine that the road to the deification of the state, which would in turn lead to Nazism, "paradoxically … was prepared, *in nuce*, by works like *Jerusalem*" (p. 72).

The first part of the book ends with the article by Laura Quercioli Mincer *Il chassidismo, una nicchia nella modernità* (Hassidism, a niche within modernity). The author shows very well the powerful innovating role played by Hassidism within traditional Judaism, despite its extreme segregation of women, showing also the opposing views of Hassidism provided by historiography, depending on the refusal of its irrational, sentimental and romantic features, or the stressing of its popular and dynamic character in a positive sense. One thing though I think must be underlined: with Hassidism a new vitality breaks into Judaism, in

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[6] Roberto Bonfil, *Gli ebrei in Italia nell'epoca del Rinascimento* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1991) 152.

conflict with a rigid and repetitive tradition: it thinks that men have an active role in the coming of the messiah, as opposed to a passive messianic waiting. This vitality has been gradually lost after emigration to the United States, in which the survivors of the destruction of European Hassidism, even though they related to that experience, took away from it its dynamic and inventive power that it had had in its stage of expansion in Europe, to freeze it into a meticulous and obsessive ritualism.[7]

The second part of the book leads us from the nineteenth century to the Second World War and the Shoah. These are very valuable essays that are nonetheless more related to the history of ideas than to the social history of Judaism. Thus, one very significant element is lost: the complete geographical transformation of Judaism between 1880 and 1950, with a thoroughly Germanocentric and Eurocentric view of the history of Judaism, and the absence of Sephardic Judaism, and the Judaism of Maghreb, North Africa, Yemen, Iraq and Iran, Greece and Bulgaria. This is certainly not by accident: communities rich of history, such as those of Thessalonica, Ionia, Crete, destroyed during the extermination, or those numerous communities that moved to Israel from Arab countries, have somehow disappeared from the geography of Judaism, which is wholly focused on Israel and the United States. Despite this, it is difficult not to think on the relationship between tradition and Sephardic reality in today's Judaism: consider the problem of *mizrahim* in Israel, their marginalization, their demands, their role in today's Israeli politics and their history, so different, but loaded with a different drama from that of European Judaism. Only one essay, which one reads with real emotion, reminds us of the drama of the pogroms and the expulsion from Arab countries, an essay different from the others because of its autobiographic character, and exactly because of this link with individual memory gives a deep impressions of this drama: it is the text on Libya by David Meghnagi, *Microstoria e grande storia (Nascere ebreo in un paese arabo)* (Micro-history and Macro-history: born Jewish in an Arab country).

But let us return to the second part of the book: Francesca Sofia in *Il tema del confronto e dell'inclusione. Il Sinedrio napoleonico* (The topic of confrontation and inclusion: the Napoleonic Sanhedrin), describes very negatively Napoleon's politics towards the Jews: with the aim of regenerating the Jews, that is, of affirming the juridical prominence of the state and the civil code on Halakhic precepts, the Emperor had in the end imposed a model of integration that would never be completely accepted by Jewish institutions, but that would be however imitated by the legislative systems of the European nation states. But her analysis,

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[7] Haym Soloveitchik (1994), "Rupture and Reconstruction: the Transformation of Contemporary Ortodoxy", in *Tradition*, 28 (1994) 64-130.

that in my opinion underestimates the progress introduced by the civil Code in the previous condition of European Judaism, leaves open the question she started with: why did a permanent positive myth of Napoleon emerge within Judaism? To be sure, the French model has prevailed: the general acceptance of subordination to the laws of the state in which one lives and increasingly also of Hebrew to the national language can be found also in the means of education, for instance the catechisms, as shown by Gadi Luzzatto Voghera in the essay *I catechismi ebraici fra Sette e Ottocento* (Jewish catechisms between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). And the Napoleonic event marks also the starting point of the transformation of the figure of the rabbi, as shown by his other article *I rabbini in età moderna e contemporanea* (The rabbis in the modern and contemporary age). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the whole of Europe and today also in Israel, the rabbi becomes a public figure, due to his role as a public official, and takes on the role of spokesperson of the communities with external society; he takes on then a public role and authority different from that of the rabbi as a teacher, judge and interpreter that he had had in the preceding period. Nonetheless, the complex reality of contemporary American Judaism leaves open some indefiniteness about the figure of the rabbi, even if in Israel the public juridical role of the Chief Rabbinate makes for a more accentuated uniformity. Nonetheless – as shown by David Gianfranco Di Segni, *Ebraismo e bioetica,* (Judaism and bioethics), a rather wide range of positions remain open in this field so ethically difficult, within an overall vision surely more reasonable than the rigid and uniform preclusions of catholic hierarchies.

In fact during the nineteenth century the process of integration continued, with very different features in the various western European states, as shown by Mario Toscano in the essay *Integrazione nazionale e identità ebraica. Francia, Germania,Italia (1870-1918)* (National integration and Jewish identity: France, Germany, Italy (1870 – 1918)). Under similar juridical forms, sociological, political and historical problems, as well as problems related to the size of the communities, differentiate this process, in part only apparent, of nationalization.

The large German and French communities grew impetuously with the immigration of the Jews from Eastern Europe, while Italian Jews never passed the 50.000 mark. And France and Germany witnessed an anti-Semitism more widespread than that promoted in Italy especially by *Civiltà Cattolica.* Curiously, Toscano does not mention the *affaire* Dreyfus, which played an important role in the definition of the relationship between Jews and the modern state, but he provides a clear picture of the liberal and constitutional positions of the Jewish bourgeoisies of the three countries, accompanied by a weakening of the Jewish identity. The First World War is "a decisive and defining event … it marks at the same time the highest point and the beginning of the

crisis in the process of integration, of the identification of the Jews, …
without any reservations, with their own national states" (p. 167)
because of the crisis of the values and the defeat of democracy in the
period between the two world wars.

But the political events of these years also witness the development of a
utopian and revolutionary Jewish thought. Michael Loewy in
Messianismo, utopia e socialismo moderno (Belief in the Messiah, utopia and
modern socialism) illustrates it through the analysis of five thinkers –
but they are just examples of a far wider movement – that share a
messianic-utopian sensibility that would play an important role in
modern culture and socialisms, "the complete opposite of the political
religion of the nation-state" (p. 226). These thinkers move between two
poles, they are very heterogeneous and yet they seem to be moved by
the same questions and the same attitudes about the revolutionary
rupture: "Jews susceptible to utopia" and "assimilated Jews, atheistic-
religious, libertarians". They are Martin Buber, Gustav Landauer, Erich
Fromm, Ernest Bloch, Walter Benjamin.

The topic of the nationalization of the Jews is resumed also by Cristiana
Facchini in the essay *Voci dell'ebraismo liberale. Costruire una religione
moderna* (Voices of liberal Judaism: building a modern religion), which
has at its centre the fundamental experience of the *Wissenschaft des
Judentums* and its role not only in the scientific study of Hebrew
literature, but also in the great debate within the German Jewish world
on the modernization of liturgy and traditional practices. From here
would branch out the various innovative currents of Judaism of
European origin which migrated to the United States from the 1880s,
especially with the *Pittsburg Plarform* (1885), characterised by a reformist
mediation between the more radical wings and the more conservative
ones of American Judaism.

This section ends with the essay by Massimo Giuliani *Il pensiero ebraico
dopo la Shoà. Forme della riflessione filosofica* (Jewish thought after the
Shoah: forms of the philosophical reflections). It is a very enlightening
essay on a historical tragedy that evidently played a central role in the
reflections between continuity and rethinking of the relationship with
religion and Jewish tradition. And of course it has a fundamental
meaning in the defining of the relationship between Judaism and
modernity. The author highlights three forms of reflections, the
religious ones, that saw in the Shoah a prelude to redemption, a
manifestation of "messianic throes", the opening of the age of universal
brotherhood, or rather God's retreat from history to leave freedom of
action to man's moral autonomy, showing what man is capable of
doing when he refuses God. The second form of reflections are the
theological ones, that intend, on the contrary, to critically rethink the
traditional categories of faith, underlining the traits of discontinuity:
Auschwitz is the proof of the absence of God, or of the silence and the

retreat of God at the moment of creation to leave to men complete responsibility of their actions in this world. This stance is for many theologians an exhortation to human action, to Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel, but it is also an interpretation of the Shoah in its universal meaning for all religions, that must be re-understood as religions of the age after Auschwitz.

The third form of reflections, that the author defines theological-political, is not a merely religious answer, but the interpretation of the Shoah as the painful and unavoidable proof of the necessity for the Jewry to eradicate itself from the alienation of the Diaspora and return to the land of Israel, or put the Covenant at the centre of its own existence and identity.

The author correctly concludes that there have been many positions on the relationship between Auschwitz and the modern world, apart from these interpretations, strongly imbued with religious thinking. These positions give to the reflections about the Shoah and its uniqueness a more universal meaning and character, that does not deny its specific character as a Jewish tragedy, but underlines its universal meaning as a reflection about the evil inside every human being, about the weakness of reason, and about the inhuman aspects of the general history of the West.

I agree in particular on the latter point, and it seems to me that it should be underlined that a particularly strong tendency on the Jewish side, both in the Diaspora and Israel, contributed to turn the Shoah into even more in an exclusively Jewish event, to be viewed with compassion and solidarity, but thereby also weakening the symbolic universal meaning that this tragedy should convey. I should also add that it would have been interesting to compare these reflections with the use of the Shoah by the newborn State of Israel, before 1961 and the Eichmann trial. A lot of the recent Israeli historiography has shown that the Shoah was the symbol of the weak Jew of the Diaspora, the Jew that lets himself be killed without defence, as opposed to the model of the strong Jew, the warrior, that was being built instead. Also, the essay by Asher Salah, *Tradizione e modernità nel cinema israeliano* (Tradition and modernity in Israeli cinema), reveals, in a cinematography extraordinarily susceptible to social life, the strong propaganda for the strong Jew during the first fifteen years of the State of Israel.

The third and fourth sections illustrate the two most important cases of the current Jewish condition: Israel and the United States. My opinion is that a larger space should have been given to the Jewish experience of the Diaspora, in France, England, Argentina, and also to those fragments of Judaism that have remained in Arab countries, in other countries of Latin America, and in the resurgent communities in, for instance, Germany, Hungary, Spain; since I am convinced that

Judaism in the Diaspora not only maintains a significant role, but that it also marks in perspective a limitation and a check on the role of guiding states that Israel and the USA have in the events of a people that built its specificity, and also one of the significant aspects of modernity, on existing as an example of a people without a state, as Ian Assmann reminds us in *Cultural Memory*.

The two essays by Alfredo Mordechai Rabello, *Diritto individuale, diritto comunitario, diritto pubblico e costituzionale nello Stato di Israele* (Individual law, community law, public and constitutional law in the State of Israel), and by David Bidussa, *La religione civica israeliana* (Israeli civic religion), both show the contradictions on which Israeli society has been built and also the ambiguous relationship between continuity and rupture, which remains an unresolved problem both of law and of the general attitude of Israeli society's self-structuring. Can a state that proclaims itself to be at the same time both Jewish and democratic guarantee a "complete equality of rights for all its citizens without distinction of religion, race or gender"? A state that recognizes at the same time Jewish law within family law and Israeli law as its general juridical system, is it not bound to continually incur jurisdictional conflicts between the Rabbinate and the Supreme Court? A state that has not provided itself with a constitution, but that has rather bestowed constitutional character on eleven (up to now) fundamental laws, is it not bound to continually incur juridical obstacles, in front of diverse social groups that that do not always recognise the legitimacy of a substantially weak institutional system? These are the questions that characterise a juridical system that has on the other hand introduced important innovations, such as stressing the responsibility and social solidarity of individual citizens and the state, through the concept of *tom lev*, good faith, especially in contracts. Rabello's essay is one of the most significant of the whole book also because of the richness of the examples and the illustration of the progressive change from the English and Ottoman juridical model to the specific Israeli one, which is also inspired by the American system.

Bidussa reconstructs instead the progressive change from a civil Zionist religion, even if understood in many different ways before the birth of the state, to a political religion strongly ruled by the monist ideology embodied by Ben Gurion, an ideology strongly antagonistic to the experience of the Diaspora. "For that political generation it is not true that the future can be mortgaged only on condition of having a past. The opposite is instead true: it is possible to have a future only by breaking free *from* and *of* the past. This is the premise on which the figure of the 'new Jew' is built" (p. 358).

But Israeli society becomes immediately complicated: Sephardic mass immigration, the Eichmann trial, the 1967 war, the end of the age of pioneers, urban and industrial development require a continuous

revision of foundational myths. The crisis of Israeli society expands since the seventies: the government passes from the labour to the nationalist component, while the secular part of society identifies less and less with the communitarian ideal and looses ground to the growing orthodox presence. The heroic myths (Trumpeldor), the myth of resistance till the last man and the myth of heroic sacrifice (Masada) are, according to Bidussa, the symbol of a society that feels besieged and without alternatives, dependent once again on external threats and protections, despite being born in order to emancipate itself from the condition of the other-directed Jew.

Israel is a multi-ethnic and multinational society: many of its political and social characteristics, of its attitudes toward religion and tradition come from this aspect that in many ways is similar to the history of American Judaism, as the latter also has become numerically relevant relatively recently, starting from the great European migrations in the 1880s. But in the United States multi-ethnicity is not only a problem internal to the Jewish world; it is rather the reality of the context with which Judaism has related and confronted itself. Roberto Festa, in the essay *Il mondo ebraico americano contemporaneo. Dai movimenti degli anni Sessanta alle nuove forme del vissuto identitario* (The contemporary American Jewish world: from the movements of the sixties to the new forms of lived identity) illustrates the progressive change of American Judaism from a liberal and democratic attitude towards the end of the sixties, to a progressive shift toward conservative positions. "At least until the whole of 1965 a consistent part of the American Jewish leadership remained at the vanguard of the civil rights movement" (p. 418), siding with African-Americans in the fight against racial segregation and for justice, in the name of a universal interpretation of Judaism, from those years the stress shifts progressively towards the topic of Jewish survival, which is menaced by communism in the Soviet Union and by the Arab countries, after the 1967 war. A pacifist Judaism moved progressively to a more bellicose attitude "convinced that new practical responsibilities would emerge from the power politics of the Jewish state" (p. 422), to avoid giving Hitler another posthumous victory. Much weight was attached to the positions of Emil Fackenheim, who theorised that after Auschwitz the essential commandment for each Jew was to live as a Jew, and not to sacrifice Jewish existence on the altar of a future humanity. The fate of the Jews of the communist bloc and Israel "became in the seventies the most important civic and social cause of the organised Jewish movement …The old socialist, messianic, revolutionary aspiration that thousands of Jews had brought into America between 1881 and 1924 from the countries of Eastern Europe, and that had still fed the battles of the sixties, was spent by then" (pp. 431 – 2).

Of course, the outline of American Judaism was and is still very

complex and has had a long and rich history of divisions: as shown by the essay of Massimo Giuliani *I Conservative negli Stati Uniti e il Jewish Theological Seminary* (The Conservatives in the United States and the Jewish Theological Seminary): from the German experience of the science of Judaism was born, next to and against the orthodox, both the so-called Jewish reformation and the conservative movement, itself somehow an answer that accepted the principle of the historical evolution of Judaism, but that remained respectful of tradition, as opposed to the innovations of the reformers, who in 1885 in Pittsburgh sanctioned a substantial abandonment of tradition. Another movement would detach from the conservatives towards the end of the 1920s, the re-constructionist, that considered Judaism neither a religion nor an ethnic affiliation, but the always changing religious civilization of the Jewish people: at the centre of Jewish life lie the people and not God. The conflicts between these groups would gradually focus on several topics, from the observance of Kashrut to the repose on Saturday, from the admission of women into the rabbinate to the attitude towards homosexuality, the use of Hebrew, up to the progressive assimilation of these innovations, which confirmed the centrality of the idea of an organised community, even if they departed from the Jewish community as an ethnic-religious group, as observed by Samuel N. Eisenstadt. Today, about a third of American Jews are affiliated to the conservative movement.

It would be important to compare the experience of American Judaism with Israeli Judaism, surely more traditionalist. But it is certain that there is a continuous exchange between the two realities, even if the society of the United States has lived in a different way its own history because of its being part of the main political and military power of the world. But even in these studies on American society Judaism is described through its official institutions and those affiliated to them, overlooking secular Jews, that is, those who consider themselves Jews but do not identify with any of the communally organized structures.

The book's last essay brings us back somewhat rudely to the conflicting relevance of the symbolic world, not only for Jews, of course. Piero Stefani in *Gerusalemme: organizzazione, occupazione e ricostruzione di uno spazio sacro* (Jerusalem: organization, occupation and reconstruction of a sacred space) tells the history, in particular its recent part, of the conflict between the three monotheistic religions for the status of the city, in which the primacy of peace clashes with the primacy of possession. A dramatic measurement of the weight of symbols in obstructing co-existence: "in order to make it real, it is necessary on the one hand to limit nationalistic and fundamentalist tendencies, and on the other to find a different way from making religious affiliations merely relative" (p. 603). This is, in the end, a sad conclusion of the general analysis of the complex reality of one of the three

Mediterranean religions.

Like all collective books this important collection of essays leaves open many problems. The books were concieved from some considerations that David Bidussa, the editor, underlines in the introduction *Mappe storiche, geografiche, culturali dell'ebraismo in Età moderna e contemporanea* (Historical, geographical and cultural maps of Judaism in the modern and contemporary age) and that I would like to discuss in order to conclude. First of all – and I agree - the idea that Judaism has known a complex and contradictory historical evolution that does not define any continuity, but can be rather defined as an archive of experiences, determined above all by internal workings rather than a mere answer to hostile external pressures. Its duration therefore does not derive from a transmission of norms and a transmission through historiography, but from practices and a memory tied to places and paths of identity. Thus a history made of ruptures and not of a linear evolution. Jews are indeed characterised by a "constant process of hybridization, remixing, rewriting their own convictions. Along this path they have, *in time*, assumed forms of thinking, vocabularies, gastronomies, ways of eating, logical procedures, imaginations, plural explanations of their own knowledge" (p. XXX). In this picture – and this opinion sounds to me more questionable – "sabbateanism is the first moment of the eruption of modernity in the Jewish world" (p. XIX). The thesis is strongly inspired by Scholem's anarchism and Zionism, convinced as he was that the true soul of Judaism lay in the revelation, in its symbolic dimension, in its mystical and messianic forces that yet reveal their impossibility to be made real, but nonetheless maintain history in a constant tension and prevent to turn it into a secular and political project. In this sense the great and disastrous story of Shabbatay Tzwi, his breaking of every norm as the essential aspect of messianic revelation and his failure, open to modern Judaism meanings and expectation in front of history, they open it to the choices of modernity, to its secular uncertainties and to the responsibilities of men in the world. This thesis also concludes the book with the essay by Christoph Schmidt *Il messia antimessianico. Soggettività messianica e teologia politica nella teoria del simbolismo cabbalistico di Gershom Scholem* (The anti-messianic Messiah: messianic subjectivity and political theology in Gershom Scholem's theory of kabbalistic symbolism), where the false Messiah has "the paradoxical task of freeing Jewish culture of its 'messianity': the ethics of the kabbalistic symbol works as a constant strategy of restoration of Jewish culture against the 'temptations' of the political theology of modern messianism" (p. 558).

It seems to me, though, that other ideas and figures besides and beyond Shabbatay Tzwi have peopled Jewish modernity in a foundational way: Maimonides, as seen in the –correct, in my opinion – analysis provided by Leo Strauss, that underlines his platonic features,

and above all Spinoza. But other perspectives also enrich Jewish modernity: Emmanuel Levinas's foundation of ethics, or Strauss's renunciation of the religious aspect, that sees in Spinoza and Hobbes the foundation of law on the basis of the subject and rationality, in a way completely independent of any authority. And still – it needs to be repeated – Judaism is also made up of diverse practices, of diverse men, of religious and atheists, of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, of progressives and conservatives, of pacifists and bellicose people, and one cannot expect even a book like this, which is so rich in ideas and facts, to contain them all and reveal the mystery of permanence within so much diversity.

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David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna***, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) pp. 360.**
by *Francesca Bregoli*

David Sorkin's studies to date have concentrated on 18th-century Jewish culture and the *Haskalah* (the Prussian Jewish Enlightenment), considering them within the larger context of the German moderate, theological Enlightenment. Certainly not a novice of comparative intellectual history, thus, Sorkin builds on the conceptual premises of his earlier works to widen the analytical scope of his argument in his fourth and latest book. Here he casts his net wider, endeavoring
"to revise our understanding of the Enlightenment," arguing - against the "secular master narrative" that emerged in the wake of the French Revolution, reinforced by two centuries of historical scholarship - that the "Enlightenment was not only compatible with religious belief, but even conducive to it" (p. 3).
This "Religious Enlightenment", claims Sorkin, was "perhaps the first development common to Western and Central Europe's religions" (p. 5), emerging from over a century of conflict after the Protestant Reformation. The study posits a history of filiations and affinity between the Religious Enlightenment's various manifestations, with Dutch Armininanism and Jansenism providing the ground over which religious enlighteners developed their theological and political argumentations. A central, underlying assumption of the book is that all religious traditions faced similar challenges in the course of the 18th century, seeking similar answers to their dilemmas. Sorkin's history therefore not only includes Protestantism, Calvinism, and Catholicism, but also Judaism: the *Haskalah* should be equally investigated alongside the Christian expressions of 18th-century moderate religious traditions.
Following a general introduction, each of the book's six chapters offers a detailed and richly erudite case study of a single intellectual figure – all of them, with the exception of Moses Mendelssohn, little-known to the modern reader – representing a specific national and confessional expression of the phenomenon. William Warburton (1698-1779)'s "Moderation", which gained state sponsorship in Whig England, embodies the first coherent version of the Religious Enlightenment, with an emphasis on toleration and reason, Newtonian science and natural law. Jacob Vernet (1698-1789), a "passionate popularizer" of Calvinist enlightened

Orthodoxy in patrician Geneva, in turn inspired by Arminianism, Cartesian philosophy and Anglican Moderation, combined a politics of subordination with a theology of free will, toleration and liberty of conscience. Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten (1706-1757), influenced by the teaching of Christian Wolff, was one of the most influential historians of his day and an early exponent of what will become Prussian Neology – a form of "enlightened piety and practice guided by a critical-historical method of scriptural interpretation" (p. 159). Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), the best known of the figures analyzed in the book and the most radical in his appeal to religious toleration, was a leading member of the Berlin Enlightenment and the foremost representative of the *Haskalah*, celebrated for his influential German translation (in Hebrew characters) of the Pentateuch as well as for his defense of Judaism. Joseph Eybel (1741-1805) was the "quintessential public reformer" in the Catholic Habsburg Empire. Supporting Joseph II's fast program of reforms, he envisioned a "state church" that would shed its corporate characteristics and "wield authority on the basis of revelation, natural law, and the commonweal" (p. 229). Finally, Adrien Lamourette (1742-1794), was part of a loose group of "patriotic" and "enlightened" clergy that emerged during the early years of the French Revolution. Believing that Christianity and Revolution were mutually supportive, Lamourette (ineffectively) defended the middle ground in the Legislative Assembly; during the Terror, he (vainly) endeavored to avoid the extremes of counter-revolution and ongoing revolution.

The "case study approach", moreover, allows Sorkin to reach a degree of generalization. Two main intellectual traits seem to have characterized the Religious Enlightenment wherever it emerged: the search for a middle ground of reasonable religiosity, based on the re-appropriation of natural religion (traditional domain of deists and freethinkers) alongside revelation; and the commitment to tolerating religious minorities and dissenting sects, based on ecclesiastical versions of natural law theories, as propounded by Collegialism and Territorialism. Two common socio-political trends, furthermore, allowed its flourishing: the burgeoning public sphere with its expanding net of journals and salons; and the powerful state sponsorship enjoyed by most religious enlighteners.

Sorkin's work has real stakes for contemporary society, he readily acknowledges. Reconstructing the role of belief in the time of the Enlightenment seems particularly urgent today, as the polarization of secularists and believers has become increasingly fraught with difficulties (p. 314). One however needs to ask what the legacy of such 18th-century religious moderation was. Opposing the secular

narrative of the Enlightenment, the study aims to demonstrate that "modern culture also has religious roots and that the Enlightenment origins of modern culture were neither secular nor religious but a complex amalgam" (p. 21). And yet, Sorkin shows well that the Religious Enlightenment enjoyed short-lived success wherever it emerged; the thinkers under consideration, with the exclusion of Mendelssohn, left hardly any intellectual legacy to posterity.

In fact, the fleeting nature of state support would seem to have determined both the initial success and the ultimate failure of the Religious Enlightenment. Although the movement "may have had more influential adherents and exerted more power in its day than either the moderate or the radical version of the Enlightenment" (p. 21) because of the state sponsorship that it obtained, Sorkin also provides much evidence to the contrary. With the significant exception of the Lutheran theological Enlightenment, which enjoyed uninterrupted support from the authorities, while also exerting significant influence among other confessions, Sorkin reconstructs a story of eventual failures. Towards the end of Warburton's life, Moderation lost state support and stopped being a public factor (pp. 64-65). Calvinist enlightened Orthodoxy crumbled at the end of the 18th century as a result of new political circumstances in the 1780s and was later on crushed by the French Revolution and the Terror (pp. 109-110). The *Haskalah*, which for obvious reasons could not enjoy state sponsorship, needed to rely on the assistance of the Jewish mercantile elite, a circumstance that brought about the collapse of its political aspirations (p. 213). Habsburg Reform Catholicism was a factor primarily during the decade of reforms pursued by Joseph II, losing its importance after his death in 1790 (pp. 258-259). Lamourette, condemned to the guillotine in 1794, epitomizes the ultimate and complete failure of the Religious Enlightenment. Utterly destroyed by the French Revolution, the historical legacy of the trend of religious moderation reconstructed by Sorkin, as well as its actual impact over "modern culture," remains uncharted.

The fleeting nature of the Religious Enlightenment raises some broad historical questions: Why was the "middle way" embraced by religious enlighteners in the end not compatible with late-18th-century developments? Why did religious moderation cease to be a compelling historical factor at the time? Are "faith" and "progress" ultimately mutually exclusive? Can the nature and circumstances of the Religious Enlightenment help explain the fact that categories such as "secular" and "radical" have enjoyed and still enjoy a wider popular and historiographical appeal than "religiously moderate"? Nevertheless, the fact that the Religious Enlightenment only existed

as a force in the European public sphere for a brief season should not detract from the many accomplishments of Sorkin's masterful study. The individual chapters will certainly appeal to academic readers looking for information on little-studied intellectuals. The work particularly comes to life in its analysis of Protestant German lands. It is in the skillfully argued chapters concerning Baumgarten and Mendelssohn that Sorkin is at his most convincing in propounding the theory of a Religious Enlightenment and exploring its wider implications and connections. The section on Mendelssohn additionally provides a succinct, yet rich and sophisticated, overview of both the *Haskalah* and his chief protagonist, which could be fruitfully assigned in college surveys of Jewish history and thought. The ambitious comparative approach of this work is to be applauded, and should serve as a model for future studies of early modern European religious and intellectual history.

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Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, **Princeton — Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. VII-438 (2nd ed., 2006; Fr. transl.,** *Le siècle juif*, **Paris: éditions La Découverte, 2009, pp. 427).**
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Published first in 2004, and in French translation in 2009, Yuri Slezkine's *The Jewish Century*, an epic, witty, and, at times, elusive book, has reached a vast audience and fueled a heated debate about Jewish history and modernity. Its style is provocative. Numbers and statistics are interspersed with references to literary and social science classics. Each chapter mirrors a great text of the European literary canon.

The book is divided into four chapters of increasing length, which build steadily on its main theme — Russian Jewry and its relationship to modernity — all the while touching on a wide array of 20th century Jewish topics involving the Soviet Union, United States and Israel.

Slezkine interrogates Jewish history from an innovative standpoint: instead of discussing its uniqueness, as Shmuel Eisenstadt does in *Jewish Civilization*, Slezkine proposes a social theory grounded in the idea that the Jewish experience is actually somewhat universal.

The first chapter of *The Jewish Century*, entitled "Mercury's Sandals: the Jews and Other Nomads," describes the traditional position of the Jews within European society in terms of the seeds of modernity. Slezkine uses the term "Mercurians" to describe a number of religious and ethnic groups, including Jews; i.e., guest groups providing the host society with crucial services such as money-lending and the practice of medicine. The Mercurians are "service nomads," performing vital functions for the so-called "Apollonians," the host society traditionally devoted to agriculture and war.

Europe's Mercurians were primarily Jews, Greeks, and Gypsies, but service nomads are common in world history: Parsis in India; Indians in Africa; Chinese throughout Asia; Lebanese and Syriac Christians in western Africa, Caribbean and America; Armenians and Fanariot Greeks in the Ottoman empire; etc.

The dynamic tension between Mercurians and Apollonians recalls Nietzsche's description of the apollonian and dyonisian drives within Greek literary tradition, an idea that was taken in a different direction by American anthropologist Ruth Benedict's classification of "cultures." Slezkine's bibliography suggests that his research on the economics of minority groups was influenced by both views.

Mercurians, being essentially powerless in Apollonian society, are forced to answer power with wiles. Slezkine paints them as "tricksters," inheritors of the "cunning intelligence" of Homer's Odysseus.

Despite being separated by history and geography, Mercurians have

developed surprisingly similar strategies for separating themselves from Apollonian societies: doctrines of pollution, such as food taboos; culturally exclusive languages, such as Roma and Yiddish, which are often linked to the preservation of a sacred tongue; and an emphasis on family-kinship ties over pride of place.

While the differences between Gypsies and Jews may seem manifold and significant, Slezkine chooses not to insist on them, a strategy both interesting and somewhat misleading.

As he says at the outset: "Modernization is about everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible. It is about learning to cultivate people and symbols." Modernization, in other words, is all about "becoming Mercurians." Modernity and capitalism require Mercurian attributes like literacy, mobility, and expertise. The Age of Universal Mercurianism owes its Jewish flavor to the fact that it began in Europe.

Modernity's second "leap forward" is somewhat more ambiguous. Slezkine's second chapter, "Swann's Nose: Jews and Other Moderns," inspired by Proust's masterpiece, is a learned and ironic journey through the landmarks of 19th century culture: nationalism, Marxism and Freudianism — the latter two teachings, according to Slezkine, being particularly Jewish ones. The mechanics of secularization and modernity are described as far more complex than Max Weber has suggested. Weber emphasizes the rise of capitalism, a product of Calvinist ethics, and the process of rationalization that led to abstract norms and the modern state. Slezkine underlines that while modernity seems to preach individualism, it cannot practice it wholly (p. 43). After all, the modern state is by its nature national — that is, tribal. Nationalism is read as a kind of secularization of the biblical model. In other words, "…every nation was to become Jewish, every people were to be chosen, every language sacred, every land promised" (p. 44).

The rise of modernity — the so-called "unbinding of Prometheus — " was perhaps a Pyrrhic victory for Jews in Western and central Europe, who advanced so many aspects of European society and culture (pp. 46-52). At the end of the 19th century, their extraordinary achievements became a matter of debate — and, I would add, an occasion for a new kind of hatred of the Jews —anti-Semitism (p. 72). Jewish success was judged in the light of attitudes towards modernity generally. If the critic's outlook on the modern world was positive, then the Jewish achievement was celebrated. If, on the other hand, the critic feared modernity, as in the case of Houston Stewart Chamberlain or Werner Sombart, Judaism was seen as strange and dangerous. Jews were perceived as an alien and inferior "race." Lamarck's language of inherited cultural features was deployed with great success (pp. 52-59).

Some intellectuals disagreed. Thorstein Veblen, the American sociologist, attributed Jewish preeminence not to Jewish tradition, but precisely to its radical rejection (pp. 56-60). Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu — the French intellectual who so deeply loved American democracy — stressed, in a famous book against anti-Semitism, that modernity was not created by Jews, but that Jews, by virtue of the rejection of their religious identity, became its best practitioners. He insisted that modernity started, in fact, with Christians of varying beliefs.

Slezkine doesn't really develop this idea. Instead, he focuses on the kind of modernity that requires a nation-state and a reconfiguration, or rejection, of religion. Some religions were worse than others at managing this change.

The coming of the modern age called into question the relevance of traditional religion, and forced a cycle of crisis, death and reconfiguration. Slezkine devotes beautiful pages to the crisis of identity in modernist literature. He celebrates Kafka and Proust, but for him the quintessential Mercurian is Leopold Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Slezkine speaks of the rise of modern "secular religions," such as nationalism and Marxism, although his inclusion of Freudianism in this group is problematic. He argues that secular religions share certain features: a concept of evil and redemption; and an apocalyptic or redemptive path to salvation. In my opinion, these secular ideologies shared more features with Christianity than Judaism, particularly in the overall coherence of their goals, and their obsession with mythmaking and cult organization. Overloaded with apocalyptic imagery at the turn of the century, these new belief systems would eventually metastasize into totalitarianism. Slezkine's third chapter, "Babel's First Love: The Jews and the Russian Revolution," deals with the realization of this dire prophecy by taking up the central story of the book: the response of Russian Jewry to modernity. The Russian empire was home to many Mercurian groups, some of them, like the Baltic Germans, quite important to the smooth functioning of the imperial bureaucracy. There were nomadic peoples from the most remote corners of the empire. Despite their religious, ethnic, and cultural differences, all of these nomadic groups shared the Jews' precarious social position. Unlike other powers in Western Europe, including the Habsburg empire, Russia afforded these groups minimal legal protection (pp. 110-114).

The process of economic modernization in Russia unleashed, as it did everywhere else, an enormous amount of entrepreneurial energy. But balancing these new opportunities were serious assaults on traditional life. The *shtetl* was a perfect incubator for these changes. There were economic losers, particularly in the middle stratum of society, and winners who were able to make the most of their talents, professional

connections, and family ties. The result of this chaotic process was both mass emigration, mainly to America, and the rise of a powerful Jewish financial and economic élite, made possible, in many cases, by the decision to convert to Christianity (pp. 115-127).

Slezkine links the cultural transformation of the second half of 19th century to the emergence of a cult of Russian literature. He uses the Jewish-Russian case to talk more broadly about a similar dynamic in many other countries, although each with its own characteristics: the mass conversion of the younger generation by way of a national literature.

Many young Russians were drawn into the *intelligentsia*, that is to say, as Hertzen puts it, "a community of more or less unattached intellectuals trained to be urban moderns in a rural empire; raised to be 'foreigners at home.'" Suspended somewhere between the state and the peasants, whom they called 'the people,' and trapped by an economic system unable to make use of them, this highly alienated intellectual class became the vanguard of a messianic movement with millenarian expectations. These intellectuals — Russian radicals and Jewish fugitives, both — shared a love for the "common man," first in the form of the Russian peasant, and ultimately in the men and women of the proletariat. Moreover, they shared a common hatred for their parents' values. They represented a generational break from traditional culture and politics, which they saw as fiercely resistant to modernization.

This conflict between "fathers and sons" was seen in Manichean terms: the possibility of a new era of peace freedom and light pitted against the backwardness, doom, and darkness of tradition. With an eye to the complex ethnic, national, and religious texture of the Russian empire, Slezkine points out the large number of Jews and Latvians in the radical movements, arguing that "most Jewish rebels did not fight the state in order to become free Jews; they fought the state in order to become free from Jewishness — and thus Free. Their radicalism was not strengthened by their nationality" (p. 152). Unlike the "Latvian or Polish socialists," Jews were not fighting for universalism and Jewishness at the same time — with one exception, dismissed as never being a serious contender for a national movement: the Bundists (p. 148).

Much as they were the most devoted nationalists, Jews were the most devoted revolutionaries, truly faithful to the religion of revolution. They were often among the sternest soldiers, and later, among the first martyrs to be devoured by the new order. The massive participation of Jews in the revolution and the civil war, not to mention the terror afterwards, fueled deeply rooted Russian anti-Semitism, as reflected in the call for Jews to accept "ethnic responsibility," a concept elaborated by the notorious Russian anti-Semite Vasily Shulgin (pp. 180-181).

Among the many Jews who rejected the radical ideology of Bolshevism, there were some who tried to understand the complex interconnection of Bolshevism and Judaism, and who did, after all, "plead guilty" (p. 183).

Even so, Slezkine argues that "ethnic responsibility" and "national guilt" are not particularly useful ideas: "members of nations might feel ashamed, but nations cannot go to confession, do penance and eventually appear before their creator" (p. 185). Simon Dubnow, the distinguished professor of Jewish history, asserts that Bolsheviks of Jewish descent were not actually Jews (p. 185) — at any rate, not if we acknowledge individual freedom. But individual freedom has proven less relevant and less rooted than ethnic and national classification, both in Soviet Union and in the United States — not to mention western Europe. The radical political choice of many young Jews in the Pale of Settlement isn't difficult to rationalize— there were many superficial, but magnetic, similarities between Marxism and Jewish Messianism; and the ranks of the radical *intelligentsia* were more open and less anti-Semitic than the population at large. A thornier problem, however, is understanding the way Jewish radicals so readily embraced violence. Slezkine skillfully sifts through memoirs, fictional narrative, poetry, and art of the early Soviet period, searching for answers. Perhaps the violence, to paraphrase one poet, was an act of vengeance representing the "rape of Russia;" or, in another sexual interpretation, a violent "congress" meant produce the offspring of a Jewish-Russian symbiosis (pp. 201-203).

Whatever its source, the tragic outburst of Jewish rage validated the paranoia of anti-Semites, especially the Christian ones who for decades had been describing Talmudism as the quintessence of violence. Ironically, the radical sons were to suffer from the same backlash as their pious fathers who preached against violence.

Slezkine's fourth and last chapter, "Hodl's Choice: the Jews and the Three Promised Lands," inspired by the short novel of Sholom Aleichem, *Tevye the dairyman*, is about emigration, both beyond Europe and within it, a path eventually chosen by millions of Jews. Slezkine focuses on Tevye's daughters, speculating on their destiny and the destinies of their children. Sholem Aleichem's Tevye had at least five daughters, who were whittled down to three in Norman Jewison's famous American musical adaptation, *Fiddler on the Roof.* We find three daughters in Slezkine's discussion, too: Chava the Zionist, Beilcke the American, and Hodl the Bolshevik, representing the three migrations of the Russian Jews: to Palestine, to America, and from the Pale of Settlement to the big cities of the Soviet Union (p. 206).

The Soviet migration was the most important, according to Slezkine, since the majority of Jews either remained in, or returned from abroad

to, the Soviet Union. Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and Kiev — the four main Soviet cities — witnessed a major influx of Jews from the Pale of Settlement (p. 217). It's interesting to note that Jews moving to these cities shared an element of idealism with emigrants to Palestine. According to Slezkine, both "Palestine and Soviet Russia were real new worlds" (p. 211) because they were truly revolutionary. Both countries needed a new kind of man, coupled with a radical effacement of the past, in order to create heaven on earth.

The post-revolutionary Jewish generation in Russia was urbanized, expert in the Russian literary canon and the teachings of the revolution, and was well represented "at the very top of the Moscow and Leningrad cultural elite" (p. 225). In fact, according to Slezkine, they were "the most important and most influential generation in the history of the Soviet cultural elite" (p. 232). Of course, "most members of the new Soviet elite were not Jews, and most Jews were not members of the new Soviet elite," although, "in absolute terms they were second to the Russians" (p. 236). Theirs was a success story of upward mobility. They were heroes of the revolution, and hoped eventually to become its prophets. The loyalty of Jews to the young Soviet state and society is a controversial topic, often expunged from Jewish historiography. Their prominence was a matter of discussion and resentment among enemies of the new order, which attempted to control the spread of anti-Semitism through strategies such as surveillance, repression (p. 245), and the politics of "normalization."

Slezkine addresses the history of Soviet Jewry in terms of the ethno-politics of the Soviet regime. The Soviet Union was not a Western-style nation-state. It was beholden to the colonial structure of the Russian empire, which it attempted to recast as "the first ethno-territorial federation in the history of the world" (p. 246). The construction of a new Soviet Jewish identity is one of the most interesting issues discussed in this chapter. What room was there for Jewishness in a state that pleaded universalism and the annihilation of cultural differences? What should replace the narrow confines of traditional Judaism that had been so readily cast aside by the young radicals?

The Soviet state initially promoted the ethnicities of peoples that had suffered under the yoke of the Russian empire. Special "ethno-units" that operated in traditional local languages were created to facilitate the transition to a new national "modern" culture. National territories were aggregated and clearly delineated. In 1932, nationality became a required marker in the internal passport system (p. 285). Slezkine reads elements of the Yiddish movement against the backdrop of these politics.

These ethnic politics proved to be a double-edged sword: belonging to an oppressed nation might provide a healthy career boost, but might just as easily single one out for persecution, especially for residents of

the so-called "diaspora nations" that were deemed, between 1937-38, internal enemies of the Soviet regime. Slezkine reminds us that the purge of enemies along ethnic lines provoked "a new, strictly genetic, procedure for determining nationality" (p. 286).

For a certain generation and class of Jews, the Thirties represented a golden period of integration in Soviet society, complete with nannies, good schools, and summer houses (pp. 259-260). However, that decade of privilege came to a violent end. The Great Terror (p. 269) devoured both the fathers and the children of the revolution. Jews were potentially vulnerable on two fronts: both as élites and as ethnic internal enemies. The purges were not purely anti-Semitic. At times, Jews were construed as dangerous foreigners like Poles, Germans, or Greeks; at others, as political enemies, members of Bundist or Zionist movements (p. 273).

Meanwhile, the Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact was encouraging racial anti-Semitism. Jewish lineage was being researched with an almost pathological zeal (p. 301). A shift in international alignment reversed this trend, at least for a while. When Hitler became the enemy of the Soviet Union, Stalin called on the entire nation, including the Jews, to put forth a great patriotic effort.

After the war, in the wake of the establishment of Israel, Stalin began to view the Jews as a "diaspora nation," and therefore as an internal enemy. His response to this perceived threat was a series of state pogroms. Intellectuals of the Yiddishist movement, "true communist believers" who had fought for the Soviet regime, were the first to be eliminated. The second wave of purges, known as the "physicians plot," was eventually halted only by Stalin's death.

From the Sixties on, it was clear that "Hodl's children" were increasingly critical of the Soviet regime. Jews, once the most fervent defenders of the system, became some of its most celebrated dissidents. By the Seventies, many of the Jewish grandparents who had survived war, prisons, and labor camps were finally convinced that they had made the wrong choice. They felt their lives should have been lived elsewhere (p. 344).

The Jewish Century is a book about modernity — that is to say, the rise of capitalism and its overarching victory — but also about the difference between modernity and modernization. Twentieth century Jewish history tends to focus on the overall failure of Jewish integration in Europe, culminating in the catastrophe of the Nazi genocide. Amos Elon proposes that the peculiar symbiosis of Jewry and modernity started in Germany with the arrival of a young Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin, and ended with the departure of Hannah Arendt for America.

But such a tight focus on the Holocaust obscures other histories, by no means less relevant or revealing, such as Slezkine's account of the

dramatic history of Russian Jews, with its achievements and tragedies. By tracking the relatively brief success of a small group of Jewish *élites* in the Soviet Union, followed by their tragic downfall, Slezkine illustrates the wild possibilities and crushing risks of the path to modernity. In the end, the most successful of Tevye's daughters proved to be Beilcke, the one who chose America.

Even as Jews exploited their skills as Mercurians to become modern, their journey through modernity has also exposed another deep-seated ambition: to become Apollonians themselves, just like their erstwhile masters. Slezkine understands the Zionist movement at the turn of the 20th century as the political embodiment of the Apollonian impulse.

The Jewish Century emphasizes the commonalities faced by all Jews on the "path to modernity" between the 19th and 20th centuries. It speaks of Jewish ambivalence towards modernity, an attitude typical of other religious traditions as well. It also speaks of the ambivalence of modernity towards the Jews. The modern state has demonstrated a tendency toward atavistic "tribal" impulses such as the rise of radical nationalism; the revolutionary upsurge proved no better choice in 20th century. They both merged into totalitarianism. The nature of Jewish integration in Europe has spoken volumes about the nature of the modern state itself and its capability to remain faithful to the principles of liberal democracy.

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Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-century British Literary Culture*, **New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 270**
by *Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa)*

In the English speaking world the last two decades have seen the birth of important new research works extremely sensitive to the seductions of cultural history; such works have considered the representation of the Jew between the 19th and early 20th century in the scientific milieu, in the periodical press, in the political discourse as well as in the literary field. In this last sector, the work of Bryan Cheyette (*Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations 1875-1945*, Cambridge U. Press, 1993) has had a decisive impact on historiography and the book of Nadia Valman has been directly inspired by that approach.

In part due to the difficulty encountered in coming to a clear definition of "Jewishness", the character of the Jew has been used in diverse historical contexts to evoke every possible declination of "otherness", be it religious, sexual, racial, cultural or ethical. Once discriminatory legislations fell and emancipation came to be, recognizing the Jew in every day life became increasingly more and more difficult. Analyzing how the dominant part of society has imagined and represented Jews contributes to illuminate some aspects of the cultural exchange between minority and majority and offers a precious point of view on the modes of self-representation of the majority culture. While this is true for nearly any epoch, the 19th century seems a particularly interesting context in which to consider such issues, as it was the age in which national and patriotic narratives developed and were progressively led to radical extremes through a constant negative definition of collective identity based on the counter-image of the enemy or the foreigner. Studies concerned with these themes have a relevance that goes well beyond the limited field of Jewish history.

Nadia Valman's book, published in the series entitled *Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth century Literature and Culture*, fits brilliantly into this research pattern. Concentrating her attention on the literary representation of Jewish women, the Author introduces gender as a problematic element, a crucial factor in the structure of national and patriotic discourse. The Author moves from the observation that most of the existing studies have concentrated on the construction of the image of the male Jew and thus asks herself whether the literary figure of the Jewish female is only a passive appendix of male characters or if it has had, on the contrary, its own specific function and relevance. This is what Valman calls «the Jewess question» (pp. 1-14), reaching the conclusion that «throughout the nineteenth century, […] the figure of the Jewess marked out the axes of difference through which English Protestant

identity was imagined» (p. 2). According to her analysis, the figure of the Jewish women proves extremely ductile, capable of incarnating the fears and the hopes of Victorian society even better then the masculine figure. Women appear to be more elusive and malleable figures, more vulnerable yet more dangerous. Their bodies do not carry visible marks, while circumcision modifies the male's body, making the Jewish man virtually impossible to be completely assimilated. The Jewess seems to incarnate cultural permeability and the mobility of the borderline separating majority and minority cultures. It thus sheds light not only the dangers that the era of emancipation posed to the minority's survival, but also - and more significantly – on some of the internal weaknesses of the categories structuring majority culture. Valman's sources – rigorously British – are exclusively drawn from the literary field and range from well known works such as Scott's *Ivanhoe* or Joyce's *Ulysses* to far less famous texts, books that have slipped into oblivion but that a the time of their publication had a meaningful success. The diverse communities to which the authors of the works analyzed belonged serve the need of raising key questions and allow a proper context cantered analysis; such questions are methodologically relevant as much as gender or the diachronical approach chosen by Valman. She distinguishes the narrative works produced by authors belonging to the liberal area, to the evangelical community or the Jewish community.

The book is divided into an introduction (*Introduction: the Jewess question*, pp. 1-14), five central chapters and a conclusion. The various chapters are built on a thematic axis, which is also a good diachronical guide, since literary representations are in some way a reflection of the social, cultural and political events which shape the life of a society. The second chapter (*Repellent beauty: the liberal nation and the Jewess*, pp. 15-50) stresses the importance of granting civil rights to Jews in the evolution of a liberal conception of the State and – to a certain degree – of the nation, while shedding light on the ambivalences present also within the minds of supporters of emancipation. The Jewish case appears to be a testing ground and, at the same time, the utmost limit of the strategies of tolerance and inclusion. Jewish women – often described according to an orientalistic canon – are represented a perilous temptation for the ethnic and moral integrity of British men. At the same time, Jewish women could be raised to be models of femminine virtue when, as Ivanhoe's Rebecca, they sacrifice themselves allowing for the accomplishment of more righteous unions.
The following chapter is instead centered on protestant narratives on the history of Jewish women (*Jewish persuasions: gender and the culture of conversion*, pp. 51-84). In these texts, the representation of a Jewess' conversion comes to symbolize the triumph and superiority of

Christian values, and the self-identification of the Christian female reader who would be encouraged to reflect on the responsibilities of her religious and gender identity. These stories reproduce common stereotypes on feminine nature, women are depicted as more emotionally sensitive then men and are imagined both as capable of profound depravation and as proprietors of great virtues.

The fourth chapter (*Women of Israel: femininity, politics and Anglo-Jewish fiction*, pp. 85-129) represents a convincing portrait of how «the status of women in Judaism and the figure of the Jewess […] became a key rhetorical element in the controversy over Jewish conversion and Jewish civil rights» (p. 86), and thus illustrate how novels and short stories acquired also a political dimension within the Jewish community's life.

In *Hellenist heroines: commerce, culture and the Jewess* (fifth chapter, pp. 130-172) the author concentrates on texts (sometimes very famous ones such as Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*) in which some of the most common stereotypes concerning Jewish greed and Jewish economic power emerge. Female characters seem to be capable of interpreting a sometimes cathartic and purifying role, often at the price of great suffering and self-sacrifice, in opposition to the negative imagery with which Jewish men are depicted. Towards the end of the 1870s a language that insists on racial characterizations starts to emerge. This topic is dealt with in the conclusive chapter which confronts the end of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th, when a racialized language and the theme of degeneration formed a linguistic code that appeared to be widely present also in Jewish circles (*The shadow of the harem:* fin-de-siècle *racial romance*, pp. 173-205). In particular, Valman presents the reader with the writings of Amy Levy and Julia Frankau, who were received very unfriendly in the British-Jewish periodical press. Their representation of a materialistic and suffocating Jewish world closed in itself was accused to support anti-Semites and their rhetoric. In their novels, Jewish women appear to be strikingly more sensible and more modern, less tied to the backward-looking and "oriental" markers of the race as compared to the males. Thus they were be more smoothly integrated into the surrounding society. Once again stereotypes on feminine nature are dynamically intertwined with the imaginary attributes of the Jews. The female figure appears as an element of dialogue and mobility, at the same time weak and occupying a crucial position for the survival of religion, culture and community.

In Valman's research the adoption of a gender perspective is not an arbitrary choice, but reflects successfully the spirit and content of the sources she used, shedding light on nuances that would otherwise be lost to historical reconstruction. It thus seems to me a successful

analytical and methodological experiment which deserves to be developed further and repeated for other national contexts.

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Georges Bensoussan, *Un nom impérissable. Israël, le sionisme et la destruction des Juifs d'Europe*, **(Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008), pp. 300.**
by *Arturo Marzano, Marcella Simoni*

This book discusses the connection between the *Shoah* and the foundation of the State of Israel, analyzing in chronological order its influence and its social, political and educational legacy. The focus here is on Israeli state and society and, from this perspective, this text represents a welcome addition to the literature on the *Shoah*, even though it does not present particularly new or innovative elements. This theme and its implications have in fact been addressed before in other scholarly studies, as the references - detailed in the footnotes - in the book indeed confirm.

The main question underlying the whole book, and which runs through its various chapters is whether Israel was born because of the *Shoah*, or rather, notwithstanding its devastation and impact, from the point of view of demography, culture and population. Bensoussan entirely rejects the idea that the State of Israel was born because of /thanks to the feelings of guilt of the international community, while he underlines the reasons of *realpolitik* which stood behind its foundation. On the one hand, the USSR was interested in having a base in the Middle East that could be useful (and eventually used) to penetrate the area; on the other, Harry Truman was reluctant to alienate the sympathies of US Jewry in the wake of two important elections: the election for New York mayor (1946) and, more notably, the presidential elections of 1948. In claiming that no evidence is to be found in archival sources to support the thesis of the guilt feelings of the international community as a factor prompting the foundation of the State of Israel, Bensoussan actually seems to follow into the footsteps of Arie Kochavi's, *Post-Holocaust politics: Britain, the United States & Jewish refugees, 1945-1948* (2001), even though this work does not appear to be quoted. On the contrary, the Author seems to support the idea that the State of Israel came into being despite and notwithstanding the *Shoah*, even if such a catastrophic event indeed jeopardized the possibility of Israel's coming into existence, for example if considering the potential number of immigrants from Eastern Europe. And here emerges one of the founding ideas of the Author's construction, i.e. that the structures of the would-be State of Israel – mainly the *Histadrut*, the *Hagana*, and the *Hebrew University*, as well as a fully organized educational system (and a networked medical system, the reviewers add) - already existed as national realities before the war (chapter 1, p. 12). This initial focus on the pre-statehood period is here not only acknowledged but also welcomed as a further contribution to a long-term history approach for the State of Israel, one that could also explain how the State of Israel could be "up and running on the 15 May 1948", to use an expression by David Vital.

The Author's initial focus on the pre-statehood period (the *Yishuv*) is not only important to substantiate the thesis that there existed a quasi-State before May

15th 1948; it is also central to the economy of a book on the relation between *Shoah* and Israel. The Author investigates in fact the question of *haavara*, i.e. the agreement between the *Yishuv* and the Nazi government to let German Jews migrate to British Palestine already in the 1930s bringing with them financial assets (up to 20.000 DM) (chapter 2, p. 21). Diaspora Jewry almost unanimously condemned such an agreement, and even stronger was the condemnation issued by Zeev Jabotinsky, the founder of right-wing Zionism, who accused David Ben-Gurion and the Labour political leadership of the *Yishuv* to collaborate with the enemy. This argument entails the corollary that Ben Gurion's political aim was not that of saving European Jews but rather that of establishing the State, a topic that has been addressed and discussed also by Tom Segev in his well known *The Seventh Million* (1993), a book which is often referred to in the footnotes of this work. If Ben Gurion's political actions were informed by an approach of *realpolitik* before the war, as the works of Segev and of Idit Zertal (also frequently quoted in the book under review) have demonstrated, they even more so followed this method in the early 1950s, when the question of German reparations emerged in the Israeli political discourse. Once again, the need to grant economic survival to Israel after the 1948 War (which had led the country to the verge of an economic collapse) prevailed over moral considerations, and thus came the acceptance of German reparations over the option of not establishing relations with Germany (chapter 4, p. 109).

Related to this question is also how the *Yishuv* - and then Israeli society - dealt with *Shoah* survivors, both collectively, individually and within families, an attitude that can be broadly summarized as rejection. As it is well known, there was very little public space for *Shoah* survivors in Israel, and their voice was unheard, if not silenced, at least until the Eichmann trial (1961). Relying on literature works such as David Grossman's *See Under: Love*, Bensoussan addresses this complex issue, that of the survivors' guilt feelings, and the question of the trans-generational transmission of trauma in the private and in the public spheres. A quote at p. 54, taken from the literary work of Aharon Megged, well exemplifies the complexity of the themes and their intertwining through the refusal of Raya, an Israeli-born young would-be mother who strongly refuses to name her to-be-born son after Mendele, her cousin died in the *Shoah*. This story also exemplifies the stand taken by the new generations born in Israel to cut ties with a Diaspora which in the 1950s and 1960s was still conceptualized in Israel as a solely negative experience, destined to failure and to cause its members destruction, either by death or assimilation.

It was not only Raya who rejected the *Shoah*, with its individual and collective horrors: Raya embodied the Israeli ethos towards this issue of her times, as it developed in the early decades of statehood. As the parliamentary debates on the establishment of a day to commemorate the *Shoah* in Israel in 1953 testify, it was also the Israeli establishment which contributed in no small measure to reject the Jewish experience during the *Shoah*, and to legitimize the (in)famous parallel with the flock being led to slaughter (chapter 3, p. 83). This image

stood in stark contrast to the Israeli model of fighting Jew and seems to be well summarized in the famous poem *My little sister* by Itzhak Sadeh (the founder of the Palmach), which is quoted also in Zertal (*Des rescapés pour un État. La politique sioniste d'immigrations clandestine en Palestine, 1945-1948*, 2000). Here are summed up the main themes recurring in the encounter between *Shoah* survivors and Palestinian Jews immediately after 1945 (pp. 51-52), i.e. the stereotyped idea that highlights the masculine traits of the new Jew versus the feminine passivity of the entire Diaspora, which brought, as a result, to the gas chambers.

Chapter 5 addresses the event considered as a turning point in the relations between Israel and the *Shoah*, i.e., the Eichmann trial. The chapter is in fact entitled "The decisive years"; as it is widely known, it was in fact during and after the Eichmann trial that the *Shoah* survivors were finally allowed to emerge from the privacy of their trauma into the public sphere (p. 138). By broadly referring to the work of Anita Shapira, Bensoussan indicates in the Eichmann court hearings "the return of the Israeli identity to the Jewish people" (p. 138), the one event that questioned the ways in which Israeli society and institutions had accepted (or rather rejected) the survivors of the *Shoah* and dealt with their memories. This was the moment in which Israel as a society internalized a genocide which, from that moment onwards, was extended as a part and parcel of the Jewish Diaspora experience, regardless of where it had taken place, including Arab countries.

Another fundamental topic of this book, which has been already discussed quite extensively by historiography, is the so called 'calendar of memory', i.e. the sequence of national and religious holidays which connects the *Shoah* and uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto (*Yom ha-Shoah ve-hagevura*; the day of Shoah and heroism), the national memorial day (*Iom ha-Zicharon*) and Independence Day (*Yom Atzmaut*), three commemorations which are framed in a time the year celebrating the holiday of Jewish freedom *par excellance*, Passover. The 'calendar of memory' is discussed in chapter 3 (pp. 77-79), in chapter 4 (p. 113) and is briefly mentioned again in chapter 5 (p. 149), a spreading out which does not help the reader to navigate its way through this particular topic. A similar criticism can be raised for the way the Author addresses the debates and issues raised by the construction of *Yad Vashem* (chapter 3, pp. 80-81; chapter 4, p. 101, 113; chapter 6, pp. 153-154).

Finally, the educational and political use and misuse of the *Shoah* is the main theme addressed by Bensoussan in the last pages of chapter 5 and in chapter 6. Proceeding in chronological order, the Author deals here with the consequences of the 1967 Six Day War and of the 1973 *Yom Kippur* War on the construction (or strengthening) of the connection between the *Shoah* and the question of Israel's defence and security. As Bensoussan states, it was in fact the fear of a new *Shoah* that preceded the 1967 war to transform "the *Shoah*-Israel link into the relationship that we know today". Here comes the most innovative part of the book and some of its most interesting issues. The Author challenges here the new generations; his attempt is to raise awareness

of the dangers of the obsessive repetition and misuse of the *Shoah* for future political decisions, whether in the realm of international relations (security, borders etc.) or in that of domestic social politics (education, schooling, teaching of history etc.). Bensoussan does not present material previously unknown; it is enough to consider the works of Yael Zerubavel, or the movie by Eyal Sivan *Izkor! Les esclaves de la memoire*, produced already in 1991. Nor is novel - although still very effective - the use of the famous quote by Menachem Begin, when, upon launching the Peace in Galilee operation in June 1982, he stated: "the alternative is Treblinka; and we have decided that there won't be another Treblinka" (chapter 6, p. 171). The Author does not stop to this quote, but provides other examples of such a misuse of the *Shoah* in Israel and in the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Moshe Feiglin, for example, the leader of *Zo Artzeinu* (the movement *This is our land*) defining Itzak Rabin as "the Judenrat that pushes us on trains". And while some historiography (for one example Avraham Burg) has also pushed this argument further, underlining how verbal violence inevitably leads to political assassination, Bensoussan advocates against such a misuse the right to oblivion (chapter 6, p. 184), for example quoting the famous letter by Amos Oz published on *Yediot Ahronot* in June 1982 "Mr Begin, Adolf Hitler died 37 years ago. Whether you like it or not, this is a fact. Hitler is not hiding in Nabatye, nor in Sidon, nor in Beirut. He is really dead".

The last pages of this book deal with the over-exposition of Israelis to the memory of the *Shoah*, for example through the so called "marches of the living" – school trips of Israeli teen-agers to European former death camps – an experience which Bensoussan defines "an injection of paranoia". And it is in fact by looking at these school trips that one can understand how Israel – and its new generations most of all – are closing up in fear rather than opening up to an broader conception of their past and of the Jewish past, where human suffering is free to emerge out of ethnic or religious boundaries to more universal traits. This idea is complemented by final words of the book, an invitation to emerge out of the depths, out of the fears and traumas of the *Shoah*, to return to what once had been the pulsating souls of Judaism, to Zionism as an attempt to "liberate the Jewish condition from the curse of the people dwelling alone" (p. 192). As Hugo Bergmann had written in the 1920s "There have always been two tendencies confronting each other in Judaism. On the one hand, the tendency to close up, characterized by hatred for the foreigner and by the Amalek complex; this is expressed through a continuous repetition of the words 'Remember what they have done to you'. There exists however another Judaism (...) whose prayer can be summarised as follows: 'Allow me to forget Amalek'. This is a Judaism of love and forgiveness." (pp. 188-189).

Despite the fact that, as mentioned above, this book does not present major historiographical novel interpretations, it represents an important and welcome contribution to the bookshelves, indeed because of its being able to summarize in less than two hundred pages a complex, controversial and difficult history of

the relation between Israel and its most recent and terrible past. Even more so in the Italian case, where little is known – in terms of historical analysis – of this difficult relationship, especially from the perspective of Israel itself. The Italian edition does not present a reference list while it provides a useful and well-done glossary of foreign terms, useful for the non-specialized reader.

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