

The Holocaust and the Historians

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Notes

Chapter 01: Thinking About the Six Million: Facts, Figures, Perspectives

Statistics of Death: The War

1. At least 35 million persons, perhaps even as many as 50 million, were killed during the Second World War in all theaters of operation.
2. Of all European countries, the USSR suffered the greatest loss of life in the war.
 - a. Soviet military and civilian losses amounted to some 20 million.
 - b. Other sources estimate that the Soviets lost about 11 million combatants and 7 million civilians.
 - c. One and a half million (1.5) Soviet Jews were murdered.
 - d. Three and a half million (3.5) Soviet P.O.Ws are believed to have been murdered by the Germans, gassed at Auschwitz, machine-gunned en masse, or shot in military-style executions.
 - e. Hitler had issued a decree guaranteeing his armed forces immunity from subsequent prosecution for shooting enemy civilians (issued one month before Germany invaded the USSR).
 - f. On June 06, 1941: *Kommissarbefehl* (Commissar Order) authorized combat troops to single out from their captured prisoners “political commissars of all kinds” and to kill them.
 - i. Soviet P.O.Ws lose protection of international law.
3. Poland ranks second in the number of war losses.
 - a. Total of 6,028,000 deaths, about 22% of the prewar population
 - b. (If Jewish losses were computed separately, the number is about 3 million, or 12.5% of the Polish Population.)
 - c. Death by “direct military action”
 - i. 644,000
 - ii. Presumably military personnel killed in combat and civilians killed in air raids and artillery fire
 - d. Death by “victims of death camps, raids, executions, annihilation of ghettos, etc.”
 - i. 3,577,000 (3 million were Jews)
 - e. Death in “prison and other places of confinement, due to epidemics, emaciation, ill treatment, etc.”
 - i. 1,286,000
 - f. “Deaths outside prisons and camps, caused by wounds, mutilation, excessive work, etc.”
 - i. 521,000
 - g. About 10,000 Poles were killed in the first year of German occupation.

- h. In the later years, about 25,000 Poles were killed in mass executions, many in reprisal for resistance activities.

4. Yugoslavia

- a. 1.5 million Yugoslavs, about 9% of the population, were killed or disappeared
- b. 1.2 million of these were civilian casualties
 - i. Mostly victims of German reprisals for the continuing guerilla warfare that the Yugoslavs conducted during the German occupation

5. Greece

- a. Similar circumstances to Yugoslavia
- b. 250,000, 3-4% of the Greek population, died

- 6. The Germans, who launched the war that brought these unprecedented statistics, suffered about 3.5 million combat casualties and 430,000 civilian casualties (mostly victims of air raids), about 8% of the German population in 1939.

7. France

- a. The number of persons who have been killed or missing: 600,000, about 1.5% of the population
 - i. 200,000 were combat casualties
 - ii. 400,000 were civilians (including about 90,000 Jews) who were killed in air raids, executed, or deported

8. Belgium

- a. Lost 50,000 lives, out of a population of just under 10 million

9. Great Britain

- a. 360,000 deaths (both military and civilians) from air raids- less than 1% of the population

- 10. The English and French probably lost more men in the Battle of Verdun in WWI than in all of WWII.

- 11. In places that Germany held power, German authorities targeted and arrested those thought to be politically dangerous, socially harmful, or economically expendable.

- a. Targeted:

- i. Communists
- ii. Socialists
- iii. Outspoken members of the clergy
- iv. Jehovah's Witnesses (who refused to recognize National Socialism)
- v. Prostitutes
- vi. Homosexuals
- vii. 'perverts'
- viii. Professional criminals

- 12. The Germans developed a system of forced labor in the camps, and in the later years of the war, the slave labor of these prisoners became the backbone of the German war economy.

- a. 1,650,000 persons were incarcerated in these camps
- b. Over 1 million of them died or were killed
- c. Some died of "NATURAL" causes: hunger, exhaustion, disease

- d. Those who could not work (the ailing, the sick, and the dying) were killed by gas chamber
- e. Hitler called the ill and dying “useless eaters”

Statistics of Death: Mass Murder

1. Nazis saw this method of murder as “ideological warfare” and considered it conventional military war technique
2. The High Command of the German Armed Forces conducted the military war.
3. The SS, the dreaded armed police of the National Socialist movement, conducted the ideological war.
4. Both wars were concurrent undertakings, strategically and operationally meshed.
5. The mass murder represented itself as a holy war to annihilate Germany’s “mortal enemy”
6. The *mortal enemy – Todfeind* was Hitler’s word – consisted of the Jews, who were, according to doctrines of National Socialism, the chief antagonists to the German “Aryans.”
 - a. Jews considered biological archenemy of the German people, whose physical presence, it was alleged, threatened the purity and even the very existence of the “Aryan” race.
 - b. No other people, nation, or “race” held that status.
7. Racial purity was a Nazi obsession and embraced every aspect of life in the German dictatorship.
8. Within Germany itself, the euthanasia program claimed about 100,000 lives.
9. During the war, convoys of patients from mental institutions from various countries arriving at Auschwitz were sent straight to the gas chambers.
 - a. No records were kept of their arrival or their murder; their numbers were estimated to be in the thousands.
10. According to Hitler’s racial doctrine, Slavs were believed to be sub-humans (*Untermenschen*). But no evidence exists that a plan to murder the Slavs was ever contemplated or developed.
11. The German racists assigned the Slaves to the lowest rank of human life.
12. The Germans thus looked upon Slavs as people not fit to be educated, not able to govern themselves, worthy only as slaves whose existence would be justified because they served their German masters.
13. Hitler’s racial policy with regard to the Slavs was “depopulation.”
14. The Slavs were to be prevented from procreating, except to provide the necessary continuing supply of slave laborers.
15. Whether the Russians- or other “non-Aryan” peoples- lived or died was, as Himmler once put it, “a matter of indifference.”
 - a. Himmler justified the murder of the Jews as “an unwritten and never-to-be written page of glory” in German history.
16. The European Romani suffered enormous losses at the hands of the Germans, yet the National Socialist state had no clear-cut racial policy with regard to them.

- a. The Germans regarded the ‘Gypsies’ primarily as an antisocial element, consisting of thieves and vagrants, rather than as an alien racial group.
- 17. Investigations were made as to whether Gypsies were racially fit to be educated. (Official conclusion was ‘no’.)
- 18. Nazi officials established two basic categories, dividing the native Romani tribes from the foreign ones.
 - a. The native tribes were defined as those who had settled in Germany since the 15th century, and hence were entitled to citizenship and the protection of German law.
- 19. When the Nazis began in 1941 to formulate a racial policy with regard to the Romani, no agreement on the matter had been reached by the top Nazi leaders.
 - a. In 1943, the German occupying authorities in the Eastern areas ruled, with Himmler’s approval, that sedentary Gypsies and their offspring were to be treated as citizens of the country, whereas nomadic Gypsies and their offspring were to be treated as Jews (that is, murdered).
- 20. SS security forces, “cleansing” the occupied countryside of “dangerous elements,” murdered many gypsies on grounds that they were unreliable, unemployable, and criminal.
- 21. Only in the last year of the war did the Nazi ideologies begin to regard the Gypsies not only as an undesirable social element, but also as an undesirable racial element.
- 22. The statistics of the murdered Gypsies are gross estimates: of about 1 million Gypsies in the countries that fell under German control, nearly a quarter of them were murdered-machine-gunned or gassed.

The Jews: A Special Case

- 1. Jews obsessed Hitler all his life and their presence in Germany, their very existence, preoccupied the policymakers of the German dictatorship. The *Judenfrage*- the question of the Jews- riveted all Germany.
- 2. Every German city, town, and village applied itself to the Jews and the Jewish question with rampant violence and meticulous legalism.
- 3. The German dictatorship devised two strategies to conduct its war of annihilation against the Jews: mass shooting and mass gassing.
- 4. Special-duty troops of the SS’s Security Service and Security Police, called *Einsatzgruppen*, were assigned to each of the German armies invading the Soviet Union.
 - a. The Einsatzgruppen were given the task of rounding up the Jews and killing them.
- 5. The Jews were loaded on trucks or forced to march to some desolate area with antitank trenches already dug or natural ravines.
- 6. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg estimated that the Einsatzgruppen murdered about a million Jews.
- 7. To systematize the murder of the rest of the European Jews, the National Socialist state built six installations with large scale gassing facilities and with crematoria for the disposal of the bodies.
 - a. These were all located on Polish territory: Oświećim (better known by its German name, Auschwitz), Bełżec, Chełmno, Majdanek, Sobibór, and Treblinka.

- b. About 3.5 million Jews from every country of Europe were murdered there.
- c. (Approximately 1.5 million non-Jews were gassed in these camps, most at Auschwitz.)
- 8. Of the 9 million Jews who lived in the countries of Europe that fell under German rule during the war, about 6 million were murdered.
 - a. 500,000 died in the ghettos of Eastern Europe of hunger, disease, and exhaustion, and as victims of random terror and reprisals.
- 9. Though the Soviet Union suffered greater losses than the Jews in absolute figures, no other people anywhere lost the main body of its population and the fountainhead of its cultural resources.
- 10. The murder of the 6 million Jews stands apart from the deaths of the other millions, not because of any distinctive fate that the individual victims endured, but because of the differentiative intent of the murderers and the unique effect of the murders.
- 11. Having mourned their dead, commemorated their martyrs and heroes, all the peoples of Europe, including the Germans, recovered from their wounds, rebuilt their shattered cities.
 - a. They resuscitated their institutions of learning and culture.
 - b. But the annihilation of the 6 million European Jews brought an end with irrevocable finality to the thousand-year-old culture and civilization of Ashkenazic Jewry, destroying the continuity of Jewish history.

The Lessons of National Socialism

1. National Socialist Germany achieved no comparable far-reaching or fundamental impact on society.
 - a. Even as the events of its short reign and its still briefer dominion over Europe recede into the past, its ghostly ghastly presence continues to hover.
2. Never before in human history had a state and political movement dedicated itself to the destruction of a whole people. (...if you ignore the United States, Canadian indigenous people, Rwanda, or Cambodia...)

Chapter 02: The Eye of the Beholder: The Holocaust According to English and American Historians

Lessons of the Textbooks

1. Geoffrey Baraclough's textbook, *The Origins of Modern Germany*:
 - a. The Jews are not merely invisible, they are altogether nonexistent.
2. *Columbia History of the World*
 - a. Begins with the formation of the universe and closes with a survey of the culture of the 1960s
 - b. 40 professors of Columbia University contributed to this 1,237-page volume
 - c. First chapter: Covers Hitler's rise to power and his government set up to 1939, contains only three sentences, and those overrun with errors, that deal with anti-Semitism, the Nazis' racial ideas and policies, and the situation of the Jews.

3. R. R. Palmer and Colton: *A History of the Modern World*
 - a. A college text which succeeds in integrating Jewish history into the framework of European history and deals in an altogether admirable manner with the Nazi era.
4. Gordon A. Craig
 - a. Devoted research to the rise of political anti-Semitism in the German Empire and to the events leading to the destruction of the Jews

The Invisible Jews

1. For long centuries, Jews had been considered outsiders by those who wrote history.
 - a. Since the Middle Ages, the writing of most history has been in the hands of the Church and its advocates.
 - b. Ever since the Church triumphed over the Synagogue, the Church determined the place of the Jews in history, if indeed they were to have a place at all.
 - c. Teachings of Jewish idea and Judaism were rewritten, distorted, and even falsified in order to assure the ascendancy of Christian doctrine and its superiority over Judaism.
 - d. Many scholars, as well as Church militants believed that only by conversion to Christianity could Jews assure themselves of a place in history in this world and their salvation in the next.
2. During the Enlightenment's shift from Christian authority to state power, the Jews continued to remain outsiders, persecuted and excluded because they were now considered alien to the developing national ethos.
3. Leopold von Ranke
 - a. Wrote a six-volume history of Germany during the Reformation (1486-1555) with barely four references to the Jews.
4. If Jews were included in any historic text, they were often cast in the same stereotypic images that the illiterate and superstitious masses held: the Jew as a usurer or money-grubber, as dishonest businessman or avaricious banker; or the Jew was portrayed as deracinated intellectual, dangerous radical, cosmopolitan bohemian, cultural contaminator.
5. The extent to which the Jews and their history are nonpersons and non-subjects is dramatically evident in a major work of American historiography, *History*, one of a series of studies commissioned by the Council of the Humanities of Princeton University.
 - a. Contains not one reference to Jews or Jewish history

Warps of Historical Method

1. Fritz R. Stern
 - a. Whose writings on modern Germany have established his international reputation, has shown a singular sensitivity to the presence of Jews in German history.

The British Perspective

1. The English historians of modern Germany, whose work has gained them international renown, astonish us with the minimal attention they give to German anti-Semitism and to the destruction of the Jews.

2. Consider Alan Bullock's 800-page biography of Hitler, which for nearly two decades has been the standard work.
 - a. Its 50 references to Jews and anti-Semitism come to about 15 pages, less than 2% of the whole book.
 - b. Emphasizes Hitler's ambition for power
 - c. Deals only lightly with Hitler's ideas, beliefs, opinions, and feelings
3. A. J. P. Taylor is the historian par excellence who consistently deemphasizes values and ideas as motivating factors in human behavior.
 - a. *The Course of German History*
 - i. Ridicules postwar Allied occupation efforts to "educate the Germans in democracy"
 - b. *The Origins of the Second World War*
 - i. "...in principle and doctrine, Hitler was no more wicked and unscrupulous than many other contemporary statesmen," though "in wicked acts he outdid them all."
4. H. R. Trevor-Roper
 - a. *The Mind of Adolf Hitler*
 - i. Argued that Hitler's mind was, to the historian, as important a problem as the mind of Bismarck or Lenin
 - b. *The Last Days of Hitler*
 - i. Quotes closing words of Hitler's political testament, composed just before his suicide in a Berlin bunker
 1. Hitler directed the German people to uphold the racial laws and "mercilessly resist the universal poisoner of all nations, international Jewry."
 - ii. The rest of the book hardly ever refers to the Jews.

"This Wicked Man Hitler"

1. J. P. Stern, an English literary scholar and a refugee from Germany, perceived that the biographical approach was likely to trivialize rather than to illuminate this particular man (Hitler.)
2. Robert Payne, a prolific professional writer, produced a briskly told account of Hitler's life which is altogether devoid of ideas.
 - a. Tells little about Hitler and the Jews: barely ten pages out of over 600 are devoted to the Final Solution
3. David Irving's *Hitler's War*
 - a. Amateur historian
 - b. Reputation as an apologist and as a writer without regard for accuracy and truth won him a measure of notoriety
 - c. Wrote a 926-page work intended to show that Hitler was kind to his animals and to his secretaries, that he was "probably the weakest *leader* Germany has known in this century," and that he did not murder the Jews or even wish to do so, but

that the murder was committed behind his back, without his knowledge or consent.

- d. The killing of the Jews, Irving believes, “was partly of an *ad hoc* nature, what the Germans call a *Verlegenheitslösung* – the way out of an awkward dilemma, chosen by the middle-level authorities in the eastern territories overrun by the Nazis.

Hitler on the Couch

- 1. Walter C. Langer
 - a. *The Mind of Adolf Hitler*
 - i. A misleading title, for the study does not deal with Hitler’s mind or ideas, but rather with his personality and behavior
- 2. Rudolph Binion’s work relies on Freudian analysis, interpreting “Hitler among the Germans” in terms of the traumatic mechanism.
 - a. Binion builds his argument on a progression of traumas.
 - i. The first trauma, according to Bionion, was experienced by Hitler’s mother, whose first three children died in infancy.
 - ii. Traumatized by the guilt for their deaths, she breast-fed Hitler with incestuous passion, thereby transferring her trauma to him.
 - iii. Years later, his mother contracted breast cancer, which Binion diagnoses as a form of self-punishment.
 - iv. Hitler then encouraged Dr. Bloch, his mother’s Jewish doctor, to treat her with iodoform, a chemical substance used as an antiseptic, whose persistent odor was reminiscent of poison gas.
 - v. His mother died and Hitler was once again traumatized, the trauma now fixed on the Jewish doctor.
 - vi. Hitler was gassed eleven years later during the First World War, thereby- Binion explains- reviving the trauma of his mother’s iodoform poisoning.
 - vii. The shock of Germany’s defeat re-traumatized him and he resolved to undo his mother’s death and reverse Germany’s defeat.
- 3. Robert G. L. Waite
 - a. Offers a psychological and analytic explanation for Hitler’s pathology
 - b. Talks about Hitler’s coprophilia, monorchidism, his fears and obsessions
 - c. Asserted that Hitler identified his mother with Germany
 - i. Therefore he favored the word “Motherland” rather than the more common “Fatherland” (“Mother Germany”)

Mass Pathology in History

- 1. Norman Cole
 - a. Explores the revolutionary messianism in medieval Europe
 - b. Wrote a book on the history of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion
 - i. Model work in the history of Anti-Semitism

- c. So repelled were the Jewish historians by the irrational character of Jewish messianism that they failed in their professional obligations to interpret such movements fairly

Chapter 03: The Shadow of the Past: German Historians Confront National Socialism

1. Even the anguished recognition in 1945 by the historians who grew up in the age of German nation – and empire-building that the Third Reich, the regime of their nation and people, had committed the most heinous crimes in human history could not make them disown their loyalties to the past or discard the values of the lifetime.

The German Historiographic Heritage

1. One historian, citing a nationalist poet of an earlier time, summed up the attitude then prevalent not only among German historians but also among most middle-class Germans: “One day the world will be restored to health by the German spirit.”
2. German nationalism, from its earliest days, was marked by two distinctive characteristics.
 - a. (1.) The belief that the German nation was not only different from other nations, but superior to them
 - i. Therefore, reinforcing the idea that Germany was destined for world leadership
 - b. (2.) The belief that the individual could best fulfill himself through subordination to his historic community (nation)
3. The centrality of the state in human affairs became an explicit concept in German historiography in the early writings of Leopold von Ranke.
 - a. The state, in its journey to gain military and political power, embodied the highest of spirituality.
 - b. All other entities could not possibly have ethical purposes and values that could transcend the state, therefore all other entities are subordinates.
 - c. By the end of the 19th century, the German state as *Machtstaat*- the state by virtue of its power- was regarded as history’s driving force.
4. Most German historians- like most Germans- were carried away by patriotic euphoria when Germany declared war against Russia on August 01, 1914.
 - a. German political commitment so overwhelmed their professional capacity, their nationalist passion so befogged their intellectual faculties that they were unable to understand the reasons for Germany’s defeat.
 - i. “Delusions kept us from any sober recognition of the true causes of our failure,” – Ludwig Dehio (one of Germany’s more liberal historians)
 - ii. He argued that the German historians were not able to produce a convincing interpretation of WWI, firmly grounded in a comprehensive historical panorama and therefore immune to both national sensibilities and political interests.

5. History written during the short-lived Weimar Republic was, for the most part, conceived in the spirit of the past, imbued with longing for the *Machtstaat*, indifferent to the presence of a constitutional government.
6. Not a single historian undertook to examine the *Dolchstoss* legend, the myth about the stab-in-the-back, the betrayal from within, which German nationalists, in a blind refusal to account for Germany's military defeat in real historical terms, attributed to the Jews.
7. The "Jewish question," as German nationalists conceived it, was the threatened and threatening invasion into the German national community by a group whom the Germans almost universally regarded as racially alien, culturally unassimilable, harmful to the Christian ethos, and politically destructive.
8. The Jews were rare subjects in German history.
 - a. Reference to Jewish people were reduced down to the "Jewish question."
 - b. The 'Jewish question,' as German nationalists conceived it, was the threatened and threatening invasion into the German national community by a group whom the Germans almost universally regarded as racially alien, culturally unassimilable, harmful to the Christian ethos, and politically destructive.

The Historians and the Third Reich

1. Though no full professor of history in the German universities was said to have been a member of the Nazi party before Hitler came to power, the historical profession- not unlike all the other professions then in Germany- capitulated to the new regime quickly, readily, and even enthusiastically.
2. Karl Alexander von Müller
 - a. Ultranationalist
 - b. Professor of history at the University of Munich
 - c. Once a Rhodes scholar at Oxford
 - d. President of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences
 - e. Then he joined the National Socialist party to demonstrate his loyalty to Germany
3. The Nazification of the historical profession showed itself first in the wave of dismissals from various academic posts and honorary positions.
 - a. Historians who were Jews or 'non-Aryans' – that is, born of Jewish parents or grandparents – were driven from the universities along with those few in the profession with leftist loyalties.
 - b. The few places in the university now made available were filled with Nazi party members, some of whom might otherwise never have been appointed had academic merit and scholarly achievement remained the chief criteria for such appointments.
 - c. Walter Frank, whose life work was governed by obsessive anti-Semitism, became a central figure in the historical profession in Nazi Germany.
 - i. Set up a six-man council of the best people he could find in the academic community who were deeply committed to National Socialism.
 - ii. Three were historians: Müller, Marcks, Srbik

- iii. Frank organized his *Reichsinstitut* (Reich Institute of History) in three research divisions:
 - 1. One on the ‘Jewish Question’
 - 2. One on ‘Political Leadership in World War’
 - 3. One on ‘Postwar History’
 - a. Most of these branches focused on Nazi history
- iv. The formal opening of the *Reichsinstitut* took place in October of 1935, at Berlin University
- v. The highest dignitaries were Frank’s top two patrons
 - 1. Rudolf Hess (Hitler’s deputy)
 - 2. Alfred Rosenberg
- vi. Heinrich Himmler, Baldur von Schirach sent as personal representatives

Chapter 04: Palimpsest History- Erasing the Holocaust in the USSR

- 1. The Soviet Union demands of its historians (as of all its scholars and artists) impossible feats of intellectual acrobatics.
- 2. Given a task that cannot be fulfilled without sacrifice of historical truth and moral integrity, historians in the Soviet Union often become little more than accessories of the gigantic propaganda mill operated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), its Central Committee, and its top dictators.

Style & Substance: Marxism-Leninism and the Party Line

- 1. Marxism-Leninism is the official ideology of the CPSU.
- 2. The philosophic underpinning for Marxism-Leninism is provided by the theory of historical materialism, which explains the rise and fall of most social systems.
 - a. Theory: The “material conditions of life” determine the structure of society.
 - b. Consequently, important changes in those conditions will bring about important changes in the legal, political, and ideological structures of that society.
- 3. Like millions of other Soviet citizens, many historians have undergone the terrors of changes in the party line and dictators.
 - a. “Many disputes that began in the pages of scientific journals,” wrote Roy A. Medvedev, “ended in the torture chambers of the NKVD.” (The NKVD was a law enforcement agency of the Soviet Union that directly executed the will of the All Union Communist Party. It was closely associated with the Soviet secret police, which at times was part of the agency, and is known for its political repression during the era of Joseph Stalin.)
- 4. Due to the constant restructuring of political regimes and dictators, writing history in the Soviet Union became a “process of continuous alternation,” which Orwell described with uncanny insight; “day by day and almost minute by minute....A;; history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary.”
- 5. With each change in party line, the previous histories disappeared and new works were ordered to take their place.

- a. Half-truths and lies were inextricably interwoven. Such histories succeeded one another according to the rhythm of the purges and the changes in party line, piling up layer upon layer.

The History of the Second World War Revised and Standardized

1. No subject has been as sensitive to the Soviet historian's touch or as dangerous to his political health as WWII.
 - a. Every subject that historians wanted to explore that pertained to WWII was literally a political booby-trap.
 - i. Ideology (Communism v Nazism)
 - ii. Practical politics (Hitler-Stalin pact or the Grand Alliance)
 - iii. Diplomatic affairs, relationships with the West and capitalism, Nazi Germany
 - iv. Military strategies
 - v. The behavior of the Soviet population and Stalin
 - vi. Social policies, economic matters
2. After the war ended, Stalin called a halt to all historical inquiry about the war.
 - a. So until his death in 1953, the major sources of information in the Soviet about the war were Stalin's own wartime writings and speeches.
 - b. Stalin's blackout on war historiography can be attributed in part to the grave disparities between reality and propaganda apparent to everyone who experienced the war.

The Holocaust as Historiographic Problem

1. Since the rise of Nazism in Germany, Soviet scholars, dutifully following the prescriptions of Marxism-Leninism, have diagnosed Nazism as tool or bodyguard of 'monopoly capitalism.'
2. Sometimes Nazism (or generally fascism) is presented as the Tweedledum to the Tweedledee of 'bourgeois parliamentarianism' and sometimes as the instrument used by capitalists to overthrow 'bourgeois democracy.'
3. The racist anti-Semitic character of Nazism has been generally disregarded in the USSR, while economic interests and class difference were stressed.
 - a. Soviet analysts used to claim that the Nazis hated only working-class Jews, while welcoming the support of wealthy Jews, or that the Nazis expropriated the Jews only to win support among the German petty bourgeoisie who became enriched at the Jews' expense.
4. Soviet history books seldom mention the fundamental anti-Jewish element of Nazi racism.
5. Despite frequent declarations that anti-Semitism is incompatible with Communism and despite the repeated assurances that the Soviet regime had outlawed it, anti-Semitism, which has been deeply rooted in the superstitions of the Russian people for generations and which had always been exploited by tsarist officials, has continued its persistently long life under the Soviets.

6. When the German armed forces the Nazi death squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) swept into the Soviet Union, they found substantial numbers of Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, White Russians, Ukrainians, Great Russians, Tartars, Kalmyks, and others willing to collaborate with them.
 - a. Some people, especially Ukrainians, wanted national autonomy and political independence; others simply sought revenge for past Soviet brutality and prosecution.
7. A common spirit binding the disaffected peoples with the Germans was their pervasive anti-Semitism.
8. The *Einsatzgruppen* found many hands ready to assist in murdering the Jews.
 - a. In all, the Germans and their helpers slaughtered about 1.5 million Soviet Jews:
 - i. 250,000 in White Russia (White Russia is an archaism for the modern-day eastern side of Belarus)
 - ii. 900,000 in Ukraine
 - iii. 107,000 in Russia
 - iv. 228,000 in the Baltic countries
 - b. The Ukrainians became Germany's most diligent collaborators.
 - i. Helped in the murder of the Jews as far away from Ukraine as Warsaw, Poland.
 - ii. Served as auxiliaries to General Jürgen Stroop's SS troops in putting down the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in April-May 1943

Erasing the Jews from Soviet History

1. New secondary school textbooks issued in the 1950s and 1960s substantially abbreviated or altogether deleted the references to Jews, not just in modern and medieval history, but even in accounts of ancient history.
2. The scholarly literature somehow managed totally to overlook the presence of the Jews in Soviet history, past and present.
 - a. For example, a multivolume history of the Ukraine never once mentioned the Jews, though major Jewish settlements were located there.

The Tables Turned: Victims into Victimizers

1. Soviet anti-Semitism intensified in 1967 after the Six Day War in which Israel stunningly defeated the Arab states armed by the USSR.
2. In July 1977, the Soviet Academy of Sciences published a collection of papers entitled *International Zionism: History and Politics*. One contributor, writing on the subject of the World Zionist Organization, charged that Zionism had a close working relationship with Hitlerism (which is a dumb idea) and was consequently to be held responsible for the Holocaust (which is an even dumber idea).
 - a. Here is the kicker: In the late 1970s this literally unbelievable assertion that the Jews themselves were responsible for the Holocaust was given wider circulation in the Soviet press and in Soviet scholarly literature.

Chapter 05: Appropriating the Holocaust: Polish Historical Revisionism

1. Today, barely 5,000 Jews live in Poland. A few decades ago there were 3.3 million. Jews had settled in Poland as far back as the 11th century and by the 16th century had become the most populous of all European Jewish communities and the most creative.

The Shaping of Polish National Consciousness

2. Polish nationalism emerged among the thousands of Polish exiles in Paris during the so-called Great Emigration of the 1830s, following the unsuccessful Polish uprising in 1830-1831. Nurturing the memory of their homeland, the philosophers and romantic poets among the exiles evolved a concept of Polish national identity and unity that had never before been articulated, even in Poland itself.
3. Philosophers, poets, and devout Catholics began to fantasize Poland as the Christ of nations, whose historical mission would be to redeem the world from its political sins.
4. This concept of Poland martyred and resurrected became an enduring national myth, continually reinforced by Poland's hapless political history.
5. Polish leaders, this time in revulsion from romantic martyrdom, turned to a more realistic and altogether different political mode. They hoped now that by developing Poland's economy and industry rather than by engaging in quixotic gestures, they could provide a sound foundation upon which some day they would build in an independent nation.
6. This new course in nationalist aspirations in the last third of the 19th century introduced anti-Semitism as another factor in Polish nationalism.
7. The anti-Jewish prejudices long indoctrinated by the Church found new expression in economic competition, as the Poles aimed to displace the Jews in business and light industry.
8. In the last two decades of the 19th century, the Polish nationalist movement split.
 - a. The liberals opted for a federalist nationalism that accepted the presence and welcomed the cooperation of all national minorities- Ukrainians, Jews, Belorussians, and Germans- in a future independent Poland.
 - b. The conservatives regarded the Jews as an alien intrusion in the Polish body politic.
 - c. In 1897, when the National Democratic party, known by its acronym Endecja, was founded under the leadership of Roman Dmowski, the Polish nationalist movement embarked on its inevitable anti-Semitic course.
9. Poland obligated itself to protect the rights of all its ethnic minorities, like other newly created states under the Treaty of Versailles.
10. Besides guaranteeing individual rights, Poland also promised collective political and cultural rights under the National Minorities Treaty, but that promise was never kept.
11. Government regulations were introduced to exclude the Jews from certain occupation and industries which they themselves had originally developed.
 - a. Jews became objects of harassment and violence, victims of boycotts and pogroms.

- b. Their access to universities- and thereby to professional careers- was limited by quota and their presence at the universities was discouraged by acts of terror committed by Polish students.
 - c. In 1937, Polish professional associations of physicians, engineers, and architects adopted the so-called “Aryan Paragraph,” borrowed from Nazi Germany’s legislation, which barred Jews from those fields.
12. The anti-Jewish attitude in Poland prevailed when in September 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland for the 4th time in its history.

The Anti-Semitic Heritage in Wartime Poland and After

- 1. The Germans use Poland as their gigantic laboratory for mass murder, not because the Nazis counted on Polish anti-Semitism, but because that was where most of Europe’s Jews were concentrated and where the Germans expected to settle for a long time.
- 2. By early 1942, they had built six killing installations in Poland, where they murdered 5.5 million people, about 4 million of them Jews- nearly 3 million Polish Jews and a million Jews from elsewhere in Europe.
- 3. Within a year or even less after the German occupation, the Jews were separated from the Polish population and imprisoned in ghettos.
 - a. The punishment for leaving the ghetto without authorization was death, and death was the punishment too for non-Jews who harbored Jews or otherwise aided them to escape.
 - b. Research conducted in Poland in the late 1960s indicated that a few hundred Poles were executed for helping Jews, while probably many thousands more helped, or tried to help.
 - c. Most of the 30 million Poles did nothing on behalf of the Jews, satisfied to observe how the Germans were now solving *their* “Jewish problem.”
- 4. Those Jews who managed to escape managed to flee into the Polish forests join with underground forces fighting the Germans not only had to elude the merciless Germans forever hunting them, but were also compelled to do battle with the vicious anti-Semitism of the Polish partisans.
- 5. When the war ended, about 70,000 Jewish survivors emerged from their hiding places in Poland.
 - a. By the end of 1945, some 170,000 Polish Jews were repatriated from the Soviet Union.
 - b. Jews who returned to claim their homes and property were greeted with terror, violence, and even murder.
 - c. After all the experience of the German occupation had demonstrated to the Poles that Jews could be murdered with impunity.
 - d. The Poles did not want the Jews back, even if they then amounted to less than 1/10th of their prewar numbers.
- 6. From March 1945 to April 1946 more than 800 Jews were murdered in Poland, the ugliest pogrom occurring in Kielce on July 4, 1946, when nearly 50 Jews were killed by a mob backed up by Polish Militiamen.

- a. By the end of 1946 some 150,000 Jews had departed from Poland, leaving behind no more than 90,000.
- b. A few thousand more left the next year, but early in 1948, the Polish authorities refused to issue passports without evidence of a written promise of a visa to a new country of settlement, thus virtually halting the exodus.

Poland: The Restive Soviet Satellite

1. In 1949, Stalin reduced Poland to the status of a mere Russian military outpost.
 - a. Stalinism in Poland held a powerful influence even after Stalin's death in March 1953.
 - b. In this period, the Jewish party and institutions were liquidated, only a bare handful of so-called communal and cultural groups remaining to operate under the party's vigilance.
2. In September 1949, the Ministry of Public Administration announced that Jews who wished to settle in Israel could register for emigration.
 - a. A deadline of one year was set, later extended to the end of 1950.
 - b. Nearly 30,000 Jews then quit Poland, leaving behind about 45,000.
 - c. In 1951, emigration was once again halted.
3. The new regime [1956+] launched a purge of Jews first from positions of top party leadership and then from sensitive posts in the government and the army.
4. In the summer of 1956, Poland had begun to ease its restrictions on Jewish emigration and by the end of 1957 about 30,000 Jews had left Poland.
 - a. Meanwhile, under the terms of an agreement with the Soviet Union permitting Polish nationals to return home, an estimated 18,000 Polish Jews were repatriated, some 6,000 of whom then emigrated to Israel.
 - b. In 1958, new regulations requiring some dollar payments in Poland slowed down the exodus, but by 1960, only about 30,000 Jews remained in Poland.

The Tangled Web of Polish Historiography, 1944-1956

1. Polish historians have sometimes explained Poland's troubles in terms of the flaws and weaknesses of its own people and their leaders and sometimes as a consequence of the greediness of its neighbors- the Germans and the Russians.
 - a. Either way of writing Polish history has proved to be an exercise in self-pity, self-flagellation, and self-justification.
2. The Poles set themselves the task of writing the history of their experiences as soon as the war ended.
 - a. From the start, history was to serve the ends of justice, and in the pursuit of justice, the Poles began to systematically gather the documentary evidence needed to prosecute German war criminals.
3. The Poles put many other governmental resources in the service of documenting the Polish experience under German occupation.
 - a. The surviving Polish Jews, in contrast, had no such resources
 - b. Yet even in the misery of their ghetto existence under SS rule, they had begun to compile the record of their sufferings.

4. Jewish historian and survivor Philip Friedman
 - a. Reputation as a historian had been established before the war
 - b. Part of a Jewish historical commission in Lublin
5. More Jewish historical commissions formed
 - a. Their common urgent purpose was to gather documents, testimonies, photographs, and all sorts of evidence about the life and death of the Polish Jews under the German occupation to be used in the prosecution of war criminals and eventually as the basic resources for a history of Polish Jews during the war.
6. By the end of 1944, the several commissions united as the Central Jewish Historical Commission.
 - a. Changed its name to the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland in 1947 after moving to Warsaw
 - b. In its first few years, the Institute provided documentary evidence for the prosecution of nearly 2,000 war criminals.
 - c. But as Stalinism intensified its grip on Poland and with the renewed possibility of emigration late in 1949, most of the Institute's founding scholars and staff members then chose to leave.
 - i. it was not enough that Polish historians were forced to interpret their past through the prism of historical materialism and to follow the party line; now they came under direct and official Soviet supervision.
 - d. After the liquidation of the Central Committee of Polish Jews and the emigration of most staff members of the Jewish Historical Institute, the Polish regime put the Institute under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.
7. Stalinist view of the Jews emerged in articles published by the Institution.
 - a. The articles followed a crude scenario in which the Communist- Jews and Poles alike- were the heroes. The rest of the Jews- middle-class, Zionist, socialist- constituted the villains, or at best, the inert and passive victims of villainous leaders and misleaders.
 - b. References to wartime Polish anti-Semitism were almost entirely eliminated, except to illustrate the reactionary character of right-wing Polish organizations that no longer existed.

The Holocaust in the Light of the Polish October

1. Polish October, also known as October 1956, Polish thaw, or Gomułka's thaw, marked a change in the politics of Poland in the second half of 1956.
2. The Polish October of 1956 loosened the vise in which the party had held the country's intellectual life.
 - a. The channels of Polish historiography opened up, especially with regard to the history of the wartime occupation.
3. Pospiesalski
 - a. Head of the Institute for Western Affairs' research section on the German occupation, which opened in 1958
 - b. Devoted to the study of the newly acquired Polish territories

- c. Explicitly stated that “the priority task” the Germans had set themselves “was not the extermination of the Poles, but the complete extermination of the Jews.”
- 4. In a short history of Poland under the German occupation, published in 1961 by Janusz Gumkowski
 - a. Director of the Central Commission to Investigate German Crimes
 - b. Acknowledged that the Germans did not intend to murder the Poles, but had planned to deport about 80-85% of them to Western Siberia
- 5. Kiryl Sosnowski
 - a. Sociologist associated with the Institute for Western Affairs
 - b. In a study of the enslavement and murder of children under Nazi rule (with special focus on the Jewish children in Poland), he estimated that the Germans had murdered 1.2 million Jewish children under 16, and that barely 5,000 Jewish children survived.
 - c. In view of the fact that some 2 million children in Poland were murdered (besides 200,000 Polish children kidnapped to the Third Reich to be “Aryanized”) and that the Jewish children, once 10% of all living children in Poland, accounted for 60% of the murdered ones, Sosnowski concluded that all over Europe, “Jewish children suffered the most. They were doomed to die, no matter what the nationality of their parents.” (Intentionalist view)
- 6. Ugly aspects of Polish-Jewish wartime relations
 - a. extensive blackmailing of Jews in hiding by many Poles and the widespread Polish sport of bounty hunting, turning over to the German police those Jews in hiding
 - b. motive- \$\$\$
 - c. In no other country did such police informing and unsolicited cooperation with the SS assume the massive proportions they took on in Poland.

The Gathering Clouds

- 1. The promise of Gomułka's October 1956 that Poland could somehow pursue an independent path, permitting intellectual and political freedom, was soon aborted.
 - a. New political realignments became to take shape after the ouster of the Muscovites.
- 2. Noted for his ruthlessness as well as his anti-Semitism, Mieczysław Moczar soon became a powerful figure in Polish Communist politics.
 - a. His faction, known as the “Partisans,” appealed to the younger and more nationalistic Poles inside and outside the party.
- 3. 1965
 - a. The arena of the power struggle had shifted rightwards and the political conflict was now between Gomułka and the Partisans, while Poland’s workers grew more restive because of the high prices and economic hardship.
- 4. Israel’s stunning victory in the Six Day War of June 1967, having inflamed the Soviet Union and its satellites by the defeat inflicted on their Arab clients, provided Gomułka

with a good political opportunity to launch a vicious attack against the Polish Jews and thus to deflect antigovernment resentments.

5. Anti-Semitism reigned once more in Poland, now barely disguised as “anti-Zionism” and legitimized by the highest government authorities.
6. The Jewish Historical Institute felt the strong arm of the government, as it increasingly was isolated from Jewish cultural institutions abroad, was demined their publications, and was altogether put under strict censorship.

1968: The Savagery of Anti-Semitism

1. 1968 Polish political mentality: “the Zionists in Poland intend to set intellectuals and youth at variance with the main requirements of patriotic responsibility for People’s Poland.”
2. Moczar’s people had succeeded in intimidating the top institutions of state and party and convincing them to blame the Jews for the turmoil in the country.
 - a. A massive anti-Semitic witch-hunt was launched under the guise of “anti-Zionism.”
3. In the years from June 1967-December 1970, the Jewish community of Poland was inevitably set on a course toward extinction.
 - a. Emigration had resumed and by the end of 1969, barely 15,000 Jews remained in Poland; a year later, only 9,000 were left and each year thereafter the numbers shrank.
 - b. The few Jewish institutions, like the Jewish Historical Institute, came under the direct administration of the Polish authorities.

The End of a Millennial History

1. In June 1968, whole sections of the archival collections of the Jewish Historical Institute were removed and transferred to various regional archives.
 - a. Archives pertaining to the Lodz ghetto, for instance, were deposited in state archives in Lodz.
 - i. The intention may have been to remove the Jewish records from the Institute’s custody and thereby prevent the staff from making copies of documents to send to Jewish depositories abroad.
 - ii. It may also have been intended to restrict access to materials that would not support claims about generous Polish wartime aid to Jews.
2. The Jewish Historical Institute’s staff members were charged with having doctored documents found at Auschwitz because they had been “actuated by the feeling of wrongly conceived national solidarity.”
 - a. The politically motivated charge concerned the transcription and translation from Yiddish of a diary found in 1962, which had been written by a member of the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz.
 - i. Sonderkommandos were work units made up of German Nazi death camp prisoners. They were composed of Jews who were forced, on threat of their own deaths, to aid with the disposal of gas chamber victims during the Holocaust.

- b. The State Museum had requested the Jewish Historical Institute to decipher and translate this badly charred, crumbling piece of manuscript.
- c. Two Institute staff members succeeded in deciphering and translating the pages they had been given- not the entire text, it later turned out- which they then published in the *Biuletyn*, just at the height of the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968.
- d. The diary described the Sonderkommando's plans for an uprising in Auschwitz.
- e. Its author criticized the Polish and Russian camp prisoners for not supporting the Jews in this venture.
- f. The authorities of the State Museum were dissatisfied with the translation, accusing the translators of "undue Jewish nationalism" for asserting that the Polish and Russian prisoners at Auschwitz had been motivated by anti-Jewish feelings.
- g. In the Museum's subsequently published text of this diary, Jews share the blame with the Poles and Russians for not having carried out the resistance action.

Chapter 06: The Perspective of Catastrophe: The Holocaust in Jewish History

Martyrdom and Resistance

1. Long before WWII and even before WWI, the young Jews who streamed into secular radical movements that transformed traditional Jewish society in Eastern Europe had committed themselves to changing the status of Jews as a powerless pariah people.
 - a. They opted for either a revolutionary transformation of their oppressive political condition or for Jewish statehood which would make Jews like other nations.
 - b. Such socialist and socialist-Zionist ideas and ideologies continued to permeate the youth of East European Jewry between the two wars, instilling them with both radical and national fervor and directing their energies toward realizing an ideal Jewish existence in the future, though often they lavished contempt on the Jews of the past and present.
 - c. They wanted to rectify the historical account, balancing the record of suffering with a record of active heroism. Thenceforth, the story of Jewish resistance as told by its participant survivors became exalted and magnified.
 - i. It was portrayed as individually honorable and socially purifying; it became a vindication of Zionist ideology and leftist politics.
2. The rhetorical debate among the survivors about resistance and passivity was soon taken up by two Jewish historians who, in time, were to produce some of the fundamental historical studies of the Holocaust.
 - a. Philip Friedman (1901-1960)
 - i. Managed to survive the German occupation by hiding in his native Lwow.
 - b. Isaiah Trunk
 - i. Spent the war year as a slave laborer in the Soviet Union
 - c. Both men completed their professional training in Poland before the war had established their credentials as academic historians.

- d. These writers charged the murdered European Jews with passivity under German terror and attributed the failure of the Jews to prevail over the Germans not to lack of Jewish resources, but to ingrained Jewish psychology and to age-old Jewish cultural traditions.
- e. Frequent repetitions of the assertion that the Jews by their passivity were culpable of their own deaths

Judenrat: The Charge of Collaboration

- 1. Even more intractable emotionally and historiographically is the problem of the *Judenrate*. The Jewish councils that the Germans established to help them administer the ghettos of Eastern Europe.
- 2. Given the Judenrat's pitifully shrunken resources, the lack of available options, and the conventional abuses that thrive everywhere in petty officialdom, it was to be expected that in most ghettos the officials of the Judenrate would be set on a collision course with the population.
- 3. No member of the Judenrat was ever chosen as a target for assassination in the ghetto, though the resistance groups carried out a considerable number of death sentences against members of the Jewish police who had behaved with exceptional brutality or against Jews who worked as informers for the Gestapo.