

The Soviet and Hungarian Holocausts: A Comparative Essay

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Preface

Some years ago the author of this booklet was struck by the question why historiography had remained silent for such a very long time about the Nazi genocide in the Soviet Union. This question spawned a whole series of additional questions. How could the story of the Holocaust in Hungary be written if we were unfamiliar with the historical origins of the Nazi genocide in the Soviet Union and with the fatal events that preceded the “final solution” in Hungary? How could this fundamental chapter of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, in the era of State Socialism, go into oblivion? It became evident that the history of oblivion could only be understood within the context of global history, and this context is even more relevant to a better understanding of the history of the Holocaust.

It is a persistently recurring question: What happened to the memory of the Holocaust in the East and in the West? If there is something to forget or something to conceal, the Holocaust has its own “secret” history which is actually nothing else but the scandalous behavior of the Great Powers during the war vis-à-vis the Nazi genocide.

Political systems come and go but history remains with us. In the second half of the 1980s the history of the Nazi genocide was suddenly rediscovered both in our region and elsewhere. It became immediately apparent that there was a fight for the memory of the Holocaust. Expropriation of the memory progressed from oblivion and neglect to the justification of a dominant political system. This took place on several interlaced political, ideological-cultural and economic levels. Some interests sponsor the trivialization and bagatellization of the Holocaust ever since. Norman Finkelstein wrote a whole book on how the “Holocaust-memory” served American hegemony. In his monograph he also recalls how American foreign policy manipulated the memory of the Holocaust during the weeks preceding the bombings first in the Balkans, and then in Iraq.

Is the Oscar-winning trashy Spielberg movie, called *Schindler's List*, made for millions of dollars and earning a fortune, not an example of expropriation or monopolization of memory? With its sentimental story, the movie tells us nothing about the real causes of the Holocaust and of Nazism and its genocidal essence.

Tom Bower wrote a sizeable book about the gold originating from the Nazi genocide, being mostly the gold fillings that the Nazi executioners removed from the mouth of the Jews massacred in the gas chambers. What interests arranged for this gold to be kept in Swiss banks as an interest bearing capital and why it was in the 1990s that the business background of this transaction was revealed? It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union that such publicity could be given to the naked disclosure of the banking rivalries and power brokering, covered for decades by the veil of secrecy.¹

After the change in the regimes and after decades of Soviet secrecy, both Russia and Eastern Europe had to pay off a large debt. Yet, the “rediscovery” of the topic was channeled into a bellicose environment by the above mentioned expropriation and by the challenges of the new anti-Semitism. It was precisely in our region, in Eastern Europe, that to a large degree, historiography became the handmaiden of politics.

In contrast to the Western silence, in the Soviet Union it was the domestic and international political and/or power factors, rather than banking and financial factors, that caused the history of the Holocaust to remain without serious and methodical study. Even today there are Hungarian Holocaust studies that do not dignify the events in the Soviet Union with a single chapter although a separate chapter is devoted to such events in Denmark.*

If we wish to stay away from the special interests of the various political circles we must put the “global history” of the Holocaust into the center of our discussion and this must include the history of the later reception of the genocide. In order to create the appropriate historical context in the exposition of our subject, we were forced to make some shorter or longer side trips to make the essential historical comparisons. This short essay that I submit to the attention of the reader, is the first contribution in Hungary to the history of the genocide in the Soviet Union which is still unknown, or little known to Hungarian and Russian readers alike. I can only hope that some from the new generation of Hungarian historians will consider it important enough to work on a serious historical study of the subject and to carry on a project, which I initiated with my work. My activities would not have been possible without the support of the Moscow Holocaust

* See László Karsai, *A holokauszt* (Budapest, Pannonica, 2001). This work relies a great deal on Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1961).

Center. I am greatly indebted to Ilya Altman and his associates at the center. Needless to say, all errors in this book are the sole responsibility of the author.

Budapest, April, 2004.

Tamás Krausz

From the Causes to the Consequences

In order to clarify our methodology and to make our study more correct theoretically we must sketch those profound and distant historical causes that made the Nazi genocide possible. Just as the history of the Hungarian Holocaust can not and must not be separated from the full history of the genocide, the complete history of the practical implementation of the Holocaust cannot be separated from the tangled chain of causes that together made the destruction of six million Jews possible.

Putting it differently, it is worthwhile to reconsider the historical precedents that led to the genocide because it is the essence of complete manifestation and also the principal direction of historical investigation to determine the differentiated weight of the causes. We will discuss the immediate political reasons coming to maturity at the end of the 1930s in their proper place, in the chapter dealing with the immediate precursors to the Holocaust. It must be pointed out, however, that the events did not appear with a linear consistency and that we can speak only about a convergence of various trends originating from widely varying sources and from different periods. New events were superimposed upon centuries-old processes so that qualitatively new developments might result.

It is a platitude to say that the history of the Holocaust was deeply embedded in the history of Europe yet it would be a mistake if we were to look at the history of this unprecedented catastrophe as the realization of blind necessity. This problem is well illustrated by the regrettably rich history of anti-Jewish pogroms that became a fixed Christian European tradition because those incidents never lacked a facultative religious support in the form of anti-Judaism. In the center of religious anti-Semitism there was always the indictment of “Christ killing” that was a handy excuse for justifying of the pogroms. But the Holocaust was not a pogrom and not a religious manifestation but a knowing, willful and systematic genocide, never before seen in history, designed for the complete physical elimination of an entire people.

Lack of space forces us to ignore the millennial history of anti-Semitism but we must realize that anti-Semitism can look back on a centuries-old rich past. A few

centuries ago the modern bourgeois developments, originating from the womb of the feudal society, modified the traditional anti-Semitism. It is well known that in the sixteenth century, in Europe, the Jewish Diaspora could adapt to the structure of European society only by developing its own specific social structure. In many countries the Jews performed tasks that were alien to the system and that were offensive to the social groups and institutions derived from feudalism. The nobility and the Catholic and Protestant Churches saw strong economic and cultural competition in the Jewish social groups, particularly in the economic and commercial arenas. Since anti-Semitic ordinances, laws and practice forbade Jews to engage in any other activities, these were the only areas where the Jews could become part of European society.

David Kertzer in his book, *The Popes Against the Jews. The Role of the Vatican in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*² shows the role of the Vatican in the history of modern anti-Semitism in general and in connection with Nazism in particular. The historical tradition established by the Roman Catholic Church came to life again in the twentieth century including identification by a yellow ribbon or star, accusations of ritual killings, the lootings and the pogroms. Everything that the Nazis could later use as historical material, was conceptually already well known to a significant percentage of the European population and was not only spiritually accepted as the teaching of the church but was made the guiding principle of daily activities relative to the Jews. These concepts included acceptance of Jews being Christ-killers, rotten, selfish, parasitic, stinking, bloodsucking, etc.

It is well-known that under the auspices of anti-Semitism Jews were excluded from public service and even from teaching Christian children. The official ideology of the church stated that any contact with Jews was polluting the greater society and constituted an eternal source of peril for Christians. The Nazis left no doubt that the well-spring of their actions were inseparable from “mystical-religious interpretations.” Dieter Wisliceny, one of Eichmann’s assistants spoke of this in a deposition made in 1946. Analyzing the methods and forms of ecclesiastic exclusion Kertzer³ concludes that the globalization of anti-Semitism, on the basis of economic interests, came about in the great European empires, Habsburg, France, Spain, primarily on the instigation by the Vatican. The Russian Empire was somewhat “lagging” in this area, because anti-

Semitism came later to Russia. Even there, however, it came with the active participation of the Russian Orthodox Church. This process can not be separated from the significant expulsion of Jews from western Europe which led to massive settlements of Jews in eastern Europe. During the nineteenth century, these settlements were located on the territories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and in Russia. It is in this context that tsarist Russia caught up with and, ironically, even surpassed Europe in anti-Semitism and nationalism.

In the formulation of the anti-Semite myth the meeting of the above cited medieval anti-Judaism with the modern capitalist society and market conditions proved to be of great importance. By the twentieth century there was a religious and/or mythical concept of Jewry that suggested an economically, culturally and socially homogenous social group. In fact the social, linguistic, political and cultural features of the European and other Jews were no less differentiated than the society into which they endeavored to be integrated. The Jews did have some peculiarities that were not self-selected but were the result of historical forces. The Jews demonstrated markedly different social structures not only from country to country but frequently even from city to city. This naturally does not mean that the exclusion and the persecution over the centuries did not produce area-specific developmental traits in their social structure that could be detected in their receptiveness for economic or intellectual pursuits or in their acceptance of a social and productive status that the traditional Christian societies offered to them. The triumph of the bourgeoisie in Europe raised the illusion in the minds of millions of Jews that they could become totally integrated into European bourgeois society, particularly in the so-called advanced center.

When the privileges of the churches were attacked by the modern bourgeois state and modern bourgeois productivity came into conflict with the Roman Catholic Church the church reverted to its own reactionary past. It was in vain that bourgeois society, under the shadow of Napoleon's bayonets, granted legal equality to the Jews because in the conflict of interest groups, the Jews were made the scapegoat and they were also blamed for the fundamentally unjust and exploitative nature of the capitalist system. Thus in modern anti-Semitism a number of different strata of society coalesced, built on

each other and strengthened each other. There was religious, economic, political and racial anti-Semitism which, at times, were very difficult to distinguish from each other.

While the popes returned to the old, medieval form of discrimination and differentiation, anti-Semitism in the last third of the nineteenth century, in the era of the consolidation of the nation-states and nationalism in general, was forged into an ideology of the masses. Modern nationalism evolved after the 1870s when some nation-states were established and when around the national markets national economies emerged. This could be seen not only in the newly created nation-states such as Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Norway or Albania, but pertained almost equally well to the multinational Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and to the tsarist Empire. According to Eric Hobsbawm⁴ the flowering of European nationalism became unequivocal during the of capitalism when the consolidation of the national markets took place within the framework of the nation-state. Globalization was not yet a process but it was in the 1870s when the first global financial and economic crisis occurred that significantly modified economic and social conditions and promoted nationalist thinking and various forms of exclusion. Consequently national interest became synonymous with the interest of the state and government. The national tongue became a vehicle of nationalist ideology.

The ruling elites and the governments representing them did not find any other intellectual and/or ideological bonding agent besides nationalism. They used it to mobilize the majority of the population emotionally and they also used it to coerce the working classes into obedience. When the nation was established in an economic sense around the national market it was then that the linguistic and/or ethnic definition of the country was solidified, but this also meant the exclusion of large segments of the population. The world was divided between “us and them,” depending on the momentary and rapidly changing requirements of the capital and labor markets.

During the crisis era the middle classes were variously concerned about the “business.” The owners of small shops, small capital, and small enterprises rightly feared for their position, which were challenged by heavy industry and the new capitalist culture. In protest, they mobilized under the banners of nationalism, not for the last time. This was less true for the working classes although even there we find instances when they were concerned about the security of their workplace on an ethnic basis. Suffice it to

say that it was at this time in Hungary the “alien,” the German, Czech, Slovak and Jewish elements became dominant among the skilled workers. But in general among the workers the Social Democrats blocked the spread of nationalistic exclusionary demands. It was not an accident that the powers in being tried to set up the dominant nationalism in opposition to the “cosmopolitan” workers’ movements. In some countries, particularly in Germany, these endeavors tried to curb the socialist increasing strength in the Reichstag.

At the same time, in Russia, when viewed from the perspective of the Holocaust, the Pale of Settlement was practically an enormous ghetto in the broad western segment of the empire. The tsarist authorities permitted only those Jews or Jewish groups to leave the area who were needed in some other part of the empire as physicians, lawyers or economists. As a matter of fact, the officially sanctioned Jew beatings—the pogroms—became incorporated into the post-1881 Russian anti-Semitic traditions, reaching their peak in 1918–1920, during the Civil War.

Modern anti-Semitism openly attached social and economic elements to religious themes. At the turn of the twentieth century there was a generally favorable environment for the growth of new populist ideologies. Anti-Semitism itself was a multi-layered ideology. Very different types of anti-Semitic considerations and emotions were intermingled in the people’s mind over the years. There was religious anti-Semitism, economic and political anti-Semitism, “everyday anti-Semitism,” referred to in Russia as *bitovoi antisemitizm* and based on popular beliefs and primitive prejudices embedded in the popular culture. Lastly, there was biological and racial anti-Semitism. It is a related and important circumstance that when the German variety of fascism, Nazism, initiated its anti-Semitic campaign, the deeply ingrained anti-Semitism of the clergy assisted the Nazis in gaining the support of the population. This also explains why the churches reacted so very sluggishly to the increasing horrors.⁵

At the same time it would be difficult to underestimate the importance of the “irrational” move that occurred at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries which coincided with the spread of colonialism and nationalism. Already well-known in Europe were the racial theories that attempted to undermine the unshakable confidence of the political and intellectual left in reason and science, i.e. in the values of the Enlightenment. It can also be stated that by the end of World War I the technical

and/or ideological scientific tools that were prerequisites for the implementation of the Holocaust, poison gas and machine-guns, became factors in the chain of causation. Paired with a romantic disposition, Nietzsche's will to power opened the way philosophically to a unique interpretation of social Darwinism. According to Hobsbawm this was done much less deterministically than seen by Georg Lukács in *Az Ész trónfosztása* [The Dethronement of Reason], as it was "a discourse conducted in the language of 'natural selection,' in this instance selection destined to produce a new race of 'superman' who will dominate human inferiors as man in nature dominates and exploits brute creation. And the links between biology and ideology are indeed particularly evident in the interplay between 'eugenics' and the new science of 'genetics,' which virtually came into existence around 1900...." The German bourgeoisie was overwhelmed by political ambitions and these ambitions, just like eugenics, readily merged into the fascist and racist pseudo-science that under Hitler turned into systematic genocide.⁶

Nation-state and nationalism. As stated earlier, in the development of anti-Semitism modern capitalism contributed two significant processes during the last third of the nineteenth century: the nation-state and the first global economic crisis in 1873. A linkage developed between the globalization of nationalism and the global crisis and they entered the stage of history as mutually supportive factors. Modern nationalism became a factor in the years after 1870 with the formation of new nation-states in Europe. Even in the Russian Empire the unified national market came to the fore and in so doing became the national economy that in the theoretical sense of the term made the nation a nation.

Nationalism became ideologically a secular religion that embraced not only anti-Semitism but also Zionism, the ideology of creating a Jewish state. Zionism actually arose as a reaction to anti-Semitism. At the beginning Zionism was the response of a very small group of the Jewish diaspora against the exclusion of the Jews from the host nation. Hobsbawm compared Zionism to the nationalism of small ethnic groups as the Irish, Basque, Flemish, Macedonian or Baltic. He also compared it to the nationalism of the large countries in so far as formulating its goals by linking linguistic, religious and territorial demands was concerned. The distinction was that the Jews were living in diaspora and thus lacked any form of "national" territory. Instead of the Yiddish spoken

by several million Jews, Zionism proclaimed the “dead” Hebrew language as the principal tool in assisting the establishment of a Jewish state. The historicizing and/or romanticizing orientation is also very reminiscent of the operation of other forms of nationalism. This gives us an outline of a second well-known development: while the nationalist middle classes served as the base of the right-wing parties, the Jewish intellectuals and workers became oriented toward liberalism and the left, i.e. toward the Social Democrats who never engaged in any form of ethnic exclusion. Zionism became left-wing, particularly in Russia, to such a degree that Hobsbawm rightfully concluded that Zionism was not founded by Theodore Herzl but by Russian Zionist workers’ parties. The great wave of emigrations around the turn of the twentieth century naturally affected the Jews, again particularly in Russia. Few of the Jews, however, moved to Ottoman-held Palestine. Most of them chose the safe harbor of the United States of America where the Jews were instrumental in the establishment of labor unions and minor left-wing political parties.

The anti-Semitism arising after the 1917 Russian revolution was a typical counterrevolutionary manifestation that led to instances of genocide. There was little security and chance for the survival of Russian Jews outside of a Soviet-type of state and this explains why so many Russian citizens of Jewish extraction went on to support the goals and organizations of the revolution. Naturally, as the most “civic-minded” nationality, the Jews were a major asset for the Soviet authorities. Most were educated and were available for work at various levels of state organizations. The price of Jewish assimilation in Soviet Russia was the abandonment of the original culture and religion. Many were ready to make these concessions without really looking at the potential consequences of their decision. They were happy to have survived the war and revolutions, and looked forward to having a decent life.

The anti-Semitism of the Soviet era had strong historical roots but it was new not based on traditional economic or workplace competition but on a status conflict for social and/or official positions and struggle among the intelligentsia and the apparatchiki. We are dealing with the Soviet “apparatus anti-Semitism” that will be discussed further below.

The political right wing and nationalism. It was after the crisis of the late 1870s that tensions arose between certain social groups in Europe. With good reason the small enterprises, small capital, small stores and the middle classes were concerned about their places of business and about their social position. Significant masses of these groups gathered around the flags of right-wing nationalism while the left wing endeavored to defend itself by placing into the forefront the “national idea” within the framework of republican ideals and the social issues. The first victims of right-wing exclusionary activities were the Jews. A milestone document reflecting the temper of the period was the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that details the “world-conspiracy of the Jews.” Even Tsar Nicholas II knew that it was a crude forgery and he noted in his diary that a “good cause” namely anti-Semitism should not be dirtied by ignoble means. In spite of this there are still many today who speak about the *Protocols* as a genuine document. This is precisely what Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi ideologue did. Kertzer notes in his book, that In both Italy and France, the best-known disseminators of the forgery were the Catholic priests.”⁷ This is alleged even though the number of Jews in these countries and England never reached 1percent of the population. In Italy it was less than 0.1percent. And the Popes were silent while anti-Semitism was rampant.

Anti-Semitic parties were established and there were even medieval type ritual murder indictments at the end of the nineteenth century, usually inspired by the church. The last ritual murder indictments came to court, for example the Tiszaeszlár case in 1883 in Hungary, and the 1911 trial in Kiev. This was the conclusive proof that backward-looking, pre-modern anti-Judaism found new life when it met the modern anti-Semitic mass movements. The most significant organizational and political form of this melding of the old and the new could be seen in the Russian “civilian” movement of the so-called Black Hundreds that became the organizational and political moving force behind the anti-Semitic pogroms at the end of nineteenth century, always directly supported by the Russian Orthodox Church. In Russia the image of the Jew was the “foreigner,” the representative of the rotten West, the ruthless usurer. This was so in spite of the fact that of the about five million Jews in Russia, the absolute majority, were poor people by any standard. At the time of the Russian Civil War, well before the Holocaust, much of the anti-Semitic genocide was performed here by the Ukrainian

nationalist detachments of Simon Petliura and by General Anton Denikin's White guard units, the so-called Volunteer Army. The latter are alleged to have murdered as many as two hundred thousand Jews in the southern parts of Russia under the slogan of "Smite the Jew and Save Russia" identifying the Jews with the revolutionaries.

The anti-Semitic attack against the Social-Democratic and revolutionary-Communist movements took hold all over Europe following the 1917 Russian revolution. These attacks, tightly linking Judaism and communism, were directly encouraged by the church. The solid backing of the right wing was provided everywhere by the churches. social-democracy and communism were a provocative force in the West as far as the churches were concerned and the churches lost some ground in this opposition. It was this loathing of Social Democrats and later Communists that makes it comprehensible why the Vatican tolerated the development of Italian Fascism and of German Nazism and why it squandered away the opportunities to stop the evolution of Nazi genocides when it would have been still possible.

The Vatican even supported the Hungarian anti-Semitic legislation and the anti-Semitic attitude of the Hungarian Catholic Church. Why should we be surprised by the shameful behavior of the Roman Catholic Church in Nazi-occupied Soviet Lithuania or of the higher circles of the Hungarian Catholic Church at the time of the Holocaust? (The fact that some individual priests saved Jewish lives does not alter to the above.) Catholic and Protestant religious traditions and modern church policies were not among the principal supporters of the Nazi racial theories, Nazi mass-murders and the Holocaust but they were responsible for creating the conditions for them. For example in 1938 on the pages of *Civiltà Cattolica*, Father Mario Barbera explained the enactment of the first anti-Semitic legislation in Hungary as follows, "The Jews have become the masters of Hungary in every way,...Their nation's instinctive and insufferable solidarity is enough for them to make common cause in carrying out their messianic aim of world domination."⁸ Just three years later the Catholic Prime Minister Pál Teleki wrote the preamble to the Third Anti-Semitic Law that was racialist and prepared the legal path to the Holocaust. This fact demonstrates that there were no clear distinctions between religious anti-Semitism and racialist anti-Semitism and that the two could not be clearly separated.

Weimarization. The old liberal world order irretrievably collapsed at the outbreak of World War I. The international system emerging after the war was built on the nationalistic confrontation of the countries, both in Europe and outside Europe as well. In Germany, burdened by revolutions, liberal democracy did not hold much promise—the “Special Path of Germany” and its causes are beyond the scope of this work. In any case, a stable political system could not take root in the shadow of revolutions and on the ruins of liberalism. Liberalism had already been undermined throughout Europe by nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century. It accepted the basic nationalist message according to the dominant emotional precepts of the times. Hobsbawm noted that even Max Weber, the liberal sociologist, fell into the trap of anti-Polish nationalism, to the point that he joined the Pan-German League.⁹ The compromise between liberalism and state-sponsored nationalism led to severe conflicts. The rising new populism, taking advantage of the opportunities granted by a parliamentary framework, wished to recruit people into its camp by proclaiming overt anti-Semitism.

In Weimar Germany the bourgeoisie was unable to maintain its power by traditional, democratic means. Under a socio-economic crisis and international isolation the new mass-movement of the extreme right arose promising stability vis-à-vis the workers’ movements and internal challenges. It promised stability for both large and small capital, for the ex military officers yearning for past glories, for the officials and even for the workers and thus managed to unite the entire right for the fateful elections.¹⁰ In large areas of interwar Eastern Europe, among the power elites and among the middle class, if there was one, the ideological and political consensus in anti-Semitism became the cohesive spiritual force of the nation-states. Following Germany’s model this culminated in Hungary in the anti-Jewish legislation that Prime Minister Teleki considered to be a peculiarly Hungarian achievement. All this pointed to anti-Semitism in its crudest forms in law, politics, socially and economically.

The period fraught with economic and political crises created an ideological and psychological situation amenable to romantic anti-capitalism along with belligerent anti-communism with anti-Semitism as a very strong emotion standing squarely in the center. A peculiar form of anti-Semitism found fertile soil in the Weimar Republic, where Jews were held up to racial prejudices as though they were physically and mentally some

aberrant human race. This new wave of anti-Semitism went well beyond Europe and invaded the United States as well and weakened the vigilance of the anti-Nazi powers who consequently did not wish to confront at home this “spontaneously” spreading filthy flood.¹¹

Under the pressure of the anti-war sentiment of the masses, the Great Powers swept the entire matter of the spreading Hitlerite anti-Semitism under the rug. The international background for this was the so-called appeasement policy of the 1930s that did not or could not recognize the deadly peril that Nazism represented. This was partly so, because amassing capital and economic interests were more important than the “uneconomical” international anti-Nazi cooperation. It was made clear by the Western European policies during the Spanish Civil War. Germany’s expansion toward the East was tolerated by the West and was formally laid down in the 1938 Munich Pact. The leaders of the Soviet Union were also taken in and they started on the path toward an understanding with the Nazis culminating in the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939. All this resulted in the Soviet citizens, including the Jews, being lulled into a fall sense of security just prior to the outbreak of the war.

This then leads us to the phase of history immediately preceding the Holocaust. Prior to its discussion we must report some of the inevitable and fundamental issues in the evolution of Russian Jewry.

The Soviet Heritage of the 1920s and 1930s

According to the 1897 census one half of all the Jews in the world lived in the Russian Empire. Their number came to 5,215,800, representing 3.94 percent of the total population. Their majority lived in the special Jewish communities in the Pale of Settlement. Many of them were engaged in local commerce and some other bourgeois occupations. At the turn of the twentieth century of the total of 618,926 persons engaged in commerce in the tsarist system 450,427, i.e. 72.8 percent were Jews. The number of Jews engaged in commerce represented only 10 percent of the total Jewish population. In comparison with the other nationalities, the Jews were more bourgeois in character. Compared to the other nationalities, among the urban Jews, there was an overrepresentation of workers. In southern Russia 25 percent of the work force was Jewish but the number of Jews among the employed, the intellectuals and the small artisans and shopkeepers was also significant. Warsaw, Vilnius, Minsk, Kiev and Odessa were the “Jewish” cities and in these the percentage of the Jewish population was only slightly lower than in Budapest where 20 to 25 percent of the population was Jewish in 1910. The large majority of the urban Jews were laborers at a low level of income. Many of them lived in hopeless penury. Between 1881 and 1914 1.7 million Jews left Russia. Eighty-five percent emigrated to the United States. It is noteworthy that at that time there was a high degree of literacy among the Jewish females and that a huge majority of the Jewish males was literate by the turn of the century. Their level of culture and interest in learning is shown by the fact that between 1860 and 1910 there were thirty-nine Jewish newspapers and periodicals of which twenty-one were published in St. Petersburg which was outside of the Pale.¹²

Among Jewish intellectuals there were major debates concerning assimilation. Just as in Western Europe there was a significant distinction between two fundamental attitudes, the “enlightened” or “assimilants” and the “traditionalists” i.e. Jews who favored religious and cultural separateness. The former did not necessarily wish to give up their Jewish identity and the latter, while orthodox in religion, did not necessarily support Zionism. The Jewish revolutionaries tended to participate in two major

organization. One was the General Jewish Workers Bund, established in 1897 that was the Social Democratic organization of the Jewish workers based on nationality. The other consisted of the Jewish intellectuals and a lesser number of workers who joined the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. They favored complete Russification and assimilation by which they meant socialist emancipation.

Demanding social activism, political freedom and freedom of movement presumed a radical revolutionary orientation. It is no accident that the Jewish intellectuals participated actively in the establishment of all kinds of political parties and organizations, mostly but not exclusively left-wing and liberal, during the period of the first Russian revolution of 1905. The exclusionary anti-Semitism supported by the autocracy and the church, the pogroms, the murders and looting by the ultra-rightist organizations known as the Black Hundreds, kept most Jews from joining the right wing. Between October 18 and 29, 1905, pogroms were reported in 660 Jewish communities and in cities with Jewish populations. According to the official reports there were 810 dead and 1,770 wounded. According to unofficial reports there were at least 3,500 dead and more than ten thousand wounded.

At the outbreak of World War I there were approximately five hundred thousand Jews in the army and many Jewish subjects in Russia initially represented a patriotic attitude and were “Devoted Sons of Greater Russia.” Yet, the majority increasingly turned against tsarism. The bloody history of the revolutions and of the Civil War decided the fate of the Jews in Russia. The counterrevolution, both in 1905 and after 1917, fought under the banner of anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism, for the “One and Indivisible Russia,” namely for the restoration of the old regime.

Under these conditions the Jews could hope only for the Soviet alternative. In this regard there was really no choice for them between the two embattled sides because the Whites considered them the cause of the fall of the antiquated system and of the old ruling classes. This was similar to what happened after 1919 in counterrevolutionary Hungary where the Jews and the Communists had to pay for the revolutions and for the dictated Peace Treaty of Trianon.

In 1918–19 a wave of pogroms swept across Russia that, up to that time, became the most significant massacre of Jews in history. According to some data, two hundred

thousand Jewish citizens were killed by various revolutionary and counterrevolutionary groups, particularly to the White guards and to the officers of General Denikin's Volunteer Army. There were allegedly also three hundred thousand wounded. Bandit elements under Hetman Nikolai Grigoriev and Petliurists fighting for the so-called Ukrainian People's Republic organized pogroms in the Ukraine. Of a total of 1,236 pogroms 493 incidents (40 percent) were attributed to these groups.¹³ The rest mostly to Denikin's army, which also expelled the Jewish officers still serving.

While this massacre does not compare with the 1.5 million Armenians who were murdered by the Turkish army and by Turkish volunteers in 1915, it should have made it clear that with World War I genocide was no longer a nightmarish phantasmagoria but a real possibility. Yet, even the Armenian genocide rapidly sank into memory's black hole.

The leaders of the Soviet Russian Republic initially viewed the new country built on the ruins of the tsarist empire as an alliance in which all people and nations were equal. All anti-Jewish legislation, going back for several decades, was rescinded during the February Revolution and the Jewish Pale of Settlement was abolished. The Soviet government endeavored to protect the extraterritorial Jews from the pogroms with laws and arms. At this time, herefore the idea of an independent Jewish state on Soviet territory never came up. Soviet power offered the historical opportunity for assimilation that most Jews viewed even before the October Revolution as the embodiment of true emancipation, Now they saw a chance for socialist equality in an approaching socialist world republic. From the first days of the revolution, political, administrative and later social laws, protected the Jews in Soviet Russia from the increasing waves of the White terror. At the beginning of the 1920s the Central Committee of the Communist Party had a "Jewish Section" and in the Commissariat for Nationality Affairs, under Joseph Stalin's leadership, there was a separate Jewish Commissariat that was engaged in improving the living conditions of persecuted Jewry.¹⁴

In a paper entitled "The Bund's Position in the Party," which Lenin wrote in November 1903, he expressed his firm belief that "the idea of a separate Jewish people is untenable scientifically and is reactionary so far as its political significance is concerned." He used the daily events of the Russian and European political life as the basis for his numerous arguments. According to Lenin the Zionists and Bundists, by

being opponents to assimilation, played into the hands of those extreme right-wing circles that excluded the Jewry, “created a Ghetto mood” and organized pogroms. The Jews should become emancipated where they lived. Agreeing with Kautsky, Lenin emphasized that, “We must support everything that aids in the elimination of the Jews’ separateness.” Lenin never deviated from this view.

Lenin valued very highly the contributions of the Jews to Russian culture and to the international revolutionary movement. After the revolutions he wrote that,

tsarism hated the Jews above all. Partly because a significantly high percentage of the leaders of the revolutionary movement came from the Jewish community, well in excess of the percentage of the Jewish population. Also, additionally, because compared to other nationalities, a high percentage of the leaders of the internationalist movement came from them. Furthermore, tsarism could exploit the most repellent prejudices of the most ignorant layers of the population against them. This was the source of the pogroms that were in most cases supported by the police, if not actually led by them. The dreadful massacre of peaceful Jews, women and children invoked the disgust of the truly democratic elements of the entire civilized world against the bloody tsarism.¹⁵

After 1917 the literate elements among Jewry became even more valuable and assisted the new powers at the time of the old state employees’ anti-Soviet sabotage. They could replace the old bureaucracy in the various offices and organizations of the Soviet republic. Lenin made positive statements about the Jews at other times as well. The writer Maxim Gorky mentions in one of his writings that Lenin spoke of the intellectual sensitivity of the Jews in which he saw the workings of history.

Naturally the Bolshevik leaders encountered the so-called Jewish question on numerous occasions on the level of political tactics. During the Civil War, when in the discourse of the Whites, pogrom-propaganda reigned. The propaganda was followed by pogrom-activities. These activities had an undesirable impact on the Red Army. This problem is reflected in a note sent by Commissar of War Leon Trotsky to the April 1919 session of the Political Committee of the Bolshevik Party. According to this report,

“Latvians and Jews constitute a significant part of the workers in the Cheka in the frontlines, and in the executive committees along the front and behind the lines. The percentage is not as high at the front as it is in the rear and therefore there is a strong chauvinistic whisper campaign among the Red Army troops who seem to be responsive to the agitation”¹⁶ One year later, during the Russian-Polish war some units of the First Cavalry Army, under Semen Budenny’s command, conducted pogroms. Several issues of the *Red Horseman*, the newspaper of the army, analyzed the events and concluded in the October 1920 issue that it was the tsarist Black Hundred “past” and the White guard “present,” together with misery and ignorance that led to the cruelties and robberies. It saw the solution in political enlightenment that consisted of explaining to the troops that the pogroms’ victims were not the Jewish bourgeoisie but the poor people who “are our brothers in the fight for the Soviet republic” and that anti-Semitism was the daily bread of the pogroms, of the White dictatorship of the military officers and of tsarism. The writers of the article argued that the rich Jews and the rich Russians, together with the German and French imperialists, regardless of national and/or ethnic membership, were united in wishing to reestablish capitalism, while the workers, employees and the Jewish poor, who made up the overwhelming majority of the Jews, together with the Russian and Ukrainian poor represented the social buttresses of the revolution. “We soldiers must be clear about this. We must not make any distinction between Jew and Russian. We will not spare the rich wherever they belong but we welcome the poor into our ranks.” In contrast to the White guard slogan, “Smite the Jew, Save Russia,” the October-November issue contained the following slogans, “The Workers of Every Nation Are Our Brothers” and, echoing Ferdinand LaSalle, “Anti-Semitism is the Religion of Fools.” The latter was printed in the October 5 issue.

On the basis of this ideology of class struggle, after 1917 the Jews as Soviet citizens were granted the opportunity for full assimilation and integration which was readily accepted by the majority. In all walks of life, the revolution opened the door to social advancement and to the hitherto unknown possibilities of upward mobility to the Jews and to all other nationalities of the new country. Yet those who considered the preservation of the Jewish religious traditions and the nurturing of the peculiarly Jewish culture as the central theme of their existence became, by the end of the 1920s, the

victims of the machinery of political oppression. At the same time the following outstanding Soviet poets, writers, musicians and theater people participated in the establishment of the new Soviet culture and, simultaneously, in the preservation of the Jewish cultural traditions: Isaac Babel, Ilya Ehrenburg, Itzig Feffer, Peretz Markisch, Lev Kvitko, Sergei Eisenstein, David Oistrakh, Boris Kogan, Isaak Dunayevsky, Solomon Mikhoels, Aleksandr Granovsky, and others.

Whether the Jews suffered more than the other nationalities from religious persecution, from the suppression of nationalist and/or separatist tendencies, and from the extirpation of the specifically Jewish culture, cannot be documented statistically. No anti-Semitic tendency can be seen in the Great Terror of the Stalin era. In the mid-1930s about 1 percent of the prisoners were Jewish while their percentage in the total population was 1.8 percent. In 1941, within the borders of the enlarged Soviet Union, when the number of Jews increased by the addition of Polish and Lithuanian Jews and refugee Jews who did not wish to become Soviet subjects, the total number of Jews in the Gulag concentration camps was 31,132.¹⁷

It was at the beginning of the 1920s that an experiment was attempted by the Soviet government to put an end to the ancient and enforced traditions of separating the Jews from the land. Initially even Stalin felt that this problem could be resolved in the Crimean Peninsula where both the soil and the climate were favorable. After the famine of 1921–22 and with the financial assistance of the American Joint Organization, a start was made in 1923 to settle Jewish agricultural laborers on the peninsula. The majority of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Republic's leadership was Tatar which supported the strong local resistance vis-à-vis the resettlement of the Jews. Originally, Iury Larin, the Jewish Communist Party official, a former Menshevik and, in the 1920s power struggles, a supporter of Stalin, recommended that the northern Crimea be made into a Jewish national area, a Jewish national home. In spite of Stalin's support this did not prove to be a feasible plan even though Mikhail Kalinin, Viacheslav Molotov and other leaders also supported the idea of settling a hundred thousand Jewish families in that area. This would have increased Moscow's international prestige and it was for this reason that Georgy Chicherin, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, also supported it. At this time approximately forty thousand Jewish citizens lived in the Crimea where the total

population was about one million. The local population was 44 percent Russian, 37 percent Tatar and 10 percent German and this, in the end, sealed the fate of the proposal. Claims that the Jewish settlers were given free land by the Soviet government caused a strong flare-up of anti-Semitism in the mid-1920s. These events made the influential poet Vladimir Mayakovsky furious and he came out very strongly in opposition to it. In connection with the growing anti-Semitism of the old Russian intellectuals, Kalinin commented that, “during the revolution they behaved in a cowardly manner while the Jewish intellectuals fought for the revolution and that now they were silent....” Eventually the Soviet government had to yield in the Crimea affair mainly because the flare-up in anti-Semitism. It was less known at the time that the Jews established agricultural cooperatives in a number of areas. Several hundred members of these cooperatives emigrated to Palestine where they established the foundations of the kibbutz movement.

Recently published, domestic policy documents, marked “most secret” reflect the realities of the 1920s. They served to advise the highest leadership of the Soviet Union, Stalin and his staff about the mood of the various nationality groups, their political stand, the anti-Semitic atrocities and systematically discussed the nature of these manifestations and their causes.

In connection with the Crimean settlements a very complicated problem arose from the perspective of maintaining authority. The Soviet leaders with Stalin at their head were trying at that time to firm up the Soviet power structure by incorporating the local nationality cadres and thereby creating an indigeneous base for the Party and for the Party apparatus (korenizatsia). Tensions arose between the local cadres and Moscow center, and consequently the Jewish Party functionaries came to be identified as extensions of the central bureaucracy.

While the Soviet leadership, particularly in the largest republic, the Ukraine, emphasized the necessity of gaining the support of the local majority nationality workers and peasants, there was an NKVD report in June 1926 that dealt specifically with anti-Semitism among the intelligentsia. It stated that, “Even in theatrical circles anti-Semitic literature like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was distributed at the Bolshoi Theater.” Other than in the NKVD documents, extension and deepening of anti-Semitism raised by

the Crimean events can be seen as being reflected in the November 2, 1926, document containing the resolution of the Executive Committee of Komsomol Central Committee concerning the fight against anti-Semitism. It dealt with the anti-Semitism that could be observed in various strata of young people.¹⁸ The rampant anti-Semitism was explained in various ways by the politicians.

In 1926 the Ukrainian Party Leader and Stalin's close associate, Lazar Kaganovich, himself of Jewish extraction, emphasized the background of Stalin's korenizatsia policy and said that on the level of the republics, in the colleges of the commissariats, 38 percent were Ukrainian, 35 percent Russia and 18 percent were of Jewish nationality. In Belorussia, in the supreme legislative body 20.7 percent were Jewish nationals. (Unlike in Hungary, in Russia the Jews were considered a nationality.) All this was the result of a spontaneous and objective process. During the time that the Soviet leaders built up their power they could select only from those literate cadres that were available. There was an urgent need for a new apparatus to replace the obstructive officials who did not wish to serve the new regime. According to the sources the ratio of Jewish nationality employees was 21 percent in the colleges of the commissariats on federal level. According to a count of the Party membership conducted in 1922 there were 270,000 members of whom 20,000, or 5.2 percent were of Jewish nationality. Resistance to the Soviet state assumed the form of being anti-apparatus and was also anti-Semitic.

Something of the bourgeois tradition was preserved in the social structure where it had settled well before the revolution. As the result of intensive urbanization in Minsk almost a third of the population was of Jewish nationality. After Poland and the Baltic countries became independent the number of Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality decreased to slightly more than half the previous numbers. According to 1926 data the number of Jews was 2,672,000 representing the seventh largest nationality group. The Jews represented 2 percent of the total population and a very large proportion of them were urban dwellers constituting 8.2 percent of the total Soviet urban population. In St. Petersburg at the beginning of the twentieth century about 35 percent of the Jewish population worked in industry, 6.4 percent were in household employment or worked as day laborers. The Jewish industrial workers were employed mainly by small industrial

concerns and crafts but their political organization was always strong. In 1926, 14.8 percent of the Jews were workers, 23.4 percent were employees or intellectuals and more than 9 percent were unemployed. It was Larin who identified the relationship between the preservation of anti-Semitism on Soviet soil and problems of the social structure. At the end of the 1920s, 8 percent of Soviet employees were Jews and 30 percent of the able-bodied Jews were working in governmental or social institutions. In the institutions of higher education in the Russian Federation Jewish students represented 11.3 percent in education, 14.7 percent in engineering, 15.3 percent in medicine and 21.3 percent in theater and arts. These numbers were not subject to regulation. Yet it was not only the followers of the system but also the avowed enemies of the system, the “new bourgeoisie” spawned by the New Economic Policy (NEP) that had a high Jewish national component. On the personal identity cards, introduced in 1933, the nationality of all Soviet citizens was stated, thus making it easy for the Nazis, later on, to identify the Jews. By this classification the ratio of Jews in the Ukraine was 29.1 percent. At the same time in Belorussia 72 percent of the rural Jews, having lost their traditional economic base, were hopelessly unemployed. Jewish poverty contributed to an increase in crime and that became a factor in the anti-Semitism.¹⁹ In spite of the Jews having such a complex social situation, the anti-Semites depicted them as an essentially homogenous group.

The documents referred to above situation kept Stalin and the Soviet leadership fully apprised of the rise of the new “Soviet anti-Semitism.” It is very interesting that immediately after the death of Lenin which triggered “hysteria, crying and despair,” the organizations charged with “watchfulness” reported the occurrence of anti-Semitic activities in various locations. The pertinent secret reports, signed by the leaders of state security, the GPU, reflected on these, saying, “It was among the rural and less self-aware workers that unhealthy anti-Semitic sentiments were voiced in addition to the regrets felt on Comrade Lenin’s death.” These sentiments were expressed by sayings such as: “After Lenin’s death the Jews took over the power.” These documents indicate that Soviet domestic authorities and Soviet leaders were firmly opposed to anti-Semitism and that the ordinances of the Soviet government were not shaped by any anti-Semitic sentiments. They, however, also show that anti-Semitic manifestations occurring among the Party

rank and file. For example, it was reported that in relation to Trotsky's opposition to Stalin, "The majority of the comments about Trotsky's opposition have anti-Semitic content."²⁰

Study of these documents also reveals that Zionism and Jewish culture were repressed, oppressed and then administratively disposed of but that this process was completely apart from the so-called Jewish question. The secret reports discuss the actions against Zionism under the heading of "nationalist movements" or "anti-revolutionary organizations." The counterrevolutionary monarchist organizations are discussed under the same rubric. The repression of Jewish religious traditions was parallel to the administrative repression of the Eastern Orthodox or Islamic religions, albeit at a much lower level.

When we try to explain the liquidation of Zionist and other Jewish religious traditions at the end of the 1920s, at the time when other religious and civil organizations were liquidated, we must realize that by that time the masses of urbanized Jews had separated to a very large degree from their religious roots. Zionism and religion affected far fewer people, not because of political oppression but because of societal transformations. In the 1930s the influence of the Eastern Orthodox Church as well as other religious influences had significantly declined partly because of industrialization, urbanization and the masses of rural workers streaming into the cities. It was during the time that the Stalinist dictatorship was consolidated that the traditional directions of Jewish religious and cultural life were completely liquidated. The administrative liquidation of the Poale Zion, the Zionist organization, took place in 1928 along with the elimination of all other autonomous social organizations. The synagogues were closed at the same time as the Eastern Orthodox churches. Of the 447 pre-1914 synagogues 257 remained by 1933 and in Odessa 47 of 48 synagogues were closed down.

By the middle of the 1920s there was only one really legal, free Jewish organization. It was the *Hahaluts*, the organization of the young Jewish oktobrists and pioneers. The Zionist organizations, like the VDOIRA in Leningrad, that prepared people for emigration to Palestine, were already illegal. The internal affairs people boasted at the beginning of 1925 that they had "conducted a campaign against all the Zionist organizations in Leningrad resulting in forty people being sentenced to

administrative exile". The reports spoke of active Zionists even in Saratov.²¹ Felix Dzerzhinsky, the head of the GPU, not much before his death in 1926, strongly opposed the persecution of the Zionists. He stated in March 1924 that the Zionists were helpful to Soviet Russia in Poland and in the United States and attempts should be made that their settlement country of choice be the Soviet Union rather than Palestine. He recommended that, "We make no enemies of them" and that they are allowed to function freely on condition that they "do not interfere with our policies." Consequently 152 Zionists were set free and allowed to depart for Palestine.²²

The same conflict took place within the ranks of Jewry just as it did, albeit differently, within the ranks of other nationality groups. One group, the dominant one, was attracted toward the communist, internationalist ideology the basis of which, even in the 1920s, was unambiguous social leveling. The Communists and the Zionists did not debate the alternative between socialism and capitalism but of their relationship to the state and within that the possibility or necessity of a Jewish state. The Zionists were also divided between right and left wings but when the right-wing Zionists were liquidated shortly thereafter, as we have seen, the same fate awaited all the left-wing Zionists, including even the socialist and communist Zionist groups.²³

It became increasingly apparent that the anti-Soviet organizations and protests in some strata of society were linked to the ideology of the counterrevolutionary organizations that sprung up at the time of the Civil War. Yet even in 1926 and 1928 in Dagestan and Uzbekistan Jewish pogroms were recorded where ritual murders were the basis for the anti-Semitic agitation.²⁴ In the anti-Soviet agitation it became popular in the first half of the 1920s to equate Jews with communism as a typical form of popular protest against the power structure and bureaucracy. In a September 1924 report we find, "In the Yelets settlement of Orlov Guberniya a hand-written proclamation, protesting against the demand for increased productivity quotas, was distributed. It stated, "Comrades, workers, if you wish to be free and equal and if all of you really want to own the factories and workshops while the land goes to the peasants, be prepared for a new, just revolution. Destroy the Jews and the lying Communists who fill their pockets at the price of our sweat. A publication of the true underground Party of the Communists." Similar anti-Semitic leaflets were found in the Odessa Guberniya which, citing the era of

the pogroms, used the old slogan of the counterrevolution, “Smite the Jews.” The documents reveal that the Soviet authorities encountered this manifestation of a concentrated form of popular anti-Semitism among the young peasants drafted into the Red Army. During 1924, in the 21st and 26th Divisions of the Siberian Military District, several anti-Soviet groups were uncovered by the internal security. Their leaders were “intellectuals and Kulak chiefs”. According to the “Mood Reports” a number of the peasant Red soldiers believed that, “the Kulaks were not exploiters but workers who got up at 3 AM.” “There were calls addressed to the Red soldiers to bash the Jews and the Communists.” “Members of the above groups were particularly active during the political hours and the central theme of their anti-Soviet propaganda was that in all areas ‘the violence of the Jews was evident.’ ”²⁵

In 1925 these activities increased. In the Chudnovo community of the Bergiansk District “drunken recruits dragged the Jewish recruits from their horse-drawn carriage shouting that ‘we will not let Jews ride in a carriage.’” In Liubar village recruits beat the Jews killing one of them. It also happened that Jewish stores were looted in the numerous communities in the Ukraine. In the Zhitomir District similar atrocities occurred in 1925 and some recruits yelled, “We will turn our bayonets against the Jews and Communists.” In the city of Bobrinets city, in Zhitomir District at one intersection anti-Semites shouted that, “We should cut the Jews’ earlocks off. If we would beat up just one, a whole movement would begin to beat all of them to death”.²⁶

It was thus that a few years after the revolution the “culture” of tsarism and counterrevolution returned, linked usually to some political event. Similarly to those following the Crimean settlement plans or the bellicose hysteria following the 1927 British-Soviet diplomatic break, anti-Semitic feelings again arose in certain districts. In addition to these activities the elections to the soviets gave an opportunity for the manifestation of a new type of political anti-Semitism. The February-March 1925 secret reports reveal that for instance in the Voitovka settlement of the Vinnitsa District the election campaigns were very clamorous. There was unrest and one peasant demanded at a meeting that the Jews be excluded from those eligible to vote. This protester justified his demand by referring to an anti-Semitic ordinance issued in 1919 by the erstwhile Denikinist and Petliurist regime, which excluded the Jews from political life.²⁷

Reports about anti-Semitic atrocities and activities came most frequently from the Ukraine. These assume a peculiar coloration when viewed from the perspective of the war years, of the problems of collaboration with the Nazis in the Holocaust. As early as the 1920s a concept developed in the Ukraine which, in the search for a scapegoat, posited an identity and conspiracy between Jew and Communist. The Jews were blamed for unemployment, for the increase in the working norms and for the excesses of personal dictatorship. We have sources that inform us about this from the Lugansky District in the Ukraine where in proclamations found in the home of a former White officer, dismissed from the Soviet apparatus, anti-Semitism was expressed as though it served the goals of the revolution against the “Jewish Bolsheviki” who “betrayed the revolution,” and “overthrew the power of the workers and peasants.” “It was in vain that we fought at the front while in the home front an organized enemy sits on our shoulders— bandits, Jews and Communists.” In several places, as for instance in Kharkov District anti-Semitic leaflets appeared that called for the destruction of the GPU because that organization was in the hands of the Jews.

At the end of 1927, in Dergach village of Kharkov District, a leaflet, inflaming the peasants protesting against the compulsory delivery of wheat, also made the Jews responsible. “Only the Jew. Comrades, let us break the yoke of Jewish power and let us build our own power, our own Ukrainian power....The damned Jew rides on our shoulders.” Again, the leaflet echoes in Ukrainian the Denikinist slogan, “Smite the Jews, Save the Ukraine.” The events of this April were discussed even in the reports of the following year because in the Dzhankovsky settlement the Jewish inhabitants were terrorized. One report offered a politically correct explanation. In it the poor peasants were parading as the good guys and the rich, the kulaks, as the anti-Semites. “The chauffeur (Russian) at the settlement was beaten because he tried to talk the hooligans out of the anti-Jewish atrocities....The bandits later returned and broke the windows and doors of the houses, yelling, ‘Smite the Jews.’ The Jewish settlers became panicky and asked for help by telegraphy. The commission sent to the scene found that the pogromists were the sons of local kulaks and rich peasants. After the matters were discussed, the local Russian poor condemned the hooligan kulaks.” The alleged participants in the action were arrested. Anti-Semitic rumor mongering also took advantage of the fact that a

Jewish terrorist in Paris killed Petliura who was responsible for the Civil War massacres. On this matter the opinions were divided between the international and Russian Zionist movements. The Zionist Vladimir Zhabotinski for instance, took a wreath to Petliura's grave.²⁸

The anti-Semitic wave continued unabated until 1927. Stalin wished to appear as both a revolutionary internationalist and a "small nation patriot" and wished to represent simultaneously the local interests and also the centralization of power which was seen as strengthening the unity of the Soviet Union. At the 15th Party Congress, in December 1927, he took a stand against anti-Semitism. He called anti-Semitism a monarchist, anti-revolutionary ideology that constituted the spiritual-political background of all the political enemies of the Communist Party and of every kind of Soviet ideas. He also drew attention to the fact that anti-Semitism had appeared in the workers' publications and in the Party cells. Prominent Soviet intellectuals, like Maxim Gorky, who were outstanding in the fight against anti-Semitism, also spoke out. Gorky in 1922 wrote the preface to Sergei Gusev –Orenburgsky's book, *Bagrovaia Kniga: pogromy 1919–1920 gg. na Ukraine* (Blood-Red Book: Pogroms in the Ukraine in 1919–1920). The work that documented the pogroms during the Civil War. Gorky also came out against anti-Semitism calling it the "Religion of Fools" in an article in *Pravda*.

Just as suddenly and unexpectedly as anti-Semitism reappeared in the middle of the 1920s it unexpectedly and suddenly became marginalized as a problem in the 1930s. Collectivization and industrialization swept away the anti-Semitic wave because unemployment disappeared, the cadres were equalized nationally within the power structures of the regime and there was an unprecedented social mobility. The turn against the NEP turned against the Jewish entrepreneurs as well and this improved Stalin's image among the rural masses in spite of the collectivization and the terrible consequences of the Ukrainian famine. The breakneck speed of industrialization and the urbanization process created a peculiar leveling. The hardships made the appearance of the Jews non-Jews equally shabby. They were no longer distinguishable by look, but the cities were also deluged by masses of other nationalities from Central Asia and the Caucasus. It seemed to the majority of the Jews that in the Soviet Union there were really no longer any serious barriers to assimilation. Who could have imagined that the Nazis coming to

power in Germany in January 1933 would have such catastrophic effects on Soviet Jewry within a few years?

It was in 1928 that a Jewish autonomous district was established in Birobidzhan but this did not attract the Jewish urban population. This area, far from any civilization, had only strategic significance in that it served to strengthen the Soviet frontier in the Far East. The assumption that Birobidzhan might do away with unemployment among the Jews was obviously futile because only a few tens of thousands Soviet citizens of Jewish extraction ever moved there. The resettlement of a hundred fifty thousand Jews never went beyond the planning stage. But even this intention, along with the hardship of industrialization and collectivization, contributed to the dispersing of the anti-Semitic wave.

The Great Terror in 1937–1939 carried no overt anti-Semitic message. But even then the so-called struggle policy against nationalist separatism was carried on, ostensibly to strengthen the Soviet state. This meant that in the 1930s a general attack was carried out against the cultural-political institutions of the national minorities. Thus an attack against Yiddish language and culture did take place, though it did not have anti-Semitic overtones. The educational and scientific establishments of the Jews weathered this campaign relatively well. In fact at that time a number of Jewish representatives of Soviet culture were awarded medals. The famous actor, Mikhoels, and the poet Markis were honored with the Lenin Medal. Molotov's Jewish wife also received a medal. Outstanding representatives of the Soviet natural and social sciences of Jewish nationality like Dov Landau, Mikhail Auerbach, Piotr Kapitsa, Igor Kurchatov, the Vice President of the Academy Anatole Alexandrov, the historian Yevgeny Tarle and many others enjoyed international reputation. It was at this time that the works of famous Jewish authors like Sholem Aleichem and D.R. Bergelson were published.

It is evident that the assimilation of the Sovietized Jewish masses was not forced and we can not doubt its spontaneity. The process was based on true legal equality. If the Jews' political rights were curtailed or if they could not exercise their constitutional rights fully, this was true for the entire Soviet society and was not a specifically Jewish issue.

It is obvious that during the second half of the 1930s, on Stalin's initiative, the turns taking shape in ideology resulted in a singular ethnic-national hierarchization of the Soviet people. This shift cannot be understood without appreciating the effects that the rise of Nazi Germany exerted by pushing all of European thinking in the direction of nationality and ethnicity. Nationalism became the mandatory direction for foreign policy. This had such an effect on Stalin that he changed his attitude toward culture as well. It was in this spirit that the endeavor to change the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin one failed in 1937. The reason given was that the Soviet people should not bow to Western culture and the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in Central Asia and Mongolia.

The old Soviet internationalism was replaced in the second half of the 1930s by a new type of Soviet patriotism that considered the Russian people as the cohesive force among the Soviet population. "In the family of the Soviet people the Russian people are the first among equals". Simultaneously with announcing an anti-Fascist Popular Front policy, Stalin's patriotic shift rehabilitated the great Russian military traditions and reassessed every significant historical figure from the Russian heroes to Lenin and included even Ivan IV in order to strengthen and buttress the regime. The new line completely ignored the findings of a history based on evidence. In this political and ideological atmosphere it was stressed anti-Semitism weakened the unity of the people and thus "it was better" not to discuss it openly, thus making it sure that it did not rise again. This whole issue was to such an extent a tactical question in Stalin's policies that he personally forbade any mention to be made of the documents that showed that one of Lenin's ancestors, his maternal grandfather, was a Jew.

Stalin condemned anti-Semitism both before and after the Nazis came to power. His famous and often cited interview, which he gave on request of the Jewish World Congress in 1931 was published in the Soviet Union in 1936. It was here that he said that, "In the Soviet Union active anti-Semites were punished by death." In 1936, in the spirit of the developing anti-Nazi fight, Molotov popularized Stalin's policies in response to the German anti-Semitic legislation which led to the exclusion of the Jews both politically and legally. On November 25, 1936 he wrote in *Pravda*,

Our fraternal feelings for the Jewish people are set by the fact that it was this people that gave us the brilliant author of the ideals of Communist liberation, Karl

Marx, who scientifically expropriated the highest achievements of German culture and of the culture of other people. Our feelings are based on the fact that, together with the most developed nations, the Jewish people have given humanity outstanding representatives in science, technology and the arts, as well as many glorious heroes of the revolution. In our country they have given us outstanding leaders and organizers in all areas of our socialist activities and for the defense of socialism. This determines our relationship to the anti-Semites and to the anti-Semitic cruelties wherever they may take place.²⁹

The Soviet Prehistory: 1938–1941

In a response to the appeasement policy of the Western democracies, the Soviet signed a non-aggression pact with Germany in August 1939. This was done to postpone the inevitable war between the two countries as long as possible. Stalin suspected that the Western European powers would gradually turn Hitler against the Soviet Union in order to satisfy his drive for a Lebensraum. It was into this interlocking system that the fate of the Jewish people was relegated during the fateful years of 1939-1941 that were preparatory to the Nazi genocide.

Let us think of the Jews in Alsace-Lorraine, the Jews who escaped from Poland to the Soviet Union, the Czech Jews, the Austrian Jews and even the Hungarian Jews. It is in this context that we must evaluate the new initiatives of Reinhard Heydrich, the deputy head of the Reich Security Service, and Adolf Eichmann, the chief of a subsection of the same organization. Their new initiative at the beginning of 1940 was to resettle the Jews from the German Reich to the Soviet Union. Later the Nazis themselves deported some of the German Jews to this area but hardly for the sake of providing them with an asylum. It was not a simple matter. It is the most vexing question, how did the Jewish question raised by the Nazis and accentuated by the Holocaust fit into the broad outline of Soviet foreign and domestic policies, into the great issues of its military strategy and how did the Soviet Union cope with these problems?

As we have seen Molotov, on November 25, 1936, cited and condemned the Nazi Nuremberg Laws and assured the Jewish people of his support. Soviet policy also condemned the anti-Semitic pogroms of the Kristallnacht of November 9, 1939, which made it clear that in Nazi Germany even the physical survival of the Jews was in question. They could not know that the Kristallnacht was but the first step leading to the Holocaust.

Hitler could feel that he was given a free hand by Europe. This was because at a meeting on this matter organized by the United States and held in Evian in July 1938 none of the participating thirty-two European countries agreed to take in the German Jews. Many view this, incorrectly, as a deliberate anti-Semitic policy but in fact there

were several disparate matters. Europe did not truly appreciate or assign sufficient importance to the problem because the leadership of every country could think only in terms of its own national and /or ethnic or international and power interests and considered the Jewish diaspora, including the German Jews, as a minor issue. Thus, the exclusion of the Jews was not solely a German action. Neither the British Empire nor the United States wished to resolve the desperate situation of the Jews trying to escape from Germany. According to the White Paper, dated May 17, 1939, the cynical British government allowed no more than 100,000 Jews to emigrate to the Mandated Territory of Palestine over the ensuing five years.³⁰ The British did not wish to weaken their position in the world and did not wish to clash with the Arab leaders in the Middle East who looked at Jewish emigration to Palestine with great disfavor. There was not a single country that did come up with a good reason for allowing the Jews to enter. A symbol of this indifference was that the steamer Saint Louis, leaving Hamburg with more than nine hundred Jewish passengers in May 1939, was not allowed to disembark the passengers in Cuba or in the United States. The passengers, forced to return to Germany, eventually became the victims of the Nazi genocide.

In 1941 Hungarian authorities transferred Hungarian citizens to the Nazis and these Jews were executed shortly thereafter on Soviet territory as victims of the genocide. Thus the beginning of the Hungarian Holocaust was directly linked to the genocide initiated in the Soviet territories. The 17,306 victims of the Kamenets-Podolsk massacre were only a prologue to the Hungarian Holocaust. Of the more than one hundred fifty thousand Hungarian Jews of Subcarpathia, only few survived until the end of the war in 1945. Where could they have gone? Neither the Poles, nor the Soviet border guards, nor Tiso's Slovakia, nor the Romanians, nor the Germans permitted them to cross their adjacent borders.³¹

The Nazi's "Final Solution" cannot be separated from the given activities of the international system and it is in this light that we must view the policy of the Soviet authorities. As mentioned above, Heydrich and Eichmann started negotiations in 1940 to resettle the German Jews in the Soviet Union. In 1940 the Soviet did not reject the proposed resettlement of the German Jews in principle, but insisted that they be of proletarian background and have two hundred dollars security each. Accordingly they

only permitted entry to the Communists or to those who were leading intellectuals. The Stalin leadership had a phobia about the establishment of a “fifth column” and we must remember that all this happened shortly after the “Great Terror”. Another component was the proposed understanding with Germany subsequent to the Munich agreement. During the period of the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany, Stalin and his associates negotiated until the summer of 1941 with the Germans about the refugee matter. A total of fourteen thousand German refugees were admitted to the Soviet Union but approximately sixty thousand refugees, many of them Jews, left or were forcefully resettled from the Soviet Union into the German zone of Poland. Stalin at that time tried to deflate the German propaganda by participating as little as possible in the international diplomacy surrounding the “Jewish affair.” It is true that all this might be viewed as Stalin’s covert anti-Semitism that became apparent but this is not easy to document because a number of facts contradictory to the above have also been uncovered.

The Soviets admitted large numbers of Spanish anti-Fascist refugees but in connection with the refugees from Germany the spy phobia assumed hysterical proportions. This was further aggravated by millions from Eastern Poland and from the Baltic States that were given to Russia under the secret clauses of the pacts of August and September 1939. The “Sovietization” of these territories presented serious problems for the Soviet domestic authorities, particularly for the NKVD. The Polish Jewish refugees coming from the German zone and not previously employed in forced labor by the Germans were all considered to be potential spies. Approximately ten thousand Jews were confined to Gulag concentration camps because they were accused of Zionism or of hostility to the Soviet. They were detained for indeterminate periods and many of them died in the camps. Paradoxically some of them escaped the Holocaust by these detentions. It was a great tragedy for the Soviet Jews that, after the September 28, 1939, signing of the friendship pact with Nazi Germany, Communist propaganda stopped its previously consistent fight against anti-Semitism and its cautioning about the perils of genocide. This was one of the reasons why not nearly as many Jews fled to the East before the Nazi attack than could have fled provided they had received sufficient information.

As stated earlier, the Soviet Union rejected the German initiatives to transfer German Jews to Russia. After June 22, 1941, following the Hitler's attack on the USSR, German Jewish deportees appeared promptly in the ghettos of Vilnius and Minsk where they shared the fate of the Soviet Jews. In spite of the Nazi Madagascar plan that was to expel the European Jews to this African island, we cannot take the Nazi intent to save European Jewry seriously because in every country under Nazi control, the Jews were eliminated with whatever means were available.

The incorporation of new territories into the Soviet Union in 1939–1940 increased the Jewish population of the Soviet Union by two million. These territories along its western border were ceded to the Soviet Union under the secret codicils of the nonaggression, and the friendship pacts. With the occupation of eastern Poland including the western Ukraine and western Belorussia, 1,270,000 Jewish Soviet citizens were added to the Soviet Union. The Baltic States contributed 250,000 (Lithuania, excluding Vilnius, 150,000, Latvia 95,000 and Estonia 5,000). In Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina there were 325,000 Jews and to this we have to add the Jews who escaped from Germany and also the 300,000 Jews who were temporarily settled in some assigned area of the Soviet Union. At the time of the German attack the total number of Jews living in the Soviet Union can be put at five million. In contrast to the three million Jews who had lived within the pre-1939 borders of the Soviet Union, the two million new arrivals could not become assimilated because the German attack interrupted the process. In 1932 the Polish strongman, Józef Piłsudski, introduced the *Numerus Clausus*, which limited the right of Jews to education. Thus the Polish Jews became second class citizens. As a result of finding themselves in the Soviet Union, Jews could feel free and had the same rights as the other nationalities. Thus, they were able to engage in education at all levels.

According to the 1939 census three million or 1.8 percent of the total population of 170 million were Jews. Eighty-seven percent of the Jews lived in cities, 40.7 percent as employees or intellectuals, 30.5 percent as workers, 16.1 percent tradesmen in cooperatives, 5.8 percent as peasants in kolkhozes and 4 percent as private contractors. Of the able-bodied Jews 26.8 percent had completed secondary education and 5.7 percent had a higher degree. The national average for the former category was 8.7 percent and for the latter 0.6 percent. At this time in Leningrad, where more than two hundred

thousand Jews resided, every fifth student was a Jew. The tendency to become assimilated is shown most clearly by the fact that among Soviet Jews, one third of all marriages were mixed.³²

The fact that in the highest power structures the ratio of the Jews declined was due to the members of other national minorities and of the national majority receiving more and better education and thus an equalization of nationalities took place. At the same time the ability of the Jews to practice their religion and nurture their traditions ran into serious difficulties. Even before the outbreak of the war a seven day work week was introduced that completely ignored the religious practices of the Orthodox Jewish communities which had been recently annexed to the Soviet Union. The new Jewish Soviet citizens had a rich and deeply rooted national culture and many of them were deeply religious. This had a stimulating effect on the national self-awareness of Soviet Jews, but there was no time left to ready a defense of the Jewish spiritual and/or cultural interests.

After June 22, 1941, the rapid advances of the Germans prevented most Jews from fleeing or evacuating. Only about 10–12 percent of the entire Jewish population of the occupied areas could escape but not all of them managed to go to areas of the Soviet Union that were not yet occupied by the German army. It happened that some of those fleeing went to areas that had already been occupied by the Germans. To the number of escapees we must add about 2–3 percent who had been taken from the areas annexed to the Soviet Union to the interior of the country before the war.

The areas further east were occupied only later and thus the Jews had more time to escape. The Soviet authorities had some opportunity to evacuate the civilian population including the Jews. A total of approximately 2,900,000 Jews living in the Soviet Union remained in the occupied territories as victims of the Nazi executioners and of their local helpers.³³ There are no good data about the number of Jews who managed to flee east in 1941 prior to the German occupation. Yitzhak Arad speaks of 1,000,000 to 1,100,000 refugees.³⁴

The Holocaust could not have been foreseen before the attack on the Soviet Union. In 1939–1940 even in Poland there was no total genocide and generally even the Nazis themselves did not see quite clearly the details of the eradication of the Jews in the

near future. In 1941 the situation was different and even more so in 1944 when it was evident that in every country occupied by the Germans the Jews were either exterminated or the task was under way.

It must be clear that the history of the Holocaust cannot be derived once and for all from an established Nazi theory that prepared the way for a future practical implementation. In the 1960s a so-called internationalist interpretation started out with the assumption that the Nazis had a “complete plan.” This view, however, ignored the transition between the abstract goals and praxis. The internationalist interpretation could also not give any meritorious answer to the question of why and to what extent the local population participated in the practical implementation of the Holocaust. Nor could the situation of the front, or the conditions in the ghetto, the need for slave labor, the needs of the Wehrmacht itself, etc., explain the implementation of the Holocaust. These developments could not be foreseen even from the 1933–1939 perspective. The internationalists cited a few statements made by the Nazi leaders at one time or another and, linking these to practice, manufactured a unified concept according to which the practical plans for the massacre of the European Jews was fully prepared prior to 1935.

Evidently the idea concerning the elimination of the Jews existed as an abstract goal in nebulous form in the mind of some Nazi leaders even prior to 1933. The Holocaust was thought about as a possibility and was yoked to considerations such as the resettlement of Jews. One of these resettlement projects envisioned Madagascar as the site and this project was not fully abandoned until 1940. More recent historiography indicates that the ideas about the Final Solution evolved and crystallized as a result of changing conditions.³⁵ It is possible to perceive in the documents that even on the threshold of the Final Solution, at the beginning of 1939, there were a number of preliminary steps taken under Hitler’s leadership that could not have been planned for any earlier. For instance, it was only after the rapid defeat of Poland that Hitler and his General Staff tried out, under the new circumstances, the enclosure of the Jews in ghettos, the organization of the Jewish Councils, the use of Jews for slave labor, the withholding of food from the ghettos, etc. We will also see that the Final Solution, the concrete forms of mass murder of the Jews, was initiated, perfected and implemented completely and implacably only after the June 22, 1941, invasion of the Soviet Union.

The Final Solution was thus brought about gradually and step by step even though the idea, the total elimination of the Jews was present in Hitler's thoughts as early as the 1920s. He wrote in *Mein Kampf* about cleansing Germany of the Jews. "We will annihilate the Jews." It can be documented that Hitler first used this expression in a conversation with the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frantisek Chvalkovský, on January 21, 1939. How deeply committed Hitler, Heinrich Himmler and the other Nazi leaders were to this endeavor is shown by the fact that they considered nothing less than the total physical eradication of the Jewish people. On January 30, 1939 Hitler stated this in a typically Nazi cynical fashion, "If the international Jewish money men manage to drag the people of Europe and the world into another war then the outcome of this war will not be the Bolshevization of the world and thus the victory of the Jews but the eradication of the Jewish race in Europe." It was in this speech that he indicated that Bolshevism and the Jews were one and the same thing.

Several historians draw attention to the fact that the decision about the total annihilation of the Jews was made on the eve of the occupation of the Soviet Union in full knowledge of two vital circumstances. Anti-Jewish policy and anti-Semitism became stronger all over Europe and the Nazi aggressors felt that they could act entirely free of any repercussions. The preparations for the extermination of the Soviet Jews were an integral part of the plan prepared for the invasion of the Soviet Union. In instructions dated March 12, 1941 and attached to the Barbarossa Plan, drafted by the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, a clear and unmistakable position was taken. In regard to the political direction the Führer assigned to the Reichsführer SS "Peculiar tasks that arise from the war between two totally different political systems." As a step up, Hitler ordered on March 3, 1941, that, "The Jewish Bolshevik intelligentsia be destroyed on the spot." For the Nazi General Staff the war against the Soviet Union was such a total war that the international agreements concerning the protection of prisoners of war and the civilian population lost their meaning. The "peculiar tasks" mentioned above included the total eradication of the Jews. In May and June 1941 the High Command of the Wehrmacht added three additional clauses to the above order that served as a legal basis for the Nazi genocide in the occupied territories in the Soviet Union.

On July 2, 1941, eleven days after the attack on the Soviet Union, Hitler's deputy, Hermann Göring, instructed Heydrich to prepare a concrete implementation plan for the destruction of the Soviet Jews under the new conditions. By the end of the summer the plan for the total liquidation of the Jews was implemented and included the liquidation of the women and children as well. The tasks of the Einsatzgruppen and of the Wehrmacht were outlined here in their final form. The concrete steps for the annihilation were initiated by the deportation of the Jews from Poland and from other parts of Europe to the Soviet Union, on July 31, 1941. It became evident that the idea of destruction via forced resettlement to areas with a hostile climate had been completely abandoned. In his order of July 22, 1941, Hitler *expressis verbis* announced that the final solution was extended to all the Jews in Europe. The January 1942 Wannsee Conference had only technical significance. By that time millions of Jews were located in areas occupied by the Nazis. Hitler fantasized about the destruction of all the Jews in the world well before the Wannsee conference when he talked about this at his meeting with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. In November 1941 Hitler explained his stand on the Jewish question to the Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini. Hitler told the Grand Mufti that, "The basis of the difficult fight that I conduct is clear. I carry on a fight against the Jews that knows no compromise... We have agreed on a step by step solution to resolve the Jewish question. We are turning to other nations, including some beyond Europe and invite them to take a stand like ours." Hitler expressed his hopes that the German-type solution would be implemented in the Arabic countries as well.³⁶

When the United States entered the European war, Hitler made the final decision to completely eradicate the Jews. He justified his call on the basis that the Aryan people were the victims of the "Plutocratic Judeo-Bolshevik World Conspiracy."

The Characteristics of the Nazi Genocide in the Soviet Union and in Hungary

Data and Facts

The history of the Holocaust in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union is impressive principally because of its unique dimensions. On June 22, 1941, approximately eighty-eight million people lived within the territories of the Soviet Union which were eventually occupied by the Germans and their allies. By the end of the war only fifty five million inhabitants remained in this territory, the others were murdered, deported, drafted into the Red Army or evacuated to the east. In the occupied Soviet territory 7.400,000 civilians were killed. Of these victims, Russia contributed 1,800,000, the Ukraine 3,256,000, Belorussia 1,547,000, Lithuania 370,000, Latvia 313,000, Estonia 61,307, Moldavia 64,246 and Karelia more than 8,000. Of the 5,269,513 Soviet citizens taken to Germany 2,164,311 were killed or died in captivity. Of the civilian population of the Soviet Union a total of 13,683,000 people died which represents more than half of the total Soviet loss during the war given at twenty-seven million.³⁷

The occupied territories were converted by the Nazis into a continuous giant death camp. It was in this environment that the Holocaust occurred claiming the life of 2.800,000 Jewish Soviet citizens. As indicated just prior to the outbreak of the war almost four million Jews lived in the Soviet territories occupied by the Wehrmacht. Historians estimate the number of Jews evacuated from the Nazi occupied territories to be at least 1 million.³⁸ Only a fraction of the unevacuated survived the Nazi genocide. We have to include among the Soviet Jewish victims of World War II the 120–180,000 Jews who died at the front as soldiers in the Red Army as well as the about 80,000 Jewish prisoners of war who were shot in the POW camps. Together with the more than 600,000 Soviet citizens several thousand Jews died in Leningrad during the siege and many died in the rear under the difficult conditions following evacuation.

When Himmler issued the secret order on August 1, 1941, that, “All Jews must be shot and the Jewish women must be chased into the swamps” he was still not quite clear

about the practical consequences of this order. (It was summer and most of the swamps were dry). Since it was a matter of several million people, Himmler's mind could not understand that such an incomprehensible activity could not be performed post haste nor could it be technically implemented by a few murder groups consisting of a few hundred or a thousand men. The three thousand men of the four *Einsatzgruppen* [task forces] were not nearly enough for this gigantic task. To accomplish it, the SS was sent an additional eleven thousand men from Berlin. Subsequently the Nazis started the mass murders of the Soviet Jews intending to massacre every single Jew without exception. At the beginning of June 1941 the four *Einsatzgruppen* were ordered to Pretz in Saxony. Heydrich summoned the commanders of the various groups to announce that Hitler had ordered the elimination of all the Jews living in the Soviet Union as well as of the leaders of the Communist Party and that the execution of this task was the responsibility of the commanders.

Starting in July 1941, the extermination of the Jews, or as the minister of the occupied eastern territories, Alfred Rosenberg, suggested, "the biologic annihilation" became and remained the practical goal. One of the peculiar characteristics of the genocide implemented in the Soviet Union was that women and children were slaughtered in public, frequently before the eyes of the local population. This was never done as an every day event in any other country. Hitler announced on July 22 that he would cleanse every European country of their Jews and even prophesized that Hungary would be the last country to do so. In his instructions to Heydrich of July 31, 1941, Göring stated that preparations had to be made to "resolve the Jewish question in all countries of Europe under German influence."

The principal characteristic of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union was its experimental nature and drive for completeness. In its goals, methods and consequences the image of a "complete genocide" is evident. It is a mirror image of the total war that Hitler launched against the Soviet Union.³⁹ Originally the Nazi leaders wished to exterminate all the Jews from the countries under their control in the Soviet Union. This was due to the incidental fact that the large extermination camps in Poland were not yet functional. It was only in December 1941 that the gas chambers were tried out, successfully. The first extermination camp, Chelmno, started operations in December

1941 and its initial purpose was the annihilation of the two million Polish Jews. This effort began after the German attack on the Soviet Union and after the slaughter of the Soviet Jews was under way. The decision was made first in the more Western part of Europe, namely that the entire Jewish population of the German, Czech and Austrian areas were to be exterminated. Accordingly, in September-October 1941, the deportation of the Jews from these territories to the ghettos of Kaunas, Minsk and Riga began and their liquidation was initiated.

The technical possibilities and the extent of the genocide can be seen relatively precisely from the time that the gas chambers and crematoria became active and enough experience was gained in the Soviet territories and in the construction of the Polish death camps. The annihilation, the Final Solution, was not always immediate and direct because there were a number of Nazi organizations that claiming a need for workers demanded Jewish laborers.

The extermination of the Jews usually began with the young males in order to eliminate any hope for resistance in the hearts of the women and children who had been left behind. The question was raised why these men could not be put to work for a while before their death? The civilian administration, also one of the principal organizers of the Holocaust, had to find a balance between two competing interests. One was the liquidation of the Jews as soon as possible and the other was the mobilization of forced labor for the performance of some tasks important to the military. The latter was looked at with disfavor by the SS and the Gestapo because Hitler's orders and Nazi ideology mandated immediate liquidation. Consequently there were debates among the Nazi leaders as to whether to give preference to ideological or to economic factors. There was no difference of opinion so far as the need to exterminate the Jews was concerned. Alfred Rosenberg resolved this problem by always regarding extermination as the principal objective and placing ideological considerations ahead of economic rationale. During the first months of Nazi victories, until the end of 1941, Einsatzgruppen "A" and "B" murdered more than 137,000 people.

The story of Babi Yar, starting at the end of September 1941 illustrates these activities. Shootings, while not as intensive as in the beginning, continued until the end and by the end of the German occupation, approximately hundred fifty thousand people

were shot in Babi Yar. Approximately 10 percent of the Ukrainian Jews were executed there, but Jews were not the only victims. In the Reich Commissariat Ukraine, an area under civil administration, 40 percent of the victims were murdered prior to the Wannsee Conference. More than half of the victims were old people, women and children and this substantiates the existence of an economic motive. This tendency was so obvious that it even appeared on the public posters relating to the Jews. On September 29, 1941, for instance, the authorities forbade anyone to move into the apartments vacated by tens of thousands of Jews, taking away the clothes, etc. Profit could be shown even when the Jews were immediately liquidated but later the Nazis increasingly used them as slave laborers, as a “concession” to the postponement executions.

In the literature frequent mention is made of W. Kube, the Gauleiter of the Belorussia District as though he would have tried to block the execution of the German Jews for “sentimental reasons.” When he drew attention to the Jews with three-quarters of Aryan blood, all he did was to indicate that this had an unfavorable psychological effect on the German firing squads. He also wished to entrust the execution of the German Jews, transported to the Soviet Union, to the Lithuanian and Latvian police because the German Jews were strangers to these people. For ideological and political purposes the Nazi leadership handled the Jewish question as an undivided, single matter and therefore during the first two weeks of the Soviet campaign tens of thousands of Jews were murdered in the area from western Ukraine to the Baltic. Kaunas was occupied on June 25 and the local Nazi detachments immediately engaged in the destruction of the Jews. All this does not contradict that genocide based on ideological and/or political considerations was always tightly linked with looting and with the despoliation of the Jews and thus formed the fundamental economic and intellectual background of the Holocaust. The industries of Krupp and Siemens cannot be separated from this background.

The mechanics of genocide in Soviet areas had three characteristic steps. The Nazi General Staff relieved the armed units of all moral scruples, established the ghettos as the framework for temporary slave labor and subsequent physical extermination and finally introduced the entire arsenal of genocide. As far as the last item is concerned the forms of the Nazi genocide in the Soviet Union can be summarized in a single sentence.

The Nazis, their allies and the local collaborators shot the Jews, burned them alive, gassed them with exhaust fumes in car parks, poisoned them with Cyclone B in the Polish death camps, poisoned them (mostly children) with a variety of poisons, drowned them, threw them down wells, chased them into the swamps (mostly women), beat them to death, froze them, tortured them to death, starved them to death, hanged them, beheaded them, hewed them in two with axes, killed them with bayonets (mostly small children), threw them down mine shafts and precipices and buried them alive.⁴⁰ The best and most permanent literary description of these atrocities, their motivation and implementation is probably Alexander Adamovich's famous short story, "The Punitive Squads." A typical mass murder is reported by a Danish investigator from archival material in the archives of the NKVD. It is the deposition of a soldier of the 315th Military Police Battalion who was a participant:

About November 17–18, 1941, our 315th Battalion arrived in Rovno to perform a mass action against the Jewish population. In addition to our Battalion, the 320th Battalion was also there and...they carried out the shooting of the Jews. It was the task of our Battalion to secure the area of the executions. On November 19th we were told that the mass executions of the Jewish population would begin the following day. The Jews were assembled in a forest about 2 Km West of Rovno on orders of the Rovno town commander. When we arrived at the site our commander told us that we were to allow none of the Jews to escape or come in from the outside. The site of the executions was a gully about 500 meters from the road near the woods. Between 11 and 12 I saw large groups of Jews approaching on the road from Rovno. This march lasted until 5 PM. There must have been about 20,000 people including women and children. They stopped 500-600 meters from us and we could see them clearly. The first executions began about 3 PM and continued for several hours. Those they could not shoot that day were shot the next day about 11 AM. It was cold and snowing and the Jews had to strip naked and await their fate in the cold. At 8 o'clock PM we were sent home but the next day we were again ordered to the scene to stand guard. The Jews were shot with machine guns, machine pistols and pistols. The

executions were directed by the commander of my unit, the 315th Battalion, Captain G. and Major R.”⁴¹

The documents assembled by the study committees of the Red Army and of the Soviet legal establishment, reveal a similar picture. One of these commissions reports an investigation conducted on October 4, 1943, to reconstruct the mass murders committed in the town of Mstyslav at the beginning of October 1941. Accordingly, “They first selected out the men, the women and the older children. The small children were thrown into the ditches alive. Many had their head smashed in to stop their crying. The shootings continued from 11 o’clock to 15 o’clock. When the executions stopped the executioners started dividing up the clothing of the victims. Under the clothing they found two Jewish women who were immediately shot. The infant of one of them was pierced with a bayonet and cast into the ditch. On this day 1,300 Jewish adults and children were killed.”⁴²

It is one of the fundamental characteristics of the Holocaust that in the occupied Soviet territories the Wehrmacht, the army of the Reich, played a very active role in the massacre of the Jews primarily during the first part of the war. The genocide paralleled the advances of the Wehrmacht. During the first two weeks after the successful invasion of the Soviet Union tens of thousands of Jews were killed in the area occupied by the Wehrmacht. The soldiers of the German army entered the Soviet Union with quite different instructions and goals from any other country. Not only because they did not wish to obey the rules of the Geneva Convention about prisoners of war, saying the Soviet Union had not been a signatory to that agreement, but they had an entirely different set of moral and political charges. They attacked an “inferior nation” regarding which no moral restriction had to be applied. According to the Nazi doctrine incorporated in the Barbarossa Plan this undeveloped, retarded East was inhabited by people of little value who were further corrupted by the Jews. In the regulations issued to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht this was stated in clear and simple terms, “Eradicate forbearance and pity from your heart, kill every Russian, don’t hold back if it is an old man, a woman a small girl or a small boy. Kill, because in this way you save yourself, you secure the future of your family and you gain eternal glory.”⁴³

In every occupied settlement the soldiers of the Wehrmacht established a military command post. Its principal task was the segregation of the Jews and the capture of the partisans which meant liquidation. In December 1941, in Belorussia, the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* killed nineteen thousand bandits and partisans, the majority of whom were Jews. There are data showing that in the first half of 1942 more than twenty thousand peaceful civilians were massacred—the majority of whom were Jews. The soldiers also participated in the identification and murder of the Jewish prisoners of war until August 1941 when the SS assumed this task. Units of the Wehrmacht cooperated in the direction and supervision of the massacres performed by the Romanian authorities. Another example occurred in Kalmykia on September 9, 1942 when masses of Jews were put into trucks as though on the road to the Ukraine. On a clearing the 16th Motorized Division of the Wehrmacht slaughtered them all. Such “valorous deeds” were also performed by Field Marshal Erich von Manstein in the Crimea.⁴⁴

Masses of documents are available showing the war-crimes of the Wehrmacht soldiers and their drunken violence. It happened frequently that young girls were raped before the eyes of their parents. All this is proven by valuable and critically important published documents. The Nazis and Ion Antonescu and his Romanian regime shared the responsibility for the destruction of hundreds of thousands who were gathered in Transnistria. In the Romanian area of occupation, including Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina nearly four hundred thousand Jews were living a wretched existence. The Romanian gendarmes and soldiers distinguished themselves and until the Stalingrad turnaround systematically exterminated the Jewish population. A total of nearly three hundred thousand were murdered. The mass murders were stopped only after the battle of Stalingrad. Antonescu’s tactical skills were manifested by the mass murders being performed away from houses and settlements, kept as much secret as possible and implemented in the so-called transitional camps erected on orders of the Romanian leader.

Regardless of all the recent attempts at falsifying history, the participation of the Wehrmacht soldiers in the elimination of the Jews was wide-spread. A Moscow expert on this matter summarizes his views as follows, “The men and leadership of the Wehrmacht played the most active role in the annihilation of the Jews”⁴⁵ This is well

illustrated by the activities of Army Commander von Manstein, one of the most skillful military leaders, who considered the clothing and food supplies of the murdered Jews as legitimate military supplies and distributed them to his troops during the cold months of 1942. The frequently repeated thesis of excusing the “simple German soldier,” namely that the enlisted men were not National Socialists, is incomprehensible. As though it were an important issue whether or not the Nazi view of the world was firmly fixed in the mind of the Wehrmacht soldier murdering peaceful civilians. There was no mental or ideological difference between the SS and the Wehrmacht, only a functional one.

The Wehrmacht had a particular role in organizing the Holocaust and without it the task could not have been accomplished. The April 1941 directives from the Supreme Command preceded the “Commissar Order” and can be considered an original version of it. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, the Chief of the Wehrmacht’s Supreme Command, who was sentenced to death by the Nuremberg Tribunal in 1946, issued the following order on May 19, 1941, “The strictest measures must be taken against Bolshevik agitators, partisans, saboteurs and Jews.” The order integrated the Hitler-Himmler idea about the Judeo-Bolshevik World Conspiracy that linked the political enemies of Germany on the battlefield with the Jewish people. It is less known that Field Marshal Keitel participated in the “ideological work.”⁴⁶ From an ideological perspective the classic document is the order issued by Field marshal Walter von Reichenau on October 10, 1941, concerning the behavior of the troops in the East. This order pleased Hitler so much that it was accepted by other commanders as a model. “The principal goal of our fight against the Jewish-Bolshevik system is the total elimination and eradication of the Asiatic effects on our European culture. The ensuing task goes beyond the framework of the simple military ideas....The soldier must realize that the lower order Jew must be subjected to cruel but just punishment. The fight with the enemy behind the front lines cannot be overestimated....So far only treacherous awful partisans and grotesque females have been captured, treated as though they were regular troops and sent to POW camps.”⁴⁷

During the first phase of the war it was the Wehrmacht and its soldiers who identified the commissars, Communists and Jews among the prisoners of war. This was done according to the “Commissar Order” of June 6 that was attached to the Barbarossa

Plan.⁴⁸ The extermination groups, the Einsatzgruppen, received permission to enter the POW camps in August. But, on orders of Field Marshal Keitel, issued on September 12, the army participated in all the “extraordinary procedures” against the Jews in the Soviet territories. The Jews were identified as the principal enemy by a number of German generals and commanders, but even among them the commander of the 11th Army, Erich von Manstein, stands out. In his order issued on November 20, 1941, he said, “The Jews are the link between the enemies behind our back and the Red Army and the remnants of the fighters still available to the Red leadership. The Jews are more powerful than in Europe. They hold the key positions in political leadership, in administration, in commerce and industry and they are also the instigators of all trouble and dissatisfaction.”⁴⁹

Thus the soldiers of the Wehrmacht were engaged in the genocide in the Soviet Union under the auspices of Nazi ideology and policy. They not only were engaged in terror activities against the population, but took active part in the liquidation of the Jews as well. It was not a coincidence that the commanders and generals of the Wehrmacht issued the orders about the annihilation of the Jews, because the soldiers had to be prepared for the bloody activities that most of them would have never considered otherwise. Murdering defenseless women and children was not considered a heroic action even in the Wehrmacht. During the first months the Wehrmacht was engaged in genocide to an extent that forced the commander of Army Group South, Karl von Runstedt to issue an order on September 24, 1941 according to which extermination of the Jews was the task of the Sonderkommandos and that soldiers were not to engage in individual actions and excesses against the local Ukrainian population.

The role of the Wehrmacht and of the SS in despoiling and looting Soviet Jewish assets cannot be ignored. The looted assets were used not only to prostitute the local collaborators but also to assuage to bottomless appetites of the officers and soldiers. The property of the Soviet Jews, contrary to the property of the local population, was considered to belong to the German Reich and this rapidly became apparent in the area of Army Group South. Early in the fall of 1941 money and other valuables looted from the Jews in Berdichev and Vinnitsa arrived in Berlin. In February 1942, thirty five to forty tons of silver arrived that had been confiscated from the Soviet Jews.

The rationale of the economics of genocide is evident. The various German organizations frequently competed for slave labor because in exchange for minimal supplies they gained the services of expert craftsmen. Being deprived of all rights, the necessity to work applied to the entire population and not only to the Jews. The unlimited confiscations and the expropriation of goods and food was an irresistible temptation to the organizers of the Holocaust. We will never know how much the German authorities stole for themselves but it is certain that other than the allowances for the military, the SS and their families, all expenses of the occupation, including food, was derived from such sources. Of course these endeavors of the Wehrmacht were not limited to the Soviet Union as is shown by the deportation and elimination of the Jews of Rhodes.⁵⁰ It was Götz-Gerlach Aly who demonstrated how the Germans profited from the expropriation of the Jewish assets in Serbia. The European Jewish assets were “nationalized” and thus benefited practically every German. “Every soldier of the Wehrmacht found some of this money in his purse and every family had food on their table and clothes in their closets that were partially financed from this source.”

The fact that, according to Nazi intent, in the huge occupied territories of the Soviet Union there was a practical fusion between the race-based anti-Semitic theory and anti-Communism had a peculiar role in the Holocaust. The joint extermination of the Jews and Communists by the military became the basic historic mission of German National Socialism. The Nazis fusing anti-Communism and anti-Semitism made it the principle guide of their actions. Ian Kershaw’s studies show very clearly that this “fusion” spread only very gradually through the people’s understanding in Nazi Germany and was fostered by a very vigorous and effective anti-Semitic propaganda campaign. It was from the mid 1930s on that anti-Semitism became the basic, quotidian, all encompassing trend in Nazi propaganda. The most widely disseminated Nazi propaganda publication, the notorious *Der Ewige Jude*, was published in 1937. On its cover a threatening Jewish figure was begging with one hand while in his other hand he held a whip and under his arm there was a map of the Soviet Union with the hammer and sickle emblem prominently displayed. Inside a horrific specter is raised that goes from Marxist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg to physicist Albert Einstein, from the Rothschilds to the Jewish bagman, from Marx to the orthodox rabbis and even to Stalin.

It was this that Hitler reconstituted in *Mein Kampf*, relying on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* for inspiration. It was in this sense that the Nazi authorities justified their activities to the Soviet population suggesting that they invaded the country only to free it from the Judeo-Bolshevik servitude and the Jewish-Communist yoke. This was what the German soldiers were told. In this sense the peaceful Jewish population was considered as a military, political and racial enemy even though the extermination, contrary to the practice in other countries, was not limited to Jews and to the “politicals” although they were most severely affected. In the Ukraine, of about one hundred thirty thousand Communists approximately fifty thousand were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. It is not an accident that the frequently cited “Commissar Order” of Hitler demanded that every commissar, Communist and Jew be shot when captured. Every Jew was considered to be an adherent to the Communist ideology and a representative of the Soviet state while every Communist was considered to be a “Soviet activist,” a council member and a protector of the Jews.

In the Soviet territories the Holocaust had other characteristics that were derived from the openly racist, anti-Communist nature of the war against the Soviet Union. It should be noted that while racism and looting were part of every war, the particular importance of the racial factor was manifest only in the Soviet territories. While in Germany under the Nuremberg Laws half-bloods were not deported, in the occupied Soviet territories people were killed who had even one Jewish grandparent. It also happened that the Russian mother was shot right next to her half-blood child. Thus, for instance, in the Zaporozhets territory in the fall of 1942, of the 8,500 Jews killed 3,000 were born from a mixed marriage.

The racial logic sometimes played tricks on the Nazis. In contrast to Hungary where the Jews were identified on a religious basis, in the Soviet Union the Jews were considered a nationality. Yet the Nazi racial sciences did not have a solid basis on which to deal with the so-called “Mountain Jews” or with the Crimean Jews who had a very peculiar ethnic structure. Decisions were made on the spot whether these Jews would be destroyed or permitted to survive.

In variance with the later forms of Holocaust, as for instance the Hungarian one, the slaughter of the Soviet Jews was generally performed right at the site and few of the

captives were taken to distant locations. Little was done to hide the activities and it was only when military defeat loomed that attempts were made to hide the traces of the mass-murders. It was not until the spring of 1942 that army commanders in the occupied areas ordered that security troops should perform executions where they could not be seen or heard. It was evident that the constant presence of the genocide eventually had a bad effect on the morale of the fighting forces and on the sentiments of the local population. The commander of Sonderkommando 4A, Paul Blobel, testified at the Nuremberg trials about the typical means used to cover the evidence of the mass murders. He reported his own experiences in uncovering a mass grave in the Kiev area in August 1943. The grave was a ditch 55 meters long, 3 meters wide and 2.5 meters deep. The victims, shot from the back, were lying in three layers on each other. The SS commander considered the unavailability of gasoline or other combustible materials to have been the greatest problem because without it the several thousand corpses could not be cremated. Escaped Jewish forced laborers who uncovered the graves and then escaped made essentially the same report as the SS commander.⁵¹ In trying to cover up the traces a special bone crushing machine was used in Lithuania to grind up the skeletal remains.

The German army and the civilian administration that followed it enlisted the cooperation of the local population, particularly during the early phases of the war and in both the military and civilian zones. The collaborators came from the ranks of the convinced anti-communists, nationalist-fascists, those dissatisfied with the regime and persons who had been persecuted by the Soviet regime and all others who could be corrupted by enlisting them among the beneficiaries of the looting. The Nazis were particularly anxious to keep the anti-Semitic traditions of the Baltic States, Ukraine and Russia alive and to strengthen them.

This incomprehensible cruelty was based to some extent on the fear of the reestablishment of Soviet power was used to frighten those who were looking forward to the return. According to Ilya Altman, only a small percentage of the local population, no more than 1 percent participated in the murders and assisted with the work of the police formations. Without these collaborators, however, the occupiers would have encountered difficulties in carrying out the genocide. From this perspective it is interesting to read the report of the Einsatzgruppen about the Babi Yar mass murders in the Ukraine in October

1941 which emphasizes the “extreme hostility toward the Jews.” “After the explosions in Kiev the Ukrainians believed that the Jews were the informers and agents of the NKVD who started the terror against the Ukrainian people. We arrested all the Jews for incendiaryism and on September 29 and 30 we executed a total of 33,771 Jews. We gathered the gold, other assets and clothing and gave it to the National Socialist Welfare Organization (NSV) to be used for the Germans and gave part of it to the newly appointed city administration to supply the needs of the local population.”

A secret report about the same incident was submitted by the NKVD to Ukrainian Party boss, Nikita Khrushchev, on Dec. 4. It confirms the negative behavior of some of the population who looted stores. It also reports that following the German entry on September 19, “a group of about three hundred anti-Soviet people greeted the Germans with flowers on Kalinin Square while the bells in the tower of the Pechorskaya monastery were rung. The solemn entry of the German troops was disturbed by the explosion of the bell tower of the monastery that caused the death of about forty Germans....” At the end of the document there is a brief and factual description of the Babi Yar massacre. “The Jewish population consisting mostly of old men, women and children came to the designated gathering place where all of them were executed. According to the report of prisoners of war, the Germans made the Jews take off their clothes, took all their valuables, made them lie down on top of each other and killed several with one shot. Approximately thirty thousand Jewish inhabitants were thus murdered in Kiev.”⁵²

In many small settlements, villages and kolkhozes the local police sought out and frequently killed Jews without the assistance of the Germans. According to Yitzhak Arad’s data, under the Reich Kommand Östland alone 4,428 Germans and 55,562 local residents were in service in October 1942. In November 1942 in the Ukraine and Southern Russia 10,194 Germans and 70,756 local residents were in service. In addition to the police battalions and other units the local residents were also organized into divisions and corps that were under the Wehrmacht, such as the Vlassov division, the SS Galicia Division, the Kazakh, the Estonian corps and others. These units did not directly participate in the massacres.

It must be mentioned that in the Baltic and Ukrainian areas the local forces began the mass murders as soon as the Germans started to occupy the large cities. In some of

the occupied territories local residents volunteered to serve in the SS execution squads. These units also served on the enclosed platforms where Jews were killed with exhaust fumes from trucks. These were used primarily in the Ukraine and in a report from Einsatzgruppe-D a certain SS Untersturmführer states on May 16, 1942, that, “The civilian population recognizes these trucks and calls them ‘death trucks.’”⁵³ In both the Baltic and in the Ukraine the collaboration of the local nationalist forces with the Nazis played a significant role in the genocide. On June 30, 1941 the leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the followers of Stepan Bandera proclaimed the rebirth of the Ukrainian state in Lviv [L’vov]. The local prime minister of the new “state,” Yaroslav Stietsko, declared, “Moscow and the Jews are the principal enemies of the Ukraine. For this reason I support the annihilation of the Jews and their extermination by German means in the Ukraine. I endorse its appropriateness and I oppose the assimilation of the Jews.”⁵⁴ The documents and minutes of the Ukrainian nationalist meetings clearly show their Nazi style and practice. They adopted the Nazi slogans about Judeo-Bolshevism but in some areas they implemented the genocide entirely independently. In 1942–1943, however, the Banderist group came into conflict with Germans who had no interest whatever in a Ukrainian state and from that time on it suspended any further Jewish massacres. This tactical maneuver came about only after the great majority of the Ukrainian Jews had been killed.

There are books and papers in Hungary which defend the anti-Moscow and anti-Communist armed struggle of the Ukrainian and Baltic “partisans” forgetting that the victors considered the Banderists to be war criminals because of the murder of tens of thousands of Jews, such as the Babi Yar, Ternopol and L’vov massacres. In Riga, Kaunas, Vilnius and other large cities the local nationalists organized the murder of tens of thousands of Jews, burning them alive in their synagogues. During the first few days and weeks of the war Latvian and Lithuanian volunteer fighters caught and murdered defenseless Jews and Communist Party functionaries. They murdered Jews in their own homes, raped the women before the eyes of their family and then killed them all. They looted and robbed. It was in Lithuania that the local population participated most willingly in the genocide. According to German reports there were at least twelve

thousand volunteers who helped in the mass murders during the first few weeks. A part of the Polish population also participated in the pogroms.

The Nazis used all possible means to inflame the local population. Heydrich, in an order issued on June 29, 1941, stated, "In the newly occupied territories the self-cleansing efforts of the anti-Communist and anti-Jewish circles must under no circumstances be interfered with. On the contrary, they should be encouraged and supported, but discreetly. They should be steered in the right directions but so that the local self-defense groups not be able to rely in the future on any promises or data that could be interpreted by them as political guarantees." It is not the Nazi cynicism that is noteworthy but the considerable momentum with which they endeavored to involve the widest possible circle of the local population in order to make them accessories to these crimes. The above should make clear the reasoning which led the Nazis to a different occupation policy. In none of the other occupied European countries did they wish to destroy a certain pre-determined percentage of the population, other than the Jews. However, the Nazis considered the reduction of the Russian and Belorussian populations to be particularly important and the decision was to gradually eliminate about fifty million Slavs.⁵⁵

It is a fundamental consideration that during the entire war the Nazis and their satellites did not kill as many people in all the other countries combined as in the Soviet Union alone. We have seen that Holocaust and genocide mean different things in practice and therefore must be distinguished from each other. Holocaust means the racially and/or politically based total eradication of the Jewish people and using every means to accomplish it. Genocide means the destruction of not only the Jews but also of other groups for political, military and other reasons, which eventually led to the destruction of millions of the Soviet population.

This cruelty, knowing no limits, was characteristic of events in the Baltic countries and in the South of Russia. In order to understand this, the role of historical precedents must be emphasized. The obvious effects of the German anti-Semitism must be emphasized from this perspective as well. Anti-Semitic propaganda always rose to hysterical levels after a major blood-bath as though a great act of justice had been performed. The resistance of the Jews in self-defense, which was never reported by the

Soviet press, was depicted as showing that the Jews had overturned the law and order. The Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943, in which six thousand inmate fighters participated, gave rise to the opportunity for the Nazis to frighten that part of the population involved in the genocide with the specter Jewish-Soviet revenge after the return of the Red Army.

The anti-Semitic propaganda, inspired and led by the Nazis, proved highly effective and significantly lessened the ability of the people in the occupied territories to resist the Nazi fascism. Yet Arad and Altman both mention the fact that the Soviet mechanism of seeking out enemies, practiced in the 1930s, infected large segments of the population and that the old method now wreaked havoc as it returned in a different context. Also, during the retreat of the Red Army a significant number of the prisoners in the jails were shot. The Nazis and their collaborators blamed the Jews for this and spread frightening rumors in order to maximize the cruelties against the Jews.

Jewish Resistance

Among Soviet Jews, in contrast with the Hungarian situation where there were rich and poor Jews, there were little if any social distinctions to divide them. There were no bankers, capitalists, major entrepreneurs and there were no “grand property-owners.” Consequently there could be no class-based distinctions. In Hungary, prior to the war, the Jews created a complicated social structure divided into classes. Most people wished to become assimilated and survive in the country allied to the Nazis, but after 1939 when anti-Semitic laws had been enacted, these attempts were doomed to complete failure. The Hungarian Jews were excluded from the non-Jewish majority, not by the German occupational policies as was the case in the Soviet Union, but by the domestic political developments. Before the war, the Jews integrated into Soviet society and were valued members as workers, factory directors, military commanders, commissars, teachers, scientists, agriculturists and writers. In contrast to the Horthy’s Hungary, there was a definite escape-evacuation plan in the Soviet Union after the Nazi attack. It was not,

however, specifically designed for Jews alone, as the Soviet leaders did not think in those terms. Also because they wished to deflect Nazi propaganda, they did not wish to handle the evacuation of Jews differently from the evacuation of the other Soviet nationalities. It was desirable to avoid the accusation that Soviet policy favored the Jews or treated them in a privileged fashion. Soviet leaders were well aware of the deep roots of popular anti-Semitism and were concerned about the impact of the Judeo-Bolshevik theme of German propaganda. Throughout the war they tried to avoid or deemphasize the issue in domestic policies. In foreign policy, the dismissal of Commissar of Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov in May 1939, and the reduction in the number of Jewish NKVD officers were not done for anti-Semitic considerations but for the sake of power politics aiming to influence Soviet-German relations. This was also true in the resettlement of the Caucasian groups. Ethnic consideration had no place in it. Rather, it was again a matter of power politics. The wartime resettlements were brought about because the authorities—rightly or wrongly—suspected these people of wishing to collaborate with the Nazis. The losses in the army were considered more important than the losses among the civilian population.

The Soviet peoples, including the Jews, were not prepared for the Nazi invasion. Stalin had a personal responsibility for this tragedy. Hungarian Jews were even less ready when the German occupation came in March 1944. Their leaders should have reacted to the events of the Soviet Holocaust. They should have publicized it at home. Instead, nothing pertinent was ever communicated to most of the Hungarian Jewry. The historical responsibility of the leading Jewish organizations or of the leaders of the religious communities has never been studied with impartiality and without an attempt to make excuses for them. The Budapest Jewish Council during the catastrophic spring of 1944, before and during the deportations, kept the “Auschwitz Minutes” (Vrba-report) from the Hungarian Jews even though it clearly described the events in the death camps. They acted as if did they not know what had been going on in the Soviet Union for years. Had they forgotten Kamenets-Podolsk? Did they not know that the Nazi massacres had become even more bestial when the military situation deteriorated? These are rhetorical questions. They knew but acted as though they did not.

Hannah Arendt states in her celebrated book wrote that,

self-deception had to have been developed to a high art to allow Hungarian Jewish leaders to believe at this moment that “it can’t happen here,”...and to keep believing it even when the realities contradicted this belief every day of the week...the Central Jewish Committee (as the Jewish Council was called in Hungary) had heard from neighboring Slovakia that Wisliceny, who was negotiating with them, accepted money readily, and they also knew that despite all bribes he “had deported all the Jews in Slovakia...” From which Mr. Freudiger concluded: “I understood that it was necessary to find ways and means to establish relationships with Wisliceny.”⁵⁶

To be sure, in Hungary the entire administration was at the disposal of the Nazis:

Eichmann himself was delighted with the organization that was excellent even by German standards and with the rapid and smooth progress of the action. The disciplined or enthusiastic participation of more than 200,000 Hungarian gendarmes, policemen and officials in the final solution of the Jewish problem surpassed his fondest expectations. German advisers participated in the discussions preceding the ‘concentration’, presented their requests and occasionally participated in guarding a camp or a ghetto. They could entrust everything else to the Hungarians.⁵⁷

Because in Hungary fighting anti-Fascism was against the law, the system and its power elite sank into the position of Nazi collaborators practically without resistance. The self-defense of the Jews remained unorganized and anti-Semitic were passed essentially without dissenting vote. During the war, Jews drafted into the army were used only as unarmed forced-labor troops, practically prisoners, deprived of basic human rights. Polish and Romanian Jews were not better off and, if anything, they were worse off. Anti-Semitic ordinances in Romania preceded the Nuremberg Racial Laws by one year and were enacted in 1934.⁵⁸ In Poland exclusionary laws were passed even earlier.

In contrast with this situation, a number of Jews fought in the Soviet Army and also in the partisan movement. In the Hungarian army the Jews in the forced labor battalions served as pariahs, the victims of the anti-Semitic, Jew-hating Horthy-system.

In Hungary the nature of the Jewish religious and social organizations was characterized not only by conservatism and an attitude of complete adaptation, but also by a political dependency and great fearfulness. The strong assimilation tendencies of the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led the Hungarian Jewry to abstain from the creation of any independent political representation. After the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, official Jewish religious organizations, using religious arguments, practically handed over the Jewish Communists and revolutionaries to the authorities and thus furthered anti-Semitism because in 1919 anti-Communism and anti-Semitism went hand-in-hand. This was the case even though many Jews were part of the counterrevolutionary movement because the Soviet Republic's activities were very hard on the bourgeois interests. "From this daze the Hungarian Israelite congregation never recovered even after the post-1933 German developments....They never realized the Arrowcrossist peril."⁵⁹

The psychological background for all of this can be seen in the shift to the extreme right of the Horthy system and in the German occupation that contributed to the rise of the guilt feeling within the Jewry. This "Heraus mit uns" self-flagellation became more deeply embedded in Hungarian Jewry on suggestion from Hungarian officialdom and from the occupying forces after March 19, 1944.⁶⁰ In order to understand the peculiarities of the Hungarian situation we might add that during the Klessheim visit, on April 16, 1943, Regent Miklós Horthy bragged to Hitler at a time when the Holocaust had already claimed about three million victims, "Hungary can claim that it was the first one in the world to take a stand in favor of anti-Semitism. The Regent cited numerous anti-Jewish ordinances, enacted in Hungary, such as the numerus clausus, the exclusion of the Jews from the universities, from cultural life and from all leading positions."⁶¹

In the religious communities in Hungary a very conservative group directed Jewish affairs which always put the interests of the rich Jews above those of the hundreds of thousands of poor Jews. This was true even in the period of the Holocaust. Among the Soviet Jews, in contrast to Hungary, in the ghettos, mostly among the men and in the

pre-1939 Soviet territories, the patriotic ethos of anti-Fascism appeared. There were no Soviet Rezső Kasztners who negotiated with the highest Nazi leadership although there were some low-level collaborators in the local Jewish councils many of whom stood before the people's courts after the war. The members of the Jewish councils were frequently recruited from the underground organizations or became members of them. Political and spiritual differences did not keep the Jewish Communists and the Baltic Zionists from working together on occasion. Yet, the well-organized Nazis controlled the situation of the Jews in the Soviet territories from the beginning.

The military authorities, when creating the first ghettos guarded by armed troops, frequently established Jewish councils which directed the Jewish forced laborers in the work camps or in the ghettos, surrounded by barbed wire or walls. The authorities used these councils to transmit their orders. In many places the local Jewish councils did the registering for the Nazi authorities or their local agents. The members of the councils answered for the enforcement of the orders with their life. Ghettos simplified the segregation and the assignment to labor battalions and sometimes functioned as the antechambers of annihilation. Sometimes they served only for segregation. In the larger ghettos there were a few hundred Jewish policemen, armed with sticks, who tried to help their families and friends. Many other ghetto policemen honestly and bravely participated in the resistance for which documents survive.

We must distinguish sharply between forced cooperation and collaboration. The purpose of the former was to alleviate the conditions for the captives and to improve the chances of protecting them, the latter served to alleviate the life of the Jewish Council and its circle by making the life of the other captives subservient to their own and the Nazi's interests. For example, this was what happened when the Budapest Jewish Council, that undoubtedly knew in April 1944 what was happening in Auschwitz and also knew about genocide going on in Soviet territories, did not convey this information to the Hungarian Jewry. It would certainly have created chaos among the Jews waiting for deportation and also among those doing the deporting. There was nothing the Nazis feared more than chaos, scattering, fleeing and resistance with all their technical consequences all of which can be observed in the history of the Holocaust on Soviet territory.

Although the post-1920s anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union survived into the thirties and the war, this phenomenon least affected the fighting units of the Red Army. Chaim Weizmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), met on June 25, 1943, with a delegation of Soviet Jews in the United States and at a luncheon in their honor said, “We must learn from the results achieved by the Russians in making the races and peoples equal. This is reflected in the historic speech that Stalin delivered on the 24th anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army and published in *Pravda* on February 23, 1943. Stalin said, ‘The Red Army is free of any racial feelings. It is free of this debasing sentiment because it was raised in the spirit of respect for the equality of the races and for other nationalities. It must also be remembered that in our country expressions of racial hatred are punished by law.’” “I am proud,” Weizman continued, “that there are six hundred thousand Jews fighting in the Red Army and innumerable Jews are fighting in the partisan groups....”⁶²

In the Red Army the soldiers could see the suffering of the Jews and the heroic deeds of the Jewish officers and soldiers. From the entire extent of the Soviet Union approximately five hundred thousand Jews participated in the Great Patriotic War and of these approximately two hundred thousand died. The highest decoration, the Hero of the Soviet Union Medal was awarded to 140 Jews, 45 of them posthumously. Viewed by nationality the Jews were fourth after the Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians. During the entire war the total number of Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality who were awarded a medal came to 160,722.⁶³ The Soviet soldiers and civilians were not aware of any of this and they did not even know that there were many tens of thousands of Jewish soldiers in the ranks of the Red Army. Consequently many Jews were and are suffering even today from the absurd prejudicial claim according to which the Jews did not fight but cowered in the rear. This delusion is reflected most clearly in the volume of documents entitled, “*Letters from the Jews to Ehrenburg.*”

After the first blows of the Holocaust the Soviet Jews began to understand that it was a matter of the total extermination of a people. In a number of ghettos underground movements were established that arranged for contacts with the non-Jews. In the Baltic area Jews of various political persuasions united to devise the battles of resistance. In the areas that belonged to the Soviet Union before 1939 the resistance struggle was led and

organized by the Communists and by the Red Army soldiers and officers who managed to escape from German POW detention. For the Jews the first critical step was to establish contact with the partisan groups in order to organize uprisings and mass escapes from the ghettos instead of individual escapes or assistance to escape while waiting for death. The partisans were willing to help because from among the Jews they could find needed physicians, dentists and explosive experts. The ghetto uprisings could be implemented only rarely because of the many arrests although in the forty-two ghettos of Belorussia the underground groups managed to get weapons, many of which were manufactured in local workshops. In the Kaunas ghetto young Zionists and Communists formed a united fighting organization during 1943 but partisan groups were formed in the Vilnius ghetto even earlier. It was here on January 1, 1942, that for the first time in any European ghetto a call for an uprising was issued the copies of which reached the ghettos in Warsaw, Belostok, Grodno and elsewhere. The proclamation of the young fighters knew exactly the message that had to be sent to the world and it is the recurring theme of the document, "Don't let them take you to slaughter like sheep."⁶⁴ And even though there was no uprising in the Vilnius ghetto it is certain that a number of escapees from the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettos participated in the Baltic partisan movement.

The most effective form of resistance proved to be the mass escape, if possible in a wooded area, that was timed just prior to the executions when the inmates had nothing to lose. If a mass of prisoners started running in various directions, even though unarmed, the SS would be unable to catch and slaughter all of them. Only the Treblinka armed resistance can be compared to the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto. The Treblinka affair is described by Vassily Grossman in "*The Hell of Treblinka*." The fight of the Jews led to the destruction of the death camp in August 1943.

All these escapes and uprisings required enormous spiritual, administrative and moral efforts that could be directed and led under the given conditions only by those who had the greatest possible moral strength. Armed resistance had the best chance when the ghettos were about to be liquidated and it was at this time that the greatest loss could be inflicted on the enemy. The Soviet army leadership and the partisan leadership in Moscow were not concerned with such "minor issues" with little potential impact and therefore the Jews had to implement these actions on their own. After any such attempt

the SS took punitive measures and shot a certain percent of the prisoners thus moving up the time of the inevitable deaths.

The other important aspect of the Jewish resistance movement was the participation in the partisan movement. The literature of this activity sets the number of Jewish partisans between fifteen and thirty thousand. The fighters of the Jewish partisan movement were recruited from escaped prisoners and from the fleeing civilian population. Escaping from the concentration camp or from the ghetto did not necessarily mean freedom. If the escapees could not contact the partisans they had to keep their nationality secret and had to procure documents that proved that they were not Jews. And it was most important that the local population not hand them over to the occupying forces or to the local police. There were local people who risked their life by hiding the escapees. It was easier to hide in the villages than in the cities. In the villages a hide-out could be attached to a house because in the villages the houses were more isolated from each other and thus the secret was easier to keep from the neighbors. Furthermore, in the small villages there were no German troops or local police.

People who were willing and determined to help were very few in numbers. The expert in this field, Yitzhak Arad, summarized the problem as follows, "The great majority of the population limited their activities to those of a spectator. One part was indifferent toward the fate of their former neighbors. This behavior had a variety of motives. Fear of German retribution, anti-Semitism, selfishness, etc." It was not only in the Soviet Union that the SS found a strong support group in the local population. As an example it might be mentioned that, when in 1944 during their retreat in Yugoslavia the Germans were forced to close the Bor mines, the Hungarian forced-labor Jews were started on a death march toward Hungary. The murder brigades consisted of Hungarian speaking German and Bosnian SS troops. It was on this march that the poet Miklós Radnóti was shot to death by his guards in the village of Abda.

The number of Soviet Jews who were saved in the occupied territories by the local population is not significant. There are no data available for the number of Jews who survived in this way but Arad says that it can be assumed that the number is much less than 1 percent of the entire Jewish population. Particularly in the beginning, the Jews received no assistance whatever in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union from

the anti-fascist or other underground groups. Such help, in a limited way, was available in some countries in Western Europe, in Poland and in Hungary and was provided by underground organizations. Its lack in the Soviet Union can be attributed to several causes. Initially the underground movement was weaker in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union than in the Western countries because of the more relentless German terror used in conducting a total war. For tactical reasons the Soviet government and the leadership of the Party did not wish to emphasize the “Jewish aspects” of the resistance. In spite of this, thousands of Jews, including escapees from the ghettos, joined the ranks of the partisans.

It must be mentioned that there were significant tensions between the partisan movement and the Jews and the Jewish partisan groups. Particularly in the beginning the Soviet partisans did not know what to do with the Jews accompanied by families and children when they themselves had enormous difficulties in managing and transporting their own elderly and ailing. In the Ukraine the problem was different. Here the anti-Semitic nationalists joining the partisans tried to raise suspicions vis-à-vis the Jews. At the same time we find Jewish commanders, and Jewish Soviet officers and men who had escaped from POW camps among the leaders of the partisan movement. Already in 1941 partisans were placed behind the fighting lines in the Belorussian forests and there were eighty-seven partisans of Jewish nationality in these small detachments. In other areas Jewish partisan groups fought very well and frequently joined Belorussian, Ukrainian or Russian partisan groups. The war-diary of the Jewish partisan unit active in the Rudnyk forest survives and lists the thirty-nine actions taken during 1943–1944 and their outcome. They destroyed telephone and telegraph wires and roads. They performed actions in Vilnius, blew up rolling stock, rails, cars, motorcycles, military transport vehicles, etc.⁶⁵ There were Jewish partisan groups established in the Polesie and Volin forests and in other more eastern areas. There were at least three thousand Jewish fighters among Sydir Kovpak and Aleksandr Saburov’s Ukrainian partisans and there were groups where the Jews were in majority. These were mostly young men who had escaped from the ghettos. In the forests of Smolensk and Briansk and in the partisan groups around Leningrad many Jewish fighters distinguished themselves in the daring actions. A separate Jewish Company served in the Lenin Partisan Brigade under the

command of the Soviet officer, David Mudrik. From Minsk to Kishinov a number of Jewish Soviet and Party leaders were dropped behind the front. The leaders of the illegal Minsk and Mogilov Party committees were Jewish Communists. The Jewish physicians and health workers had a particularly important role in the partisan movement.

The Moscow leadership of the partisan movement opposed the formation of independent Jewish partisan units because the partisan movement was organized along territorial and republican and not national and/or ethnic lines. They frequently forcefully enrolled the Jews into their own groups and it did happen in the western part of Belorussia that their weapons were taken away and they were left alone in the forest where their survival without weapons was very unlikely. In western Belorussia the Polish Home Army of anti-communist Polish partisans fought on a nationalist basis and killed many Jews. In the forest of western Ukraine the nationalists belonging to the Polish partisan movement also persecuted the Jews. The reason for these murders was not only anti-Semitism but the Jews were viewed as pro-Soviet elements and were persecuted as such.

Yitzhak. Arad summarizes the significance of the Jewish partisan movement, “Many Jewish partisans acquired great merit in the fight against the Germans and their satellites. They attacked the German bases and police formations. They mined railroads and blew up trains heading to the front. Thousands of Jews paid with their lives for these underground activities during the ghetto revolts and the partisan battles. They contributed to the destruction of Hitler’s Germany and to the expulsion of the enemy from Soviet territory. The Jewish partisans wrote glorious pages in the history of the Soviet and Jewish peoples’ fight against the German invaders.” In any case we can forget the myth that the Jews allowed themselves to be massacred like sheep and passively endured the Nazi tyranny.

Apparatus Anti-Semitism and the Cold War

Anti-Fascism and Anti-Semitism

The Soviet leadership, with Stalin at its head, reacted to the Holocaust with any merit only late in the summer of 1941 although on the second day of the invasion, on June 24, the Soviet Information Bureau (Sovinform) was established under Communist Party Secretary Aleksandr Shcherbakov, charged with organizing counteraction against Nazi propaganda. With the assistance of the great Soviet writers, Alexey Tolstoy and Mikhail Sholokhov, they formulated a concept that emphasized the general genocidal tendencies of Nazism and not its specific anti-Semitic nature. The Nazis were fighting not only against the Jews but also against the Slavs and against the entire Soviet population. The Soviet authorities had precise information about the fundamental facts of the Jewish genocide.

The facts of the Nazi genocide were first presented to the country and the world, with the assistance of the Soviet leadership, by a group of the leading Soviet Jewish intellectuals in August 1941. They applied to Aleksandr Lozovsky, the deputy chief of the Soviet Information Bureau with the recommendation that the first all-Soviet meeting of the Jews be summoned. The basic purpose of the meeting was the revival of the anti-fascist propaganda that had fallen into abeyance during the life of the Soviet-German pacts, to show the entire Soviet Union the nature of the Nazi genocide, the anti-Semitic goals and practical actions of Hitlerism and to call for anti-fascist, self-defense resistance. Every speech emphasized the unbreakable link between Jewish self-defense and the liberation of the Soviet Union created by the Nazi atrocities. Ehrenburg, the world-famous author who enjoyed Stalin's confidence, used his poetic language to state, "My mother tongue is Russian. And like every Russian writer I defend my country. The Nazis remind me of something else. My mother's name was Hanna, I am a Jew. I say this with pride... We curse those who wash their hands. We will not condone indifference. Help everyone who fights against the bloodthirsty enemy..."⁶⁶ The participants at the meeting accepted the call to the world's Jewry to collect equipment for the Red Army. On August 24 there was a very effective radio program where the best-known representatives of Soviet Jewry, Mikhoels, Ehrenburg, Samuel Marshak, Eisenstein, Markish and others described the facts of the Nazi genocide. All this was published in the central press as well. From the August 25, 1941 issue of *Pravda*

everybody should have known, in theory, that in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union the Nazis were enacting the systematic eradication of the Jewish people. This document was signed by the outstanding Jewish public figures, scientists and artists and was entitled, “Jewish Brethren of the Whole World”. The signatories included, in addition to the above, David Oistrakh the violin virtuoso, Piotr Kapitsa the physicist-academician and member of the Royal Society and others. They made it evident that there was a genocide all through Europe and particularly in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union and issued a call for a “Holy War” against fascism.

The program and the proclamation echoed throughout the West. Weizmann wrote a letter, on October 9, 1941, to Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, that contained a call addressed to the Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow. The document turned to world Jewry asking that in solidarity with the Soviet Union they unite in the fight against Hitler and assured the Soviet group that world Jewry would never abandon the common cause.⁶⁷

While the Soviet leaders emphasized the overall manifestations of Nazi atrocities, Stalin in his speech on November 6, 1941, on the eve of the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, mentioned and condemned the anti-Jewish Nazi mass-terror. Molotov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs was the one who dealt with the Holocaust in public. In a note, dated January 6, 1942, he condemned the Babi Yar, Odessa, Lviv, and other Nazi mass-murders in the Ukraine. In his memorandum of April 28, he listed the newest sites for the Holocaust, Taganrog, Kerch, Minsk, Vitebsk and Pinsk. He no longer spoke specifically of the Jews but mentioned the peaceful Soviet citizens, suggesting that this was not just the extirpation of one nationality but that the campaign was conducted against the entire Soviet population.⁶⁸

In November 1942 the Special State Commission was established and charged with investigating the Nazi atrocities. On December 19, 1942, the Information Bureau of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs published a summary of the Commission’s reports and this was published in *Pravda* on the same day. Now Soviet public was able receive data about the murder of the Jews.

In preparing the document NKVD material was also used which on Konstantin Umansky’s request Molotov had obtained from Lavrenti Beria. In this there is a clear

reference indicating that, since the beginning of the year, Hitler was implementing a systematic plan (Wannsee) designed to physically eradicate the European Jewry. It is interesting that an objective description of the situation of the Hungarian Jews, working in the Soviet Union in the forced labor battalions, was included. Henceforth the world should have known everything about the Holocaust, at least in principle. On December 18, 1942, all Soviet central newspapers published an announcement by twelve countries, including the Soviet Union, declaring that the atrocities of the Nazis against the peaceful Soviet population were war crimes for which the Nazi leaders would have to answer. In this announcement they called the atrocities against European Jewry the most serious crime of Nazism. This also had international significance. Prior to this, on October 14, a special announcement was made by the Soviet government about the Nazi genocide on Soviet territory that was an answer to the call of the nine allied nations to place the Nazi criminals before an international tribunal. These documents did not contain any practical call for the saving of the Jews still surviving in the ghettos and concentration camps nor did they alert the partisans to do whatever possible to help. At the end of 1942 the numbers were still in the hundreds of thousands. The Western Great Powers, perhaps because of the anti-Semitic sentiments of their population or for military strategic reasons, did not assign any significance to the genocide and did not take any effective counter-measures while the Red Army fought its life and death battle in Stalingrad.

In 1943 Molotov issued seven papers on the Nazi genocide but Jews were mentioned in only one. Even this one mention was due to the prestige of Alexey Tolstoy, a member of the commission, who insisted that it be done.⁶⁹ It would be improper to assign the Soviet propaganda machine—the agitprop promoted silence to a conceptual anti-Semitic policy, as has been done by a number of writers on the subject. It was rather because of the anti-Semitism that flourished on domestic Soviet soil, that the Jewish aspects of the genocide were not emphasized. Soviet propaganda emphasized that the genocide was conducted against all the people. When they addressed the situation in other countries, Soviet propagandists emphasized the Jewish aspects of the genocide in order to gain foreign assistance and did not censor the information. The Soviet leadership and Stalin himself, according to his personal, characteristic military and foreign policy interests, suggested the establishment of an organization, later called the

Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. It was a social organization in the Soviet Union under the direct supervision of the Soviet political leaders. Its goal was to secure assistance from foreign Jews and from the Western Great Powers. Starting in 1941, the Soviet authorities worked closely with the world Zionist movement. Weizman, David Ben Gurion and other Jewish leaders met regularly with Soviet diplomats and it would be improper to underestimate the moral and economic advantages ensuing from these meetings. The Soviet leaders felt that some matters had to be emphasized for domestic purposes and some others were important abroad. The tendency to consider the Holocaust primarily as a subject for literary discussion could be observed already during the war and became characteristic later on for decades. "It is better not to make a political issue out of it." The political leadership, including the Soviet leaders of Jewish nationality, such as Kaganovich, Mekhlis and others, agreed that keeping the "Jewish Question" on the agenda weakened the Soviet state rather than strengthening it.

Years later, around 1948, the presence of anti-Semitic thought was evident but there were always other trends as well that considered taking the "Jewish Question" off the agenda appropriate because this decreased the anti-Semitic influence in both the Party and the country. Sooner or later this problem emerged in a number of areas mainly in the Communist parties in Eastern Europe. This was related to the fact that practically every European Communist Party was the child of mismatched parents, the national left wing and the internationalist-world revolution originating in the October Revolution.

A.S. Shcherbakov, the Central Committee Secretary was in charge of the administrative aspects of the developing Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC). The *Sovietinformbureau* first mentioned it, together with other anti-fascists organizations, in April 1942. It was under the supervision of this committee that the Jewish newspaper *Einigkait* [Unity] started in the summer of 1942. The second anti-fascist meeting of the Jewish community, in May 1942, addressed a proclamation to world Jewry and called on the Jews in the Soviet Union and everywhere in the world to fight against Nazism. At the same time it informed the world about the newest atrocities that the Germans had committed.

According to the original idea of Stalin, the JAC came into being with the basic mission to turn to the diaspora, but particularly to the American Jews for support. This

included the Jewish capitalists who were also asked to defend the Soviet Union and support the Red Army. The third Jewish meeting on April 2, 1944, considered the victims among the Jewish people. Contrary to Stalin's intentions, the JAC increasingly became an internal Jewish organization and assumed defensive functions that were displeasing to some of the Soviet leaders. Some politicians, particularly the party apparatchiks, working in the area of propaganda and agitation, intentionally exaggerated the role of the JAC and started making anti-Semitic statements. There is no doubt that it was at this time that a novel but characteristic form of anti-Semitism reappeared under state socialism, namely the apparatus anti-Semitism. This was a complex, multi-level issue that embodied the conflict between various power blocs and the fight for greater influence. Leading Central Committee apparatchiks like Matvey Shkiryatov and E.E. Andreyev saw the JAC as an evolving "Commissariat of Jewish Affairs." They could not dismantle it during the war because of foreign policy considerations but they kept the organization under constant pressure.⁷⁰

These manifestations had an ideological background. Shcherbakov, the director of the Agitprop Department of the Central Committee and Georgy Alexandrov, one of the leading Party philosophers of the time, after the great military defeats, from the middle of 1942, following good historical precedent, initiated a "Hurrah-Patriotic" line in which every Russian was transfigured. In this context, the apparatus campaign to "purify" Russian art was supplemented with "democratization" in cadre policies, meaning that the nationality composition of the cadres was administratively influenced. It was during the war that outstanding Jewish editors, who had significant cultural achievements, were removed from their positions. In 1943, for instance, the editor in chief of the army paper *Krasnaya Zvezda*, David Ortenberger, who on Stalin's order wrote under the pen-name of Vadimov, was dismissed.

In 1943 the composers Dmitry Shostakovich and Nikolay Myaskovsky protested against the anti-Semitic cadre policies. The dismissal of the Rector of the Moscow Conservatory, Alexander Goldenveizer, could serve as an example. It appeared to be an anti-Semitic action that was disguised when in 1946 it was "made good" by awarding Goldenveizer the "Artist of the Soviet Union" award, and the following year he received the Stalin Prize. Mihail Romm also apraised Stalin about the anti-Semitic cadre policies.

This covert anti-Semitism must not be mixed in with the official, “legal” state anti-Semitism evident signs of which appeared at the time of the post-1948 anti-cosmopolitan campaign.

The apparatus anti-Semitism established its true meaning in the internal fights of Party and state organizations and in the internal conflicts of the various apparatuses. “Jewish overrepresentation” as a basic argument in this type of anti-Semitism was always a tool of somebody or some organization endeavoring to grasp or supervise some power base or occupational status.

The appearance of this strange political trend cannot be separated from the revival of popular anti-Semitism that seemed to preserve some the effects of the Nazi propaganda. The garden variety anti-Semitism used the old techniques to find a scapegoat for the wartime miseries. Pointing to the evacuated Jews, there were anti-Semitic actions in the Soviet rear of which both the NKVD and the JAC informed the Soviet leadership on the basis of complaints that these two organizations had received. In the letters censored by the military, at the time of the battle of Moscow in November 1941, anti-Semitic statements were found although the large majority of the letters referred positively to the above mentioned November 6 solemn and morale-boosting speech of Stalin. We can find such comments, however, “Only the Jews can leave Moscow. You cannot see a single Jew in Moscow. They have all escaped including the highest leadership.”⁷¹

In the later years of the war the wounded in the rear and some of the poorest people committed uncontrolled outbreaks under the influence of the general anti-Semitic mood. It was said that, “The Jews sit in nice warm places and do not participate in the war.” Occasionally acts of violence took place. All this was unsupportable not only because of the Holocaust but also because the percentage of Jewish soldiers was approximately the same as that of the other nationalities. Data quoted above support the statement that Jewish soldiers fought with great courage in the Red Army. Many Jews wrote to Mikhoels or Ehrenburg asking for assignment to the front because they wanted to revenge themselves on the Germans for the murder of their family, relatives, friends and comrades. Yet, people knew nothing about this and such information was not made available to them. The anti-Semitism in the country caused serious concerns early and in

the highest places. On October 15, 1942 V.M. Bochkov, Vishinski's deputy informed the chief public prosecutor about the situation in Kazakhstan, "In the entire republic, in the first half of 1942, twenty men were sentenced for pogrom-agitation, incitement and prejudiced anti-Jewish hooliganism. Between August 1 and September 4 in Alma-Ata and Semipalatinsk alone forty-two men were sentenced."

On February 18, 1943, the JAC targeted the manifestation of recurring anti-Semitism and this was done on the personal initiative of Ehrenburg. It was the first time that anti-Semitic activities were condemned before a wide public. The fight against domestic anti-Semitism was designated as the principal task of the Committee. The leaders of the JAC turned directly to the Chairman of the Council of Commissars Joseph Stalin, in a letter dated February 15, 1944, in which they summarized the wartime accomplishments of the Soviet Jews and contrasted these with the anti-Semitic manifestations seen in some areas of the Soviet Union.

During the last phases of the war and immediately after the war there were local flare-ups of anti-Semitism that were caused by the Jews returning to the liberated territories and demanding their former property, particularly their homes, thus giving rise to many local arguments. On May 26, 1944, Mikhoels and Epstein wrote to Beria, "Dear Lavrenti Pavlovich, We are transmitting to you the copies of some letters received by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee proving that a number of abnormal actions had been taken against the Jews in a number of areas." At another time they wrote to Molotov about the abuses that took place in the distribution of Red Cross aid packages. In their October 28, 1944, letter they stated, "Dear Vyacheslav Mikhailovich! In an earlier letter we drew your attention to a number of impermissible events....With very few exceptions the local authorities ignore the needs of the Jewish population when such aid packages are distributed. Even the Jewish partisans in the Ukraine, Belorussia and other Republics receive nothing. As we had pointed out these abnormal events are becoming known in the United States and other countries and the hostile press uses this widely in their anti-Soviet propaganda...."

In the fall of 1945 there was even a pogrom in Kiev, just like in Hungary in Kunmadaras in 1946. The atrocities were triggered everywhere by the same event, the demand of the returning Jews for their former homes. All this became evident from the

letter written by the Jewish frontline fighters to Stalin and from the investigation into the allegations. They wrote about the anti-Semitism to the “beloved leader” as though it had already affected the highest leadership of the Ukrainian Central Committee. They sent their protest to Beria and also to Pietr Pospelov, the editor of *Pravda* and a member of the Central Committee. In 1947 Stalin sent Lazar Kaganovich to the Ukraine as the new Party boss to do away with separatism. The anti-Semites in the Ukraine always viewed the Jews as the agents of Moscow’s centralization. Kaganovich did conclude that the intellectuals in the Ukraine had to be cleaned of fascism. Several, hard to reconcile endeavors clashed in this area.

The power structure always asserted its interest in and solidarity with the Jews. Frequently this was hypocrisy but frequently it was real support. The same Beria who later supported Stalin’s anti-Semitic policies when the JAC was eliminated, sent the following letter to the Ukraine in 1944 in response to the above cited letter by Mikhoels, “...Let the Central Committee and the Ukrainian Council of Commissars advise Comrade Khrushchev to issue orders for the support of the Jews....because they suffered particular oppression from the German occupiers, in ghettos, concentration camps, etc. As part of this the orphans should be located and placed in appropriate children’s homes....”⁷² Later Andrey Zhdanov, the powerful Central Committee secretary, took a stand against the anti-Semitic trend in the above mentioned power struggle. In the environment of intrigue, this apparatus anti-Semitism further revived the existing intellectual anti-Semitism that had deep roots and that traditionally delivered an anti-Soviet message.

As mentioned above, in 1942–43 for the sake of political expediency, there was a conspiracy of silence about the Holocaust. The best example of this is that when the victims of Babi Yar were listed in the volumes of the Special State Commission the word “Jew” was crossed out everywhere and was substituted by “peaceful Soviet citizen.” Both Molotov and Khrushchev, the leader of the Party in the Ukraine, agreed with this.⁷³ Though this policy was not pursued for anti-Semitic reasons, certain anti-Semites could endorse a political trend that was manifested in slogans like, “Don’t place the situation of the Jews into a central position” or “Let the Jews draw back somewhat from the politically exposed positions.” The Soviet leaders did not wish to give the Germans the opportunity to call them “Jew-Stooges” and did not wish to appear in the eyes of their

own people as though the Germans were right and the Jews indeed had a privileged position in the Soviet Union. It is also true that the vast majority of the Soviet victims, in absolute numbers, were Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians. The Soviet leaders did not wish to single out the Jews as victims, in order to deflate the appeal of local anti-Semitism that was frequently associated with anti-Sovietism and almost always took on an anti-Communist appearance.

Altman assumes that keeping quiet about the Holocaust after the war was done in order to avoid investigating the responsibility of the Soviet leaders for the Holocaust. On this basis, one could point a finger at the West as well so that here we are probably dealing with a common interest on the part of the victorious powers. It is debated to this day why Auschwitz, the railway lines, the crematoria and the gas chambers were not bombed from the air.⁷⁴

After the war the JAC performed a Jewish defense function in which the Soviet Jews saw their representation in the Soviet Union and in the world. From the beginning there were tensions between the interests of the centralizing authorities and the interests of the Jewish autonomous organizations. During the war these differences in interest could be viewed as marginal in comparison to what happened later due to the dramatic changes in the post-war Soviet-Israel and Soviet-United States relationships. The beginning phases of the Cold War were particularly damaging to the relationship between the Jews and the Soviet political leadership.

There was a change after the war during the anti-cosmopolitan campaign in 1949. The apparatus anti-Semitism flourished and controlled the important areas of public policy until the death of Stalin. There were numerous contributing causes. Because of the lack of adequate study of the Holocaust there were large social groups whose repressed guilt feelings resulted in aggression. The problem is naturally incomprehensible if we ignore the development of the Cold War, the rapid functional shifts in areas of the Middle East, the international power struggle and the rising Jewish nationalist sentiment following the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948. In addition the revival of the apparatus anti-Semitism was furthered by Stalin's old-age anti-Semitism that is explained by many as the result of his dissatisfaction with his Jewish relatives, particularly with the Jewish spouses of his children. Actually in his case we are

not dealing with an ethnic, religious or social anti-Semitism but the political anti-Semitism of a ruler who mishandled the Soviet foreign policy. He disguised his anti-Semitism as anti-Zionism. This manifestation, with real anti-Semitism in the background, became ever more widely spread. The apparently innocent statement that, “We suffered just as much as the Jews, members of our family died too” could be heard with increasing frequency. The number of Jews murdered amounted to approximately only 10 percent of the Soviet losses but considerably more than half of Soviet Jewry perished. The number of non-Jewish victims was approximately twenty-four million, amounting to 16 percent of the total population. The oppressive and debasing manifestations of the garden variety anti-Semitism can be seen from the letters that Jews, belonging to various societal groups, wrote to Ehrenburg.⁷⁵

The Cold War, the West and, particularly, the United States’ global challenge with a foreign cultural and political penetration appeared to threaten the internal stability of the Soviet military world power and sphere of interest. The spiritual and/or political rebuilding of the Stalin dictatorship started from an isolation psychosis that permeated all of Eastern Europe.

The Soviet Jews and the Establishment of the State of Israel

The history of the Soviet Jews’ suffering was recorded very promptly. There were the investigational minutes of the state commissions that followed the advancing troops of the Red Army and that were submitted to the Nuremberg tribunal as the basic documentation of the Holocaust.⁷⁶ On Ehrenburg’s initiative the JAC started considering the production of a volume documenting the Nazi mass murders, the *Black Book*, reconstructing the horrible events of the Holocaust on the basis of eyewitness accounts. On recommendation from the JAC the collection of material was begun in the summer of 1943. Ehrenburg invited Vassily Grossman, the outstanding writer, to be an associate and, within the framework of an international organization generously supported by Albert Einstein from the United States, the work began. The book was finished rapidly, in spite of internal arguments and trials. In vain did Ehrenburg turn to

the Party's agitprop committee in August 1944, in the interest of a Russian language edition. The Central Committee Secretary Shcherbakov, with the agreement of Alexandrov delayed the publication indefinitely. It was published in Russian only in 1993.

The politicians decided that the history of the Nazi genocide would not have a specifically Jewish angle on the "internal market" and that this history would have to be written abroad. In fact the *Black Book* was published, in an edited version, in the United States and played a significant role in Nuremberg. It was never available to Soviet readers. The fate of the book became part of the history of the reception of the fate of the Jews and Holocaust in the postwar memory.

At this time it seemed more important that the Soviet leaders try to compensate the Jewish survivors. The Soviet had several reasons for compensating the Jews other than the suffering the Jews had endured. Successful cooperation with the international Jewish organizations seemed to raise positive perspectives concerning economic cooperation. Stalin was very confident that American capital would assist in the reconstruction of the Soviet Union because that country suffered by far the most in the war against the Nazis. A role was played also by the United States' interest in the Middle East endeavoring to remove the British with the assistance of the Soviet. The geo-strategic position of this oil-rich area understandably raised the Soviet leaders' interest. It became apparent even during the war, however, that the cooperation of the Soviet Union with international Zionist and Jewish organizations and with the United States in the war against the fascists served mutual interests but also raised potential opposing interests.

Stalin would have preferred to get rid of the JAC as early as 1946, because it enjoyed too much autonomy and might serve as a model for some other national minorities. In the administrative power struggle the apparatus anti-Semitism directed by Shcherbakov and Alexandrov again made an appearance with its customary argument of Jewish overrepresentation. At the beginning of 1946, 3.65 percent of the Party membership was Jewish while the Jews represented only 1–1.5 percent of the total Soviet population. This type of anti-Semitism, claiming overrepresentation was able to justify itself in other East-European countries as well.

The problems with JAC came to a head when it became evident that the United States would not support Soviet reconstruction and that it wished to establish Western Europe economically as its own base against the Soviet Union. It was in this way that the Soviet leaders viewed the start of the Marshall Plan in the summer of 1947. The American supporters of the Cold War like Dean Rusk, the Director of the UN Division in the State Department opined that, “The increasingly sympathetic attitude of the Soviet Union toward Jewish Palestine is related to the fact that the Marshall Plan is the United States’ principal weapon against the Soviet Union...and Russia wishes to abort its implementation and align the European Jewry, and perhaps the American Jewry as well, on its side....”

In fact is that the Soviet Union would have liked to have a joint position with the United States in the Palestinian matter. It was during the war, in 1943, that the Soviet leadership, well before the Americans, recognized that the Great Powers had to establish a Jewish National Home in Palestine.⁷⁷ The Zionist leaders quickly recognized the trend of this complex process. The May 27, 1943, letter of Nahum Goldmann, the founder of the World Jewish Congress in 1936 and the representative of the Washington Jewish Agency for Palestine, to Edvard Beneš, the president of Czechoslovakia, concerning the relationship between the Zionist movement and Soviet-Russia stated,

The severe conflict that resulted in the arrest of a number of Zionists [in the Soviet Union] has two reasons. There is an internal ideological reason that was expressed in the antagonism between Zionist workers’ organizations and the Communist Jews. The latter saw world revolution as the only possible solution and rejected all forms of national separatism. On the other hand the Soviets believed that Zionism would realize the British interests. Today, these reasons have lost their validity. This would explain why the Soviet-Russian diplomats have shown more understanding for Zionism than the Jewish Communists.”

The letter indicated that the Soviet leadership was more sympathetic toward the establishment of a Jewish Palestinian autonomy. Goldman emphasized another political fact as well. “If we take the present war then the Arab leaders openly or in secret take a

pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist stand...Egypt that has a treaty with England according to which it should have declared war on Germany and Italy, remained neutral even when the Nazis approached Alexandria.” He explained further that the ideological and/or social conditions of establishing a new state are given because, “the majority of the Palestinian Jews are not Communists but think of the new society as a society of justice, equality and communal property.”⁷⁸ Yet Stalin was not concerned either then or later with the problems of social organization but only with questions of power. He never thought about letting a part of the Jewish work force, raised on the idea of communal property, depart later to Israel even though the matter was raised at the time.

In the center of Zionist considerations stood the idea of the emigration of the Soviet Jews and they viewed the JAC as an agency that could assist in realizing the mission of Zionism. The practical purpose of the Goldman letter was to enlist Beneš’ support for the post-war Zionist program, namely for the emigration of the Eastern-European and Soviet Jews.

In any event, in 1944 it was natural for the Soviet diplomats to inform the Soviet leaders in Moscow about the problems of creating a Jewish state and about the conflicting power interests of the British that were expressed in their support of a “United Pan-Arabic Federation.”

Litvinov was charged with the peace negotiations and was the president of the committee for postwar arrangements. His extensive notes, dated July 27, 1945, reveal that the Great Powers considered the creation of a Jewish State a moral duty. It was a form of compensation in answer for their omissions and “guilty conscience.” The decisive factor was the realization of the Great Power interests within the new international power structure and this meant that the Middle-Eastern vacuum had to be filled after the departure of the British. Litvinov wrote, “Palestine guards the road to the Suez Canal and the path to the Iraqi oil fields leads through it. This is far too valuable for England to be allowed to fall into the hands of another country, let alone the Soviet Union...”⁷⁹ A number of documents recorded the common interests with the United States. The secret memorandum sent on March 6, 1947, by Boris Steyn, a Councilor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union to Andrey Vishinsky the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs states, “The interests of America in Palestine became much

stronger during World War II, in connection with the concessions that aimed at developing the richest oil producing areas in Saudi Arabia and also envision the building of an American pipe-line leading from Arabia to the Mediterranean as well as the building of refineries in Palestine....” According to the assessment of the Soviet foreign affairs leaders the reason for the present conflict between the Great Britain and the United States was that the USA, aware of the importance of two million American Jewish voters, was leaning toward the acceptance of the Soviet position. The essence of this position was, 1. Termination of the British Mandate, 2. The withdrawal of the British troops from Palestine, 3. The UN working out the details for a united, independent, democratic Palestine that guarantees equal rights to all the people living there, 4. The resolution of the Jewish question, impossible in Western Europe, could be arranged only by emigration to Palestine after the “complete eradication of fascism there can give the Jews the possibility of a normal existence.”⁸⁰

The turning point was the speech of Andrey Gromiko, the Soviet Union’s permanent representative at the United Nations, who said at the special meeting of the UN General Assembly on May 14, 1947, “The experiences of the past, particularly during World War II have shown that there was no country in Western Europe that could give adequate support to the Jewish people to protect its rights and existence vis-à-vis the Hitlerites and their allies and ...this is the source of the Jewish people’s endeavor to create their own country. It would be unjust if we would not take this into account and deny the Jewish people’s right to implement this endeavor. Denying this right of the Jewish people can not be justified, particularly if we take into account everything that it suffered during World War II.”⁸¹

Even though the Soviet Union approached the creation of a Jewish state very cautiously until the very end, Molotov addressed a memorandum to Stalin on October 26, 1947, in which, on the basis of Vishinski’s recommendation, he sketched an idea about an independent Jewish State and an independent Arab state as an immediate political goal. The memorandum contains the following comment relative to Stalin’s secretary, “Comrade [Aleksandr] Poskrebyshv [Stalin’s secretary] advised us via the special governmental connection that Comrade Stalin agrees . X.28. Podtserob.” At the second General Meeting of the UN, on November 26, 1947, Gromyko came out strongly in favor

of establishing a Jewish State in Palestine because the Jews and the Arabs could not agree to have a common state. He justified the support of the Soviet Union with, "...The Jewish people suffered more during World War II than any other nation. You know that there was no country in Western Europe that could protect the interests of the Jews from the Hitlerite tyranny and violence."⁸²

Many letters of thanks were sent to the Soviet leaders. On May 15, 1948, M. Moshe Shertok, identifying himself as the new Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, advised Molotov that the State of Israel had been proclaimed and assured the Soviet Union of its gratitude. It is well known that as soon as the Jewish State was established the surrounding Arab countries, with British support attacked Israel. This caused an uproar in the Soviet Union and caused a flare-up of nationalist feelings among the Soviet Jews. Grigory Heyfetz, one of the leaders of the JAC advised the Central Committee of the Party as follows, "A multitude of volunteers reports to the JAC to participate in the fight against the aggressors and fascists." Red Army soldiers and students wanted to go fight against the Arab fascists and their British allies. During the first few days eighty students from the University of Moscow reported as volunteers. Even Colonel David Dragunsky, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, was swayed by these voices and Golda Gorbman, the wife of Marshal Kliment Voroshilov, allegedly said, "Well, now we also have a homeland."⁸³ Any such help or overt military assistance, however, was most decidedly barred by the Soviet government.

The Soviet Jews started a collection and wanted to send packages to their "Jewish brethren." There were some who offered their monthly salary. By this time the Soviet leaders, and particularly Stalin, viewed the mass-manifestations of Jewish national "separateness" with marked disfavor because they saw it as a manifestation threatening to disrupt Soviet unity. It appears from the minutes of the JAC presidential meeting of June 7, 1948 that although they accepted solidarity with Israel because of the attack of Arab armies with British and Hitlerite officers serving with them, but, at the same time they distanced themselves from the "bourgeois nationalist spirit." The JAC drafted an opinion that must pleased even Stalin. "A form of Zionism is now coming to the surface that was previously hidden. We can see this from the letters. People believe that a form of Zionism is being legalized today that we condemn.... We must write a series of articles

for *Einigkeit* that teaches patriotism and represses the mood of the inhabitants of Zhmerinka and other similar things.” The latter was a reference to the beginning of emigration in a number of places.⁸⁴

By this time an anti-Zionist mood, directed from above and previously unknown in the Soviet Union, became apparent. Within it Stalin worked, in conjunction with the strengthened anti-Semitic groups in the apparatus, to put the brakes on “Jewish Separatism,” repress the Jewish intellectuals and dismantle the JAC. Regardless of how we assess the spiritual roots and psychological motives of Stalin’s anti-Semitic turn or the effects of the insane accusations drafted by the leadership of the NKVD concerning the “Zionist conspiracy directed from America” on the mind of the aging leader, the decisive reason was that Stalin was disappointed in his expectations of the Jewish leaders and of Israel. Neither of them was suitable to materially strengthen the position of the Soviet Union in the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. Furthermore, Stalin viewed the role of domestic Jewry and of Israel in world politics as treason. In addition the leaders of the JAC took a step that in retrospect turned out to be a serious mistake. Under pressure from coreligionists who had survived the Holocaust they revived the suggestion made in the 1920s that a “Jewish Soviet Socialist Republic” be established in the Crimea. The extensive Crimea document was signed by Mikhoels, Fefer and Epstein.⁸⁵

Golda Meir, Israel’s envoy to the Soviet Union, arrived in Moscow on September 3, 1948, shortly after the proclamation of the State of Israel. When she visited the synagogue several thousand people gathered in the surrounding streets and this was repeated in the beginning of October when celebrating Yom Kippur. Meir proudly reported these events to her government.

The consequences of this event on Soviet Jewish life were considerable. Particularly the so-called anti-cosmopolitan campaign that started at the beginning of 1949. On Stalin’s instructions, Alexander Fadeyev, the Secretary General of the Writers’ Union, initiated a drive against “unpatriotic critics.”⁸⁶ He called it a campaign against the “rootless cosmopolitans” and in essence targeted the JAC and the Jews spreading Western influences. Mikhoels, the JAC chairman, spent eight months in the United States in 1943, and established good contacts with American and Jewish organizations.

The information he gained there contributed to the shaping of Stalin's policies. In January 1948, the actor and director, holder of the Stalin and Lenin Prizes, but who "knew too much" was murdered with Stalin's concurrence. The patently political assassination was disguised as a car accident. In public, Stalin always tried to conceal that he was conducting anti-Semitic policies. After Stalin's death, Beria reported to the Presidium of the Central Committee on April 2, 1953, about Mikhoels's murder and put the blame on Stalin and Viktor Abakumov.⁸⁷

The final arguments for the liquidation of the JAC were gathered by Abakumov, the head of the Ministry on State Security (MGB), and submitted to Stalin, Molotov, Zhdanov, and Central Committee Secretary Alexey Kuznetsov on March 26, 1948. Abakumov alarmed the already very suspicious Stalin by saying that an anti-Soviet Zionist conspiracy was being organized. The fact that the JAC had gained great respect among Jewish organizations both in the Soviet Union and beyond the borders made Stalin suspect the "hostile intentions" of the JAC. Abakumov closed his report with, "Among the Jewish nationalists arrested by the Soviet Ministry of State Security a number of American and British agents were discovered who voiced hostility against the Soviet Union and did disruptive work." In November 1948, the only central Jewish newspaper, *Einigkeit* was closed down. On the 20th of November a document signed by a Central Committee secretary ordered that the JAC be terminated, "...This committee is the center of anti-Soviet propaganda and regularly provides anti-Soviet information to foreign spy organizations. The press facilities of the JAC must also be closed and the documents must be seized. At the moment no arrests need to be made." Stalin followed the events from day to day and personally signed the document that disbanded the Jewish writers' organizations in Moscow, Kiev and Minsk, effective February 8, 1949. He also ordered that the Yiddish-language almanac, *Homeland* cease publication. It was in connection with this affair that Molotov's wife was accused of the guilt of "anti-Soviet, Zionist deviation." Abakumov's principal indictment was that she supported the Crimean "occupation" by the Soviet Jews. The idea of a "Zionist conspiracy" did not originate with Stalin but survived him.

At the same time the Soviet leaders had good reason to be concerned about the desire for emigration growing in Soviet Jewry. This was fanned by the Israeli leaders and

diplomats but also by the reports by the Soviet secret services. Stalin and Molotov received a memorandum from the NKVD in Belorussia that there were attempts by the American intelligence service and the international Zionist organizations to introduce a desire for emigration among the Belorussian Jewish communities and called Stalin's attention to the connections of the Soviet Jews with foreign religious and nationalist organizations.⁸⁸

At the same time the Soviets sent weapons to Israel via Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia while the British sent arms to the Arabs. Stalin and the Soviet Union were the first ones to recognize Israel *de iure* in the creation of which they had played a decisive role. Ben Gurion sent the following telegram to Stalin on November 7, 1948,

I am happy to send you my and the State of Israel's best wishes on the anniversary of the October Revolution that gave equality to the peoples of the Soviet Union, guaranteed work and subsistence for every worker, opened the path for the urban and rural masses toward social and cultural advances and created the mighty Red Army that fulfilled an enormous historic task in the war against the Nazi-Fascist peril. Our people will never forget the assistance that the Soviet Union gave to the Jews, the victims of Nazism nor the very real help to the State of Israel in its historic fight for freedom and independence. I wish your people working on the reconstruction of your country economic and cultural progress, peace and mutual understanding....

For obvious reasons Soviet Jewry reacted confusedly to the events. They had to experience anti-Semitic manifestations, persecutions in the workplace and had to listen to legends about the existence of a "Jewish lobby." There was a wide variety of linkages in the local and central power struggles that could incorporate local nationality "Maffias," including Jewish ones. There were also other power groups clustering around the leading politicians, seeking advantages for themselves. In 1951 serious anti-Jewish cleansing began in the ministries, in the press and in cultural and literary life. Even *Pravda* checked the number of Jews working for the paper and began to rationalize about it. Subsequently it was the turn of the scientific institutes, middle and higher education and

the editorial offices of scientific publications. When at the end of 1949 the Central Committee undertook an investigation the negative aspects of nationality distributions were documented, such as the Odessa State Conservatory where among the upper level teachers 38.7 percent were Russian, 33 percent were Jewish and 24.5 percent were Ukrainian. Of 263 students, 93 were Russian and 117 were Jewish. In every branch of industry and science this purge was implemented. Such activities, however, did not achieve the desired goals because there were so many conflicting interests at play. Sometimes the initiators of the cleansing were themselves purged. It also happened that Stalin himself was among the assessors of the purge.⁸⁹

Simultaneously, signs of the official fight against anti-Semitism could also be observed. Even Ilya Ehrenburg recalled these times as an era of chaos and of incomprehensible events, “In the spring of 1949, I did not understand anything at all. Now that we know a little I believe that Stalin used the technique of heavy camouflage. Fadeyev told me that the press campaign against the ‘unpatriotic critics’ had been launched on Stalin’s instructions. But a few weeks later he [Stalin] summoned the editors and said: ‘Comrades, the divulging of literary pseudonyms is inadmissible, it smells of anti-Semitism,’ Rumor attributed the arbitrary measures to those who carried them out while Stalin was thought to have been a restraining influence.”⁹⁰

The feelings of a large number of Jewish Communists and Soviet patriots are best expressed by Ilya Ehrenburg and are shown by the many letters written to him, by his works, his journalism and by the international, mostly Israeli appreciation of his activities. Today, some authors characterize Ehrenburg simply a Stalinist whose only task was to dismantle the growing Jewish national awareness. Stalin undoubtedly respected the writer who won the Stalin Prize in May 1948 for his novel “*Tempest*.” Ehrenburg’s enormous popularity began during the war. As a war correspondent he fought an unremitting war against anti-Semitism and was a convinced foe of Zionism but at the same time, and because of the Holocaust, he wholeheartedly supported the existence of the State of Israel. All this appeared in a concentrated form in an article inspired and approved by Stalin and published in the September 21, 1948, issue of *Pravda*. Ehrenburg presented his personal position so that it could be taken as the official position of the Party. The article was managed by the entire Party leadership as shown

by a note sent by Deputy Prime Minister Georgy Malenkov to Stalin on September 18, "A few days ago Ehrenburg arrived. Kaganovich, Pospelov, Ilyichev and I talked to him. Ehrenburg agreed to write the article but did not want to have the article signed by several people. I am enclosing for you Ehrenburg's "Apropos A Letter." If there is no objection from you we would like to publish the article in the September 21 issue of *Pravda*." Stalin agreed and signed the article that reflected the official position of the Soviet leadership.⁹¹ The article described the Soviet Union as the only safe harbor for Jews and stated that it was the Soviet Union alone that defended the Jews against the Nazis in Europe. Therefore, the writer cautioned Israel that,

it was not only the invasion of the British-Arab hordes that endangered the country but that there was another factor that threatened the independence of the country, one not as noisy but just as dangerous, namely the invasion by Anglo-American capital. For the imperialists Palestine meant oil. It was a battle of robbers with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and Standard Oil on one side and Shell on the other, interfering in the life of the still not entirely solid state.... I was thrilled with the bravery of the Israeli fighters who threw back the English mercenaries but I also knew that the solution of the "Jewish Question" did not derive from the Palestinian military successes but from the victory of socialism over capitalism and from the victory of the workers' internationalist ideals over nationalism, fascism and racism.

It was a political dilemma for both Ehrenburg and for Soviet policy how to meld and represent very dissimilar interests at the same time. These were the unity of the Soviet Union and its position as a world power vis-à-vis the existence of the State of Israel, putting the brakes on Zionism and the protection of the regional interest of the Soviet Union in the Middle East.

Under the effects of the preparations for the notorious physician trial the anti-Zionist battleground extended over all of Eastern Europe. The Slansky show trial in Czechoslovakia was instituted under the auspices of anti-Zionism. The Czechoslovak dictator, Klement Gottwald called Zionism a spying activity within the Communist Party.

Similar events occurred in Poland. Party leader Władisław Gomułka wrote to Stalin on December 14, 1948, and in this letter he claimed that the greatest obstacle to the expansion of the societal base was the high percentage of Jews in the leading organizations of the state and of the Party. He added, "...For this situation the primary responsibility rests with the Jewish comrades....On the basis of a number of observations we can state with confidence that a number of the Jewish comrades do not consider themselves to be part of the Polish nation."⁹²

By 1952 the Soviets believed that Israeli policies would not extend beyond the interests of the United States and therefore beginning with that spring they forbade any emigration from the Soviet Union. Because the Israeli leadership admitted their economic dependence on the United States and indicated that this dependence was the price of Israel's continued existence, the Soviet saw this as proof of Israel's treachery. On February 12, 1953, Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Vishinsky handed the note of the Soviet government announcing the termination of diplomatic relations to the Israeli envoy in Moscow. The reason cited was the bombing of the Soviet Mission in Tel Aviv on February 9. Official Israel made the affair appear as though the bombing was occasioned by the Slansky trial, the banning of emigration from Eastern Europe, the expulsion of the diplomatic attaché from Budapest in February 1953, the preparations for the doctors' trial and the arrest of the doctors in January 1953. This state of affairs could change only after Stalin's death.⁹³

In this atmosphere it seems hardly necessary to ask why the entire matter of the Holocaust and even any mention of it disappeared from the agenda in the Soviet Union.

Reactions to the Holocaust, Anti-Zionism and Emigration

The Soviet Example

The apparatus anti-Semitism survived Stalin because the reasons for it did not cease to exist. The forms of its manifestation, its weight and significance in both domestic and foreign policy changed. After Stalin's death, on March 5, 1953, the preparations for the doctors' trial were immediately abandoned and the signs of political anti-Semitism became less frequent. Yet, mention of the Holocaust did not appear as an independent event in the history of the war and the martyrdom of the exterminated Jews appeared in the memory of the war-time victims of the Soviet people and in the official histories as the murder of peaceful Soviet citizens. This is the inscription that can be seen on most monuments that the Soviet authorities have erected from Riga to Odessa. The Holocaust, known in Russian as the "catastrophe," has disappeared from political discussions and from historiography after 1948.

This silence has many reasons. Every simplification, so popular again these days, serves incomprehension. The existing foreign and domestic political power structures have remained unchanged in their basic elements since the death of Stalin. Soviet policy considered it advantageous if the Jewish question and the genocide never again reached the agenda because it affected sensitivities and raised memories that did not strengthen the unity of the Soviet people. Hundreds of thousands and even millions were affected in some way by the extermination of millions of Soviet citizens. They were there as witnesses to the events, they behaved passively and they suffered from the acts of war while others actively participated in them.

Following the 20th Party Congress and the "détente" significant changes took place in Soviet intellectual life. The well-known de-Stalinization wave led to a previously unknown creative freedom in intellectual and cultural areas. The position of the Jewish national cultural horizon also widened and the Holocaust appeared in literature and in the motion picture industry. The task of preserving the memory of the extirpation of the Jews as an independent theme, devolved on the writers and movie actors. It was as though the years of 1944–45 had returned

when Ehrenburg's or Lev Ozerov's poem under the same title, "Babi Yar" were published. In 1960 Yevgeny Yevtushenko wrote a poem with the same title which, in an internationalist spirit, declared war on Russian chauvinism and on the anti-Semitism that was inseparable from it. The same year also saw the appearance of some new writings by Vassily Grossman whose mother was shot in the Berdichev ghetto. Grossman's major work is *Zhizn' i I sud'ba* [Life and Fate], was completed in 1960, but it was published in full only at the end of the 1980s. Before that only excerpts were published in newspapers and periodicals. The novel was a sequel to his work "For the True Cause" published in 1952 in the literary journal *Novy Mir*. The cultural authorities considered this work anti-Soviet and politically harmful and the manuscript was confiscated by KGB agents from the apartment of the author.⁹⁴ The real turn in the representation of the Holocaust occurred when Sholokhov's short novel, *The Fate of a Man*, was published in 1960. It was made into a movie and was the first one to show some of the characteristic features of the Holocaust, particularly the implementation of the Commissar Order. Later Anatoly Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar* and, in the second half of the 1970s and Anatoly Ribyakov's *Heavy Sand* described the daily events during the Nazi genocide and helped to maintain the memory of the Holocaust in at least a narrow segment of Soviet and Eastern European awareness.

Another indication of the cultural aspects of the détente was that after 1958 Yiddish language books could be published again and that Jewish social life came alive. From the end of the 1950s on the manufacturers of external propaganda emphasized how strongly the Soviet Jewry became integrated into the scientific and cultural life. There was a systematic endeavor in 1958 and later in the appropriate apparatus of the Central Committee to "unmask in the capitalist countries the Zionist propaganda that claimed that in the Soviet Union the Jews were being persecuted." The deputy chief of the Central Committee's Agitprop Department, A. Romanov, wrote to Nuridin Muhitdinov, the secretary of the Central Committee on January 1958 and indicated, that on the basis of the Soviet Information Agency material, the Jews were highly regarded in the Soviet Union. He emphasized the important role that the Jews played in Soviet culture and how many received honors, from the Academician Joffe to Marshak and how many of them were war heroes.⁹⁵

The 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars strengthened and gave a new impetus to the fight against Zionism and to the apparatus anti-Semitism, not only in the Soviet Union but in all the

Eastern European socialist states. In those days practically every pronouncement of the Soviet leaders was simultaneously anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist. The latter adjective had a completely confused meaning because of its strongly anti-Semitic connotations. There was a desire to soften this stand and therefore the 1967 war was officially condemned, on inspiration from the highest Soviet leadership, by well-known Jewish politicians, writers, poets and war heroes. This did lessen the effectiveness of the anti-Semitic interpretations but the anti-Zionist ideological declarations seemed to be without any credibility in the Soviet Union and beyond its borders because these never voiced condemnations of anti-Semitism.

There was a slow change in the emigration policy as well. In 1956, 753 Soviet citizens were allowed to go to Israel. The old story that there was no emigration from the Soviet Union even after 1968 is simply not true. In 1957 only a hundred Jewish nationals received an exit permit but fifteen years later large masses of people emigrated. According to a secret KGB document, dated May 9, 1973, 64,595 people emigrated to Israel between 1945 and April 1973. Only 8,296 emigrated prior to 1968, 2,673 in 1969, 992 in 1970, 13,711 in 1971 and 29,821 in 1972. The rest left in the early months of 1973.

In 1971, 2,151,000 Jews were recorded as living in the Soviet Union. Of these 500,000 in the Ukraine, 148,000 in Belorussia, 98,000 in Moldavia, 65,000 in the Baltic republics, 55,000 in Georgia, 250,000 in Moscow and 156,000 in Leningrad. The 521,000 Jewish technician-specialists made up 3.5 percent of the Russian technical labor force. 24 percent of the Jewish population had a middle school or higher education degree. A secret KGB document of 1972 revealed that there were nine times as many Jews with a graduate degree per one thousand population as Russians, twelve times as many as Ukrainians and seventeen times as many as Belorussians. In the scientific area there were 63,700 Jews of whom 3,500 had a doctorate and 20,000 were doctoral students. Among those working in a scientific field the Jews took third place after the Russians and Ukrainians. Among those with a doctoral degree the Jews were in second place after the Russians. 339,000 Jews had received a decoration or a medal. About 8,000 Jewish experts worked in a variety of council positions. Of those active in literature or the media 9.8 percent were Jewish. In the arts the ratio was 8.13 percent and in the health fields 9.8 percent. The appropriate agents of the KGB who kept the political leaders informed about “things” were boasting that in the large cities there were one hundred synagogues, that there were religious schools and that nearby the larger synagogues matzo was being baked.⁹⁶

By 1974, 11.4 percent of Soviet Jewry had emigrated. In contrast to the KGB's explanation of the Zionist peril, the motivating force behind the emigration was not Zionist ideology. In 1970 there were 11,452 Jews living in the autonomous Jewish territory in Birobidzhan. None of them applied for an exit permit. Actually, between 1970 and 1973 only 1.6 percent of all exit permit applications were rejected. This is shown in the secret document that the deputy minister of the interior sent to Central Committee secretary, Konstantin Chernenko.⁹⁷

Starting in the 1970s the basic reasons for emigrating were the economic conditions and the local anti-Semitic manifestations. This is supported by the finding that the majority of the emigrants eventually settled in the United States and not in Israel. Even though the Holocaust destroyed the societal integration of the Jews and though after the war the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the doctors' trial and local anti-Semitic flare-ups tried the souls of hundreds of thousands of Jews, the large masses did accept assimilation and the majority of the survivors were integrated into the structure of Soviet society. In 1970, 17.7 percent of the Jews considered Yiddish as their mother tongue and by 1979 this percentage dropped to 14.2 percent.

Mainly because of the "Six-Day War" of 1967 and the more recent 1973 Arab-Israeli war the entire problem was linked to the anti-Zionist fight and to the fact that one part of the Soviet population considered emigration to be a form of treason. By this time, in the eyes of the authorities, the entire Holocaust issue became an ideological tool for the Zionist organizations. In the 1960s some emigration matters were decided at the highest level of Soviet political leadership. Later, when in the 1970s emigration became a mass activity, Zionism and the Jewish question became a major political affair that influenced Soviet-USA relations, economic cooperation and human rights. Following the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Accords these issues all became a subject for international political discussions. In order to further its own importance during the Brezhnev era, the KGB exaggerated the strength, nature, extent and influence of the Zionist organizations and suggested that these represented a major threat to the Soviet system. The KGB did not emphasize that after challenging human rights and accepting the final document of the Helsinki conference it became an issue for the Soviet political system the importance of which could not be overestimated. This was something that only Mikhail Gorbachev came to understand about fifteen years later at the end of the 1980s. This was another area when the Soviet was in a "losing position" vis-à-vis the West.

The situation was further complicated when the Arab political allies of the Soviet Union complained about the increasing number of Jews being permitted to leave. On February 21, 1972, the Deputy Chief of the Central Committee International Division, R. Ulyanovski reported that Arab officials, including the Syrian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Z. Ismail and Yasser Arafat expressed their concern at the Soviet embassies about the permission given to Soviet Jews to move to Israel. On March 1, 1973, the Egyptian minister of defense protested against the Jewish emigration even though the majority of the emigrants were elderly, retired or female, as shown by a KGB documents marked “secret.”⁹⁸

The General Secretary of the Party Leonid Brezhnev, at the Politburo meeting of March 2, 1973, saw the harmful role of Zionism in being responsible for the cancellation of the Soviet-American summit conference. The Zionists caused an uproar because the Soviet authorities assessed the emigrants having an advanced degree with a so-called “higher education tax.” For tactical reasons Brezhnev, in his pragmatic fashion, recommended that that this tax, which amounted to the modest sum of two hundred dollars per person, not be collected because the amount collected was nowhere equal to the damage it caused in international relations. Brezhnev called for additional allowances to enhance the cultural life of the Jews. “If the Jews want a small theater, seating 5–600 people, why should we not agree?” As a practical politician, Brezhnev did not want to fight with the Arabs, did not want skilled Jewish workers to leave the Soviet Union but also wished to further economic and/or political connections with the United States where there was a strong Jewish lobby.⁹⁹ Of the group around Brezhnev the “liberals” were Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin and trade union leader and Politburo member Aleksandr Shelepin. Party theoretician Mikhail Suslov, Dmitry Polyansky and Ukrainian Party boss Petro Shelest demanded that the limitations be made more stringent. The chairman of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, took varying positions but was not an anti-Semite while Shelest, the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee clearly was.

In the unofficial debates the Holocaust appeared to be something that was stopped by the Red Army, an accomplishment that deserved the eternal gratitude of the Jews. It was precisely this that the domestic and foreign Zionists denied. This was the logic of the argument that appeared in the documents of the Party and of the KGB. The 1967 Israeli military attack was identified with “Hitlerite barbarism” in the official propaganda without making any effort to explain this otherwise incomprehensible analogy.¹⁰⁰

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Soviet policy was forced to prove to the foreign countries, over and over again, that there was no anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Domestically this subject could not appear because what does not exist cannot be denied and officially there was no anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. The Western political circles and particularly the American and Israeli Zionist organizations accused the Soviet Union of having a policy of anti-Semitism and argued that the Soviets impeded the emigration of the Jews from the Soviet Union and persecuted all vestiges of opposition in which a number of Jews participated. The indictment justified the West's support of the opposition groups in the Soviet Union and kept the matter of Jewish emigration on the agenda. Needless to say, the Soviet leadership and, particularly the Chairman of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, opposed the Jewish emigration to Israel not because of anti-Semitism but because they were concerned about maintaining the political unity of the country. They feared that the mass emigration of one nationality to Israel and to the Western countries might serve as an example for other nationalities. Another reason was that the so-called brain drain encouraged by the other super power was clearly at the expense of the smaller countries.

It is well known that the opposition movement and the *samizdat*, starting after 1956, had the problem of human rights at their center. After 1960 this issue was linked to the protest movement of the Jews who were denied an exit permit. It is revealed by the documents written by Andropov and other KGB leaders to the Central Committee that the Zionists timed their antisocial activities to coincide with the anniversaries of noted events associated with the Holocaust such as the Warsaw ghetto uprising. In this way the Zionists could attract much greater interest abroad and could also gain the support of American Jews. The police were able to disperse the demonstrations of a few dozen troublemakers who were usually arrested. The greatest repercussions were triggered by the Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky trial. The clamor was so great that at the June 22, 1978, session of the Political Committee Brezhnev asked Andropov to discuss the situation. Andropov felt that because the "refusenik" Sharansky violated Soviet law he should not be set free even if the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, asked that he be released. Andropov's speech reveals that at that time 520 Jewish nationals were in prison of whom 110 were accused of political crimes evidently linked to emigration and human rights issues.¹⁰¹

While there could be no open discussion or scholarly study of the Holocaust, the Soviet agitation and propaganda organizations were constantly engaged in an ideological fight against Zionism. This was true even in the post-Stalin era, starting in the mid-1950s. There are numerous documents available today that indicate that concerning this problem area there was extensive ideological work being performed within the KGB as well. In 1970–1971 fifty nine books were published in several languages with more than two million copies discussing the “Reactionary and anti-Soviet essence of Zionism in theory and practice.”¹⁰² In spite of all this, as we have emphasized, there was no “Jewish Question” in public discourse because the hope was that keeping quiet about the Holocaust would do away with the Jewish question and with anti-Semitism. Yet it was a commonplace of public conversation that in the higher levels of Soviet education there was an unofficial but very real limitation on admitting Jewish students to the entry exams. Many felt that because of the “Jewish Bloc” other nationalities could not be admitted to institutions of higher education. In the 1980s one could hear, even during the intermissions of a historiography conference, that it was wrong to talk about this whole business, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism because it annoyed a substantial portion of the non-Jews. This mood was characteristic of all of Eastern Europe and was frequently voiced by intellectuals of Jewish extraction as well.

The drive of the Soviet Union for world power, the so-called anti-imperialist alliance with the Arab nationalist states, the throttling of domestic anti-Semitism by forbidding the mention of the word Jew and Holocaust in public, economic cooperation with the United States and permanent war with Zionism were the mutually exclusive ideas that the Soviet power elite, particularly the highest Party leadership, could never come to grips with. If officially there was no anti-Semitism then, naturally, individual anti-Semitic acts such as the burning of the synagogue in Malakhovka on October 4, 1959, could not be discussed in public. The sole reaction of the power structure was always the same. In response to the international echo about the Malakhovka affair and others similar to it, the rabbis and Jewish public figures were requested to sign a petition against the Western rumor-mongering and tendentious, manipulative distortions. “Let there be an article in our press that unmasks the false anti-Soviet propaganda of the Zionists.”¹⁰³

The Central Committee repeatedly condemned international Zionism and we can point to the February 1972 declaration and to the anti-Zionist organization established in 1983. These

were always done under the flag of internationalism but they usually contained anti-Semitic elements and endeavors. If anybody mentioned at that time that there was anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union he ran the risk to be classified as a Zionist even though he had not intention whatever to emigrate. This attitude is reflected in KGB documents.¹⁰⁴

In a curious fashion the peculiar reaction to the Holocaust by the power structure was related to the ideological aspects of Zionism and to the fear that the other nationalities would be offended if the tragedy of the Jewish people was considered special and unique in the total system of Nazi genocide. This consideration was not limited to the intellectual baggage of the apparatus anti-Semitism. Soviet policy simply did not know what to do with the Holocaust and did not understand the spiritual and moral effects it had on Soviet Jewry. Lacking empathy, the “sensitivity” of the Jews was regarded as unwarranted demands or, even worse, as an aggressive demand for advancement. The anti-Semitic texts, disguised as condemnation of Zionism, frequently triggered angry responses from scientific and intellectual circles.

An “accusatory” document drafted on March 30, 1974, by two Ph.D.s in science and two senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and sent to the Central Committee’s Department of Foreign Affairs and to the Agitprop Department makes a special mention of the fact that the editor Aron Vergelis reviewed Ye. Yevseyev’s book published under the title of *Fascism under the Blue Star*. According to these people Vergelis’ principal crime was that he did allow the Zionists to monopolize the Holocaust and be the sole representatives of the Jewish nation. Yet, it was Vergelis, the editor in chief of the Yiddish language newspaper *Sovietish Heimland*, who was the first one to suggest the creation of an anti-Zionist committee in a letter addressed to the Central Committee on November 1, 1971.¹⁰⁵ The four authors in their denunciation described Vergelis’s review as a typical Zionist concept. The real problem was that Vergelis mentioned the anti-Semitic aspects of Yevseyev’s book and the Zionists abroad could cite the editor’s review and claim that anti-Semitic books could be published in the Soviet Union. The document states that, “For the Zionists the only important matter is the tragedy of the Jewish people. For them world history exists only to the extent that Jews participated in it. The fate of tens of millions of Slavs and other Goyim [gentiles] is of no interest to them even though these despised Goyim were the ones who saved humanity from fascism and racism.” Citing Lenin they rejected the concept of the universal Jewish nation. In the absence of free speech the scientists, forced to “denounce,” did not understand that after the Holocaust there was

a totally different historical situation than before it and that the difference was even greater when compared to the era of Lenin. Vergelis deserved the designation of Zionist because he used the concept of the Jewish nation, indicating that the authors of the document failed to understand the significance of the State of Israel or chose to ignore it. According to them, “The concept of Jewish nationality is contrary to the interests of the Jewish proletariat” and was even opposed to assimilation. They did not understand that the Holocaust shattered any honest confidence in assimilation and that a new anti-Semitism, based on a guilty conscience, was linked to the fact and the memory of the Holocaust.

Anti-Zionist books were proliferating. In 1972–1973 the publication of twenty-nine such works was planned. Among the scholars a certain resistance developed that could also find an outlet politically only in letters explaining the merits of their stand addressed to the Central Committee. On December 6, 1977, Mikhail Zimyanin, Central Committee secretary, received a letter from Academician M. Korostovtsev, and Lev Korneyev from the Eastern Research Institute of the Academy of Science, stating that many mistaken and false works were published on Zionism that depicted Zionism as part of the world-power drive of the Jews. Other works exaggerated the role of Zionism in comparison to other anti-Communist and nationalist ideologies although there existed a scientific committee, established in 1972, that was charged with the scientific assessment of Zionism. It did not function. “In this area partisanship and self-motivated activity must be stopped” and it would be desirable if only experts wrote about this subject. Piotr Fedoseyev, the vice president of the Academy of Science, who was always subservient to the current political trends, rejected the proposal that there were too many attacks injurious to the Jews.¹⁰⁶

From this perspective the analytical paper of L. Onikov, a consultant to the Agitprop Division of the Central Committee, written for internal use, is informative. The paper deals with emigration and, generally, with the relationship to the Jews. It reached Suslov and Central Committee Secretaries Ivan Kapitonov, Katushev and Boris Ponomariov on March 30, 1974. The document is interesting because according to its very careful wording there were many Jews who felt that there was anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. The document raised the question of why the Jews are not reassured by the rejection of anti-Semitism. Perhaps fewer would then wish to emigrate. The document also indicated that the memory of the doctors’ trial and, particularly, the memory of the Holocaust were still very much alive. Onikov emphasized that in

fact there were many anti-Zionist publications that were directed against all the Soviet Jews. Lately there have been one hundred books and pamphlets published against Zionism but not a single one against anti-Semitism and that this could frighten the Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality.¹⁰⁷ The author of this work also remembered that in Moscow in the beginning of the 1970s the rumor was spread regularly among Jewish intellectuals that an anti-Semitic pogrom was in preparation, but there never was one. Onikov submitted several recommendations for the fight against anti-Semitism. He recommended an international conference for a discussion of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism and suggested articles in the pages of *Pravda* and *Kommunist* against anti-Semitism. He also recommended that the Jews be invited to participate in the fight against Zionism and that there be established a JAC-like Soviet committee against Zionism. It should be noted that it was again a person taking a stand against anti-Semitism who recommended the establishment of an anti-Zionist committee with Jewish participation. This was a continuation of the thinking and policy that Ehrenburg represented at his time, namely to confront Zionism and anti-Semitism at the same time and to act against all forms of the position that denied the right of the State of Israel to exist.

As the result of a “most secret” order by the KGB on March 29, 1983, the Anti-Zionist Committee was established, with fourteen members and “on societal demand.” The president was one of the best-known Jewish personalities, the war hero David Dragunsky. The Agitprop Division of the Central Committee and the KGB were charged to support the work of the committee. Yet, the committee accomplished nothing useful.¹⁰⁸ Beside the “War against Zionism” it did not even have time to reach the stage that existed in 1947 when it was still possible to speak of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.

Hungarian and Other Eastern European Variations

Until 1948 in Eastern Europe, particularly in the former Nazi satellites, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and, to a lesser degree Croatia, the denazification was accompanied by the recognition and dissemination of the facts of the Holocaust even though large segments of the local population looked at this with disfavor for reasons that were understandable but not

acceptable. This situation was a warning to Communist policy makers at the time when the one-party-state came into being. Accordingly, and independently of the developments in the Soviet Union, they realized that this entire subject area had to be buried in the subconscious of the nations. Yet, they managed to increase the feelings of guilt by blaming the remaining members of the former ruling classes and the large number of people who were subservient to the former powers for the military and political alliance with the Nazis and for the war. This was done in a very undifferentiated fashion. In Austria the problem was resolved more simply but not better. The matters could be discussed with varying intensity and style, depending on the period, but always with pointing the finger at Germany as though the Nazis had simply raped Austria when, in fact, multitudes of Austrians participated actively in realizing the Holocaust and the Nazi activities. The situation in Germany took a peculiar turn. When, at the beginning of 1948 the Soviet-American relations hit bottom, the United States quickly put an end to the denazification project and began to provide strong support to the western part of Germany under the auspices of anti-communist and anti-socialist rhetoric. It is inseparable from this development that although the Western Allies drew up a list of 37,000 war criminals only a fraction of these ever stood trial and some war criminals escaped to South America with the direct assistance of the Vatican. Nazi experts also wound up in American scientific centers. It was only the Eichmann trial and the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt that drew attention to the lack of punishment for the active Nazis.

The German situation crystallized in the formation of the two countries. Both in the Soviet controlled Germany and in the American-British-French controlled Germany the power requirements of the new governments determined the extent of denazification but this was done much more radically in the East than in West Germany. The DDR considered itself to be the gathering point of German ethnicity and in the official political culture the collective shame for the Holocaust was laid squarely on the entire ethnic German nation. All this is reflected in the differences between the constitutions of the two countries. The East German constitution was class-based so that German equaled citizen. The Western one was ethnicity-based. This latter obviously does not exclude the citizen concept that is the basis of the proclaimed multi-cultural society.¹⁰⁹

In West Germany at various historical periods and with varying emphasis and forms three fundamental myths were preserved that are present to this day in the reaction to the Holocaust.

These are present not only in Germany. They are, 1. The German people were the victims of the Nazis, 2. They were unaware of the atrocities and mass murders and 3. There was considerable resistance among the population against fascism.¹¹⁰ In the DDR in the “Country of Workers and Peasants” the existence of two German peoples was assumed, although beginning in the 1980s the system began to cite the entire German past, including Martin Luther and Frederick the Great whose heritage was used to legitimize the DDR. In contrast to the West, the DDR proclaimed the proud calling of an anti-Fascist state but recalled only the heroic events of anti-Nazi resistance. Following the example of the Soviet Union, the memory of the Holocaust went into oblivion because it became a component of the myth about the workers’ movement resistance. In West Germany the situation was different and the country had to determine its relationship to the Nazi past that was expressed by the constant debate and cross-fire of attacks about the historic memorial places. The reason for this was that after the establishment of the DDR and until the 1990s they tried to conceal or ignore the name of the murderers as shown by the history of the reaction to the first concentration camp, Dachau.¹¹¹ The camps as memorial sites became evermore numerous by the 1990s, operated with multimedia devices although they maintained the effects of the preceding decades. The expectations of politics always make their effects felt in one way or another.

In the DDR all debate and open discussion was avoided and the legend of self-liberation was created by the manufacture of myths and symbols. This was used to “legitimate the present and indoctrinate into all persons the feeling of political indebtedness, that could not be questioned. Whoever opposed fascism was on the side of the DDR.” In West Germany the ritual admission of guilt was used to document the peoples’ innocence and they participated in the national expiation.¹¹² The collective feeling of guilt was incorporated in the West into the common political culture while in the DDR the official anti-Fascist heroism remained the characteristic feature.

Perhaps the most significant difference in the propaganda of the two Germanys’ can be found in the official definition of the victims of Nazism. Already during the first years of the DDR the Jews and other politically unsuitable groups disappeared from official definitions and were replaced by the heroes of the opposition fighting against Fascism. In contrast, in the Soviet Union, other than the Jews, the nationalities did not disappear and the dominant role of the Russians was maintained. In East Germany the abstract internationalist ideology

conventionalized nationality into an irrelevant circumstance. The credibility of the West German denazification was further undermined by the fact that the industrial concerns, the Krupp, Flick, I. G. Farben, BASF, Hoechst and Bayer, Siemens and others that both financed Nazism and then made fabulous profits from it, could invest very advantageously in the 1950s and 1960s the accumulated capital that they amassed from the slave labor of the concentration camps and war-time looting. In addition, the economic experts and many other professional and public personalities who profited from the Holocaust retained their positions, not to mention the hundreds of thousands who passively served the Nazi regime. Fulbrook in her outstanding book writes that there was a perhaps cynical attitude that claimed that the compensation paid to the Jews was not a true compensation to the victims of Nazism but was an attempt to draft a political and moral certificate of good behavior for the new West German democracy before the rest of the world. "In a somewhat simplified way we can say that the state-mandated philo-Semitism was to some extent a mirror image of anti-Semitism in so far that it again classified the Jews as different and "other" people who had to be treated nicely by positive discrimination".¹¹³ In the East the problem was resolved by silence, "The objective reasons for the Jewish question have disappeared and anti-Semitism has died a natural death" was the mandatory argument.

After Stalin's death the state socialism systems followed the Soviet example and endeavored to subsume the fact of the Holocaust, its history and memory in the history and memory of anti-fascist resistance. In Hungarian society, as shown in the sporadic anti-Jewish outbreaks during 1956, anti-Semitism survived and was official pronouncements claimed that it was under the surface as a remnant of the interwar Horthy regime. Anti-Semitism was officially persecuted by the authorities but was tacitly supported by the newly appearing apparatus anti-Semitism. In this environment the guilt feeling for the Holocaust, for cooperating with the pro-Nazi oppressing and deporting authorities and for complicity did not produce a desire for national self-awareness in the people but turned to apathy or a poorly disguised anti-Semitism.

There was no societal pressure that would have made the people accept their responsibility. Official policy, just like in the Soviet Union, although in part for different reasons, did not wish to confront this entire problem. The purpose of suppression seemed to be self-justification. The immediate postwar flare up of anti-Semitism could not be repeated, it having been due primarily to the economic restitution demands made by the returning Jews. The majority of the approximately eighty to one hundred thousand Hungarian Jews preferred to

forget their Jewishness rather than being confrontational and appear to be anti-Hungarian.¹¹⁴ Even historians of Jewish extraction for a long time favored keeping quiet about this problem area and this was not just a Hungarian characteristic. The most famous historian of DDR, the Jewish Jürgen Kuczinsky, in his extensive discussion of Nazism does not even mention the extermination of the Jews and this is a striking example of the characteristic compensation. Isaac I. Mints, the official head of revolutionary historiography in Moscow, in his three volume work, does not discuss the Jewish problem in any detail while the valuable material gathered by him during the war is still resting in the archives. The communication taboo led to the solidification of anti-Semitic fantasies in this entire region.

The abstract internationalist ideology of the Communists, and not only of the Jews, considered the entire anti-Semitism problem to be a dying prejudice that had lost its power base. In Hungary this philosophy extended from the abstract internationalist Erik Molnár to the populist nationalist Aladár Mád. The ideology of “socialist patriotism” reflecting “national unity” i.e. the interests of the establishment bureaucracy, could not tolerate a society-wide confrontation with nationally divisive problems like the Holocaust and this conceptually articulated the nationalist barriers throughout Eastern Europe. Admitting the past was everywhere subordinated to national pride which was adequately expressed by the historians. György Ránki, the most original historian of the period, put himself at the head of the investigations of this problem area in the 1980s, putting aside the false, myth-generating ideologies of national pride and chauvinistic patriotism.

1967–1968 was also a turning point in Hungary but the new waves of anti-Semitism never rose high although certain manifestations became unmistakably apparent. While in 1968, in Germany, the new generation rebelled against the lies of the parents and the false presentation of the Nazi past and of the Holocaust, nothing like this happened in Eastern Europe. In the East the power elite was concerned with preserving and/or reforming state socialism but learning from the Czechoslovak experience avoided rocking the boat. Significant segments of society, attracted by raising the standards of living, gave up a search for an independent spiritual and/or political path and for humanizing state socialism although this latter item was discussed in theory at the 22nd Communist Party Congress in 1961. In Hungary, the consideration of experiences and lessons of 1956 was out of the question and the few anti-Semitic outbursts of the revolution made the power elite very cautious. In other places, like Romania, where reforms were not

possible, a strong nationalist indoctrination compensated the population for the economic difficulties of everyday existence.

After the Middle-Eastern war of 1967 the conservative stand in Hungary inevitably led to some manifestations of apparatus anti-Semitism that was related to the Soviet developments. In November 1968 József Lengyel the famous Communist writer, who had personal experiences with the Soviet Gulag, and Sándor Fekete, literary historian, reported this event. György Aczél the enlightened despot of cultural policies recalled the events and stated, “I also know which populist writers participated, in 1972, in the discussions at the Soviet Embassy. It was not a simple matter because many of them were in favor of the anti-reform option. Not for dishonorable reasons, but because they had concern for their country.” After the Prague spring and the invasion the entire area was affected by the anti-Semitic renaissance. The Hungarian leader, János Kádár, and Brezhnev as well, tried to block the overt anti-Semitic outbreaks. The Hungarian Party leaders had the easier task and suppressed all public campaigns. The apparatus anti-Semitism justified itself by pointing out that the economic reforms and overt materialism had led to a new type of economic imbalance and tacitly hinted about the people who stood in the background and who were benefiting from the new privileges. In 1971–1972 anti-Semitism was still present in the unofficial lectures and comments of certain populist ideologues and their students. They spoke of the “domestic tourists” [Jews] and of “foreign violence” [Israel]. In 1973, the high party official Zoltán Komócsin and his circle were the models for apparatus anti-Semitism which under the banners of anti-Zionism proclaimed its dedication to peasants, proletarians, anti-imperialists and pro-Arabs. They claimed that Hungarian cultural policies becoming Jewish, and they expressed their opposition to the “urbanist” [i.e. cosmopolitan Jew] Aczél and made contacts with certain populist groupings.¹¹⁵

In Poland the anti-Zionist campaign brought a different result. In 1968, under Mieczysław Moczar’s direction, essentially all the remaining Polish Jews were forced to emigrate to Israel but this did not produce the hoped for economic improvements or democratization. In the DDR there was no anti-Semitic campaign and this was only to be expected.

Thus after the 20th Party Congress of 1956 the Soviet influence produced numerous peculiar characteristics in the Eastern European countries even though there were also some surface similarities. In Eastern-Central Europe anti-Semitism was strongest in Poland and was neutralized most effectively in Hungary. It happened in several areas that while keeping silent

about the Holocaust the true state of affairs was openly distorted. In Romania they simply denied or adulterated the basic facts and the history of the Holocaust. This was done under the rule of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej but even more so under Nicolae Ceaucescu. In the beginning the recollections were limited to the actions of the fascists against the Jews and Communists but later mention of the Jews was omitted.¹¹⁶ In Czechoslovakia, following the 1968 invasion of the Warsaw Pact countries, the anti-Semite ploy was used, with Petro Shelest's assistance, against those who had demanded reforms. During the two decades after the fall of the reform endeavor conditions were not favorable for an objective discussion of the Holocaust.

Beginning with the period of détente, in both Poland and Hungary it was literature and the movie industry that informed about the problems of the Nazi genocide. This was the case even though a number of books and essays of documentary value had been published prior to 1948. Andrzej Wajda's *Samson* was presented in 1961. In Hungary the *1956 Budapest Spring* (Félix Máriássy), *Presence* in 1965 (Miklós Jancsó), *The Father* (István Szabó, 1966) and the *Love Movie* (Szabó, 1970) indicated that the subject of the Holocaust was alive in the minds of the intelligentsia who were able to influence the thinking of the intellectual groups of society. Imre Kertész's 1976 novel "*Sorstalanság*" (Fatelessness) that received the Nobel Prize in 2003, attracted little attention.

In the DDR it was also in literature that society could begin to confront the Holocaust and this was strengthened by the debates going on in the West. Peter Weiss's play, *Investigation*, was published and presented in Hungary. Weiss, who since 1946 was a Swedish citizen and a member of the Swedish Communist Party, tried to demonstrate in the mirror of the Auschwitz trial how the Nazi system integrated a significant part of the local population into the murder process and how West German justice and a segment of society attempted to whitewash the murderers. In the West, Hochhuth's play, *The Deputy*, depicted the acquiescent Pope (Pius XII) and caused an uproar while in the East the official lack of interest was maintained. It was only the very successful presentation of the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* in Hungary that showed that the societal reassessment of the "Jewish Question" had not really begun but that there was a real need for so doing. The wartime sacrifices, the problem of the extermination of the Jews and the fate of the Hungarian prisoners of war should have been discussed together and in public but this was done only during the 1980s. Prior to this the Jews were barely mentioned among the victims in Eastern Europe while Communist victims were over-represented. In the West it was the

reverse. Only the Jews were mentioned and the Communists hardly at all even though anti-fascist resistance, where there was one, had been initiated by the Communists.

Hungary was the first country in Eastern Europe where the subject of the Holocaust became a serious subject in historiography in the mid 1970. Following the footsteps of the political scientist István Bibó, György Száraz's *A Prejudice*, Mária Ember's "*Hairpin Turn*," and Péter Hanák's essays indicated a new departure. In the preface of a precedent setting volume of essays, published in 1984, the high Communist official, Imre Pozsgay, defined clearly for Hungarian policy the fundamental framework of the problem. He quoted Bibó's famous 1948 essay on the Jewish question, demanding that the "spirit of accepting responsibility" assume national dimensions.¹¹⁷ It was part of this process that led to the publication of the translation of Randolph Braham's important work on the history of the Holocaust in Hungary.¹¹⁸ The publication in Hungarian revived the debate, the ramifications of which became comprehensible only after the change in regime.

Epilogue

The change of regime in the former Soviet bloc made the "Jewish Question" one of the fundamental issues of policy and in this way the Holocaust became a subject for public discussion. All this was connected with the well known redistribution and reorganization of economic and political power including such matters as the multiparty system, privatization, liberalization of economic life, etc. While the global spread of multinational capitalism with its social cataclysms was under the banner of neo-liberalism and under the direction of the post-modern crusader knights of globalization, the nationalists from Moscow to Budapest were distributing the national wealth and, according to the stigmatizing prescription of anti-Semitism, tried to discredit the competing neo-liberals as strangers, anti-nationalists, Jews and/or Communists. The ultimate purpose of the nationalistic exclusion for the so-called nationalist forces was the takeover of control over state funds accumulated during the period of state socialism. The losers of the new capitalism in many areas enlisted under the banner of nationalism and in their absurd struggle for self-defense became the supporters of ethnical thinking, political ethnicity and also readily became preys of anti-Semitism. It was not with capitalism, private property or privatization that they had problems but with the nationality of the

new proprietors, their ethnic background, religion and strangeness. All this was done to implement their own economic interests.

With this background the significance of the Holocaust was naturally devalued in the nationalist discourse. In Russia, in contrast to Hungary, anti-Semitism did not become the daily topic of parliamentary politicking and of the grand policy, even though Jewish emigration increased enormously after 1989. In the former Soviet Union the uncertain future, the sudden impoverishment and the disappearance of jobs impelled hundreds of thousands of Jews to start a new life in Israel. Between 1989 and 2004 1,096,572 Jews moved to Israel from the former Soviet territories.

The study of Jewry's past came alive not only because of the traditions of opposition but it was put on the agenda as one of the fundamental problems of Soviet history that were now analyzed on the basis of an enormous amount of hitherto unavailable source material. The matter of the Holocaust was one of those unexplored problems that could count on international curiosity. The successor states of the former Soviet Union and Hungary, were not only important countries because of the large number of the Holocaust victims but also because of the survivors. These states still have significant Jewish populations. In Russia the determinant force to reexamine the past was American historiography, although the importance of French or German historiography should not be underestimated.

In Hungary the situation was similar on the liberal side. The conservative, nationalist side, however, was more under the influence of the new, right-wing, retrograde thinkers of German historiography like Ernst Nolte. As far as their assessment of Soviet history was concerned, their thinking was very strongly influenced by the American ultra-conservative views of Robert Conquest and Richard Pipes from whom some of the liberals also learned a great deal. On the basis of the 1986–1987 debate of the German historians, many objected to the recommendation of Chancellor Kohl that a memorial be erected to “all German victims.” Typically the protests did not come from the political parties that did not wish to lose votes, but mostly from the independent left-wing liberals and the radical left-wing intellectuals who did not want to equate the victims of Nazism with the executors and servants of the Nazi system. In Russia, at long last, the principal task was to, teach the history of the Holocaust in the schools and to create the infrastructure for historical research in order to finally implement its basic functions. The ideological task facing Russian Holocaust research was to bring it to the attention

of national thought. By today, in the majority of the Russian secondary education textbooks there are a few lines, or even a paragraph, on the Holocaust as a part of the history of the Great Patriotic War or of World War II. In contrast to the Eastern European countries, the anti-Communist interpretation of the history of the war did not slide over to the “Nazi side,” mainly because it was interpreted from a national perspective.

In Hungary, after a succession of conservative Prime Ministers, Kohl’s “pacifying” gesture became the official view, and Hungary’s role in the war was changed from being just anti-Communist to being also anti-Russian. Under the slogan of “pacification” it became accepted that the Holocaust and the Gulags were identical, thus criminalizing the history of Communism in the spirit of the *Black Book of Communism*. The true meaning of the Holocaust became inadmissible because the new nationalist elite’s search for the roots of its tradition-preserving endeavors looked to the Horthy regime, thus making the objective analysis and large scale study of the Holocaust impossible. It was the Horthy system that prepared the Holocaust in Hungary that was implemented after the Nazi occupation. The Socialist Party perspectives are opposed to the increased discussion of any of the so-called culture conflict questions because its purpose is to muddle or avoid all historical and ideological matters for reasons of pragmatic political goals. In this respect a certain change was suggested in Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy’s statement on April 16, 2004, on the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust according to which, “The Holocaust was made by Hungarians against Hungarians.”

Because of the nationalist exclusion, Holocaust research became a missionary obligation of the liberal side. They approached it with a partiality that can legitimately be called “political expropriation”. On the liberal side, perhaps under Daniel Goldhagen’s influence, the ethnic element was exaggerated in the discussion of the Holocaust and the multi-dimensional diversity of the true motivations was ignored. In the West there are increasingly complicated debates about the origins of the genocide. In Eastern Europe studies were done unthinkingly or for political reasons and simplistic questions were raised about the “essential identity of communism and fascism” covered by the totalitarianism paradigm. This was done instead of the systematic study of the development of the Holocaust and of its world history that was demanded by Géza Komoróczy in his historical work on the reaction to the Holocaust in Hungary. Instead, in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia there is a strong apologetic trend that under the

auspices of “national self-justification” excuses the interwar systems and the national roles played during World War II.

Very soon after the change of regimes an ideological compromise was reached between the nationalist ideologues and a number of liberal ideologues on the basis of proclaiming the commonality of communism and fascism. The essence of this compromise is to discredit the entire history of state socialism, the anti-fascist tradition and even the historical achievements of the Red Army, claiming that they came not as liberators but as occupiers. They make unsubstantiated statements and aver that Auschwitz and the Gulag, or Hitler and Stalin, were identical phenomena. Some of these ideas might have been taken from the works of Russian historians such as Vladimir Bukovsky and Viktor Suvorov. Another example comes from some of the conservative, right-wing ideologues who in the spirit of falsifying history spread rumors even in Hungary that Stalin was preparing to deport the Jews and that the camps were ready but that he ran out of time. Clearly political emotions are still influence this entire problem area.

In the meantime Hungarian Holocaust studies have profited little from the work that has begun about the problems of genocide in Russia. In Hungary, prior to 2004 there was only one publication about the Holocaust that took place in the Soviet Union and this came from the pen of an Israeli historian.¹¹⁹ Since the change in regime in Russia, and with cooperation of American, Israeli and French historians, Holocaust studies have resulted in serious achievements. The historians working in this area included Alla Gerber, Ilya Altman, Lev Bezimensky, and others.

In investigating this area the Russian colleagues devote considerable space to the problem of the relationship of the local population to the Nazi genocide. In Hungary, the “little people,” the thousands of bureaucrats taking care of the paperwork, the gendarmes, the engine drivers who voluntarily or under duress drove the trains carrying the Jews to Auschwitz, the Hungarian soldiers who participated in the genocide in the Soviet Union and all those individuals or groups who benefited from the Holocaust are not yet on the agenda of the practitioners of social history. For many the only guilty parties are the Arrowcrossist mass murderers. They do not understand that the death of a Hungarian or German soldier fighting against the Red Army is not the same as the slaughter defenseless Jewish, Belorussian, Ukrainian or Russian civilians. The division between guilt and innocence must never be removed.

Because of the absence of the honest examination of these questions in Eastern Europe, many people, even Jews, have guilt for repressed feelings that is a clear indication that the nationalist “reconciliation” is fundamentally false and impractical. In Eastern Europe in the 1950s the political concept of “class innocence” was introduced and is being replaced now by the very firmly embedded local concept of “national innocence,” which is very much akin to the above discussed confrontation of the evil Nazi/Arrowcrossist/Iron Guardist as contrasted with the innocent “little people” and “little soldiers.” In the spirit of the perspective advocated by Prime Minister József Antall and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, societal debates are replaced in our area by bad politically motivated explanations that are inseparable from denying the reality, the uniqueness and even the significance of the Holocaust.

Notes

- ¹ Tom Bower, *The Nazi Gold. The Full Story of the Fifty-Year Swiss-Nazi Conspiracy to Steal Billions from Europe's Jews and Holocaust Survivors* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1997)
- ² David I. Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews. The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Knopf, 2001).
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), pp. 142–165.
- ⁵ Kertzer, *The Popes*, p. 15.
- ⁶ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pp. 252–253.
- ⁷ Kertzer, *The Popes*, p. 266.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 278–279.
- ⁹ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 152.
- ¹⁰ Gábor Székely, *Hitler hatalomra jutása [Hitler's Coming to Power]* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1983), pp. 175–178.
- ¹¹ Saul Friedlander, *A náci antiszemitizmus. Egy tömegpszichózis története [The Nazi Anti-Semitism. The History of a Mass-Psychosis]* (Budapest: Uránus, 1996), pp. 174–175.
- ¹² Tamás Krausz, *Zsidók Orországra 1900–1929 [Jews in Russia 1900–1929]* (Budapest: Magyar Ruzsisztikai Intézet és MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1995); Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnoseniya, 2003), pp. 30–31.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 43, and 56.
- ¹⁴ Tamás Krausz *A Bolsevizmus és nemzeti kérdés [Bolshevism and the National Question]* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989), pp. 34–86.
- ¹⁵ Vlagyimir Iljics Lenin, *Lenin összes művei [Lenin's Collected Works]* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1971), vol. 30, pp. 308.
- ¹⁶ Krausz, *Bolshevism* p. 75.
- ¹⁷ Tamás Krausz, ed., *Gulág. A szovjet táborrendszer története. [Gulag. The History of the Soviet Camp System]* (Budapest: Pannonica, 2001).
- ¹⁸ Krausz, ed., *Zsidók*, p. 182.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 37, and 193.
- ²⁰ A. N. Sakharov, et al, eds. “Sovershenno sekretno.” *Lubianka – Stalinu o polozhenii v stranie (1922–1934)* (Moscow: Publisher, 2000–2002) vol. 17.
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