



THE HOLOCAUST AVERTED

An Alternate History
of American Jewry,
1938-1967

JEFFREY S. GUROCK

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For Dahlia Ruth and Sophie Ann

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Jeffrey S. Gurock
Riverdale, Bronx, New York

The Holocaust Averted

Prologue

Ghosts in the Restored Jewish Quarter in Krakow: An Entrance into Alternate Jewish History

The restored Jewish quarter in the Kazimierz District of Krakow, Poland, became, in the late twentieth century, a tourist attraction. Visitors walked within the narrow streets of this section of the city and discovered—with their website printouts as guides—“a unique atmosphere of the Jewish past of this area.” For an authentic retrospective on a civilization that was no more, travelers stopped at the Museum of Judaism housed within the Old Synagogue, a sanctuary that dated back to the fifteenth century. In 1495, King Jan I Olbracht first moved the Jews who were under his protection to these streets. For a sense of what day-to-day life had been like in the centuries before World War II, the intrigued perambulated—particularly on Sunday—through a farmers’ market where produce, full of “fresh delicacies,” was brought to city dwellers. Around the square that held the market were many cafés with “excellent Jewish restaurants,” albeit no kosher ones. Those interested in souvenirs or curios recalling Jewish culture wandered through bookstores and gift shops, many with faux Jewish merchant signs. Local promoters asserted that the “bustling and live again” quarter had “become Krakow’s equivalent of London’s Soho, Paris’s Quartier Latin, and New York’s [Greenwich] Village.” So lifelike was the scene that when Steven Spielberg filmed *Schindler’s List*, he used that site as “an authentic Jewish quarter” rather than Grodgorze, the area that the Nazis actually constructed as a ghetto.¹

In the summer of 2005, my wife and I mixed with these crowds on a guided tour through Poland and Ukraine conducted by a fellow historian.

We were on a mission to study, memorialize, and meditate about a lost Jewish civilization. The high point of our visit to Kazimierz was our attendance at religious services in the heart of the square at the famous Remah Synagogue, named after the great sixteenth-century rabbinical sage Rabbi Moses Isserles. The six men in our contingent, combined with an elderly man who had fled to Palestine in 1938—returning for the first time on the way to see what remained of his old *shtetl*—and his son, joined two locals. Our wives also attended Sabbath services, but since this was an Orthodox synagogue, they were not counted toward the minyan. During the prayers, a group of Israeli Army officers, on their own inspirational tour of the Jewish past, supplemented our group. It was an uncommonly moving experience for me to step up to lead a portion of the services. Emerging from the small, one-story shul, I was struck with sadness about what was obviously missing as we walked around the bustling square. There were the shops, cafes, stores, and the Remah's cemetery to be visited. But except for those two old Jews with whom we had prayed, there were no Polish Jews around.

As a Jew and as a historian, I knew the obvious answer to the rhetorical question of "Where were they?" Although in recent decades, major efforts have been made to develop a new Jewish presence in Poland mainly from among Jews who have migrated from the former Soviet Union, an indigenous community has been dead for more than fifty years. In 1943, Kazimierz's 17,000 Jews were deported primarily to Auschwitz, where the vast majority was liquidated. With all those Jews long gone, there was a lamentable ghostlike quality to the surroundings. I almost expected Jews to come out of the old homes on the side streets to greet us as they assumed their longstanding positions behind street carts selling produce, or looking wisely over our shoulders helping us choose the most interesting Jewish book from their stock of religious and secular Yiddish and Hebrew writings, or offering us a glass of tea to complete the kosher meal served in their restaurants. But, of course, they were not there.

Two years later, I happened upon a *New York Times* article by Craig S. Smith entitled "In Poland, a Jewish Revival Thrives—Minus Jews" that only reinforced my feelings about those Polish Jewish apparitions. Smith's account certainly had an upbeat quality as he wrote about "Jewish style" restaurants . . . serving up platters of pirogis, klezmer

bands . . . playing plaintive Oriental melodies, derelict synagogues . . . being restored,” a June festival that draws “thousands of people to sing Jewish songs . . . and dances,” even as he was certain to note “the only thing missing, really, are Jews.” For some Poles who are dedicated to such festivals, “it’s a way to pay homage to the people who lived here, who contributed so much to Polish culture.” Others say that “the revival of Jewish culture is, in its way, a progressive counterpoint to a conservative nationalist strain . . . that still espouses anti-Semitic views.” More ambivalent gentiles have spoken of the cynicism of “commercialism” that permeates the restored square, but nonetheless understand that despite some entrepreneurial abuses, “it is one of the deepest ethical transformations that our country is undergoing.” Certainly for the American and British Jewish businessmen whose dollars have created this cultural revival—without Jews—it is a holy mission. Disdaining mourning, they became involved “with a great sense of dignity, a great sense of pride for what our ancestors accomplished.”²

Those missing Jews—those ghosts of Kazimierz—have haunted me ever since. They have made me wonder what it would be like to return as visitors to ancestral homes like Kazimierz if millions of Jews still lived in Eastern Europe, if there had been no Holocaust. Getting there would be a simple matter. Modern air travel would bring those interested to Krakow in but eight hours from New York. But would American Jews want to connect in any sustained way with *landslayt* (fellows from the old home) within still vibrant, if inevitably transformed, communities on the “other side,” generations after their immigrant forebears had come to America? The historical record shows that in the decades before the Holocaust, Jewish immigrants to America and their children traveled back to Europe not so long after coming to American shores. These Jews were looking closely at happenings in their erstwhile cities, towns, and villages, up close and personally. American Jewish Communists traveled to the Soviet Union to link up with fellow Jewish comrades in “a spiritual homeland” and to partake of the great campaigns of their times. Orthodox students sought out the renowned yeshivas of Lithuania to sharpen their ability to learn the Torah. They relied on an informal international network of Orthodox homes—usually of the rabbi and rebbitzin (rabbi’s wife) in the stops along the way—to get them to their studies in Slabodka, Telshe, Mir, or

Baranovich. When they got to these towns and cities, these dedicated spirits coped with the absence of creature comforts, like indoor plumbing, to which they were accustomed in America. In return they acquired “a sense of authenticity and rootedness that eluded them in their everyday lives within the States.”

There were also those who traversed the ocean and the continent—six days on a steamship and three more days on a train—to assist family and friends. In 1920, the American ambassador to Poland reported that representatives of no fewer than 290 American-based Jewish mutual aid societies—called *landsmanshaftn*—“were wandering throughout the country distributing funds” to impoverished brethren. There also were those who slinked back because they had not gained a substantial economic foothold in the new world. Except for those failures, Jewish identity, linking their past and present, spurred their peregrinations eastbound. Yet, notwithstanding those travelers who “sought the ‘heykish,’” the familiar, we also know that far more Jews of their generation had severed their ties with their Jewish past, certainly with their East European roots, and had no desire to trek back. Their world was totally in America.³

If circumstances had not been so tragically different, travelers today could sojourn for a summer among distant relatives—now drawn near through technology and social networking—in their grandparents’ old hometown. The more affluent would stay in an up-to-date flat or a commodious villa in a gentrified modern European city. Seniors, back for good, might settle in a newly constructed retirement village with all the comforts of American life. I also imagine American yeshiva students learning for a year or more in Lithuania, tightening their own ties to the tradition. But would these contemporary American Jews be but a small minority within a community that cared little about its Jewish past? A hundred years or more after ancestors arrived in America, might a highly assimilated Jewry have only the most meager interest in the persistent world of their fathers and mothers and grandparents? Their disinterest might reflect a profound lack of rootedness in Jewish identification unmitigated by what happened to Jews during World War II. Even today, given all that we have been told about the Holocaust—replete with the mournful images of a lost civilization that have been placed before our eyes—I suspect that the average Jewish traveler making the rounds of old European sites and

palaces makes at most only a brief stop at those primarily “Jewish places” that have been dressed up “authentically.”

Scholars, typically, keep to themselves such queries and emotions about what might have been, and the consequences from what did not take place. Historians are inured not to ask questions in the subjunctive. We are trained not to inquire what could have been, what should have been done, or what ought to have transpired. Rather, we have been taught to explain, as best we can, what happened and perhaps speculate, with the utmost caution, on why certain events occurred. Yet, thinking aloud about what did not take place has become a respectable academic pursuit. Alternate scenarios for events and outcomes have their spokespeople who believe that it is a way not only of understanding the intricacies of past decisions, but also of comprehending what those “roads not taken” mean for contemporary conditions.

Indeed, “counterfactual” or “alternate” history has in recent years become more than a parlor game for its practitioners. Trenchant questions have been asked about major turning points in history that call for further discussion. For example, in Robert Crowley’s compendium *The Collected What If?: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, a distinguished scholar has speculated on the fate of western monotheism had the Assyrians laid waste to Jerusalem, the center of the ancient Judean faith and cult, in 701 B.C.E., as this invading military giant had done two decades earlier to the northern Kingdom of Israel, the home of the legendary ten lost tribes. Similarly, another has wondered if and how Christianity would have evolved if Pontius Pilate had spared Jesus. What sort of Christianity would there have been without the Crucifixion? Moving to modern times, what of the fate of Europe had Napoleon won at Waterloo, and what would have been the American and worldwide implications of a Confederate victory over the Union in the American Civil War? Think of the real repercussions from that “great divide in modern history, the First World War.” As Crowley has put it: the “conflict of nationalisms, the competition for markets and colonies . . . strategic agendas and hegemonic aspiration” made a continental conflict almost inevitable. But “could it have been to a scale that was not worldwide in its events and significance?” Suffice it to say, absent a German defeat and humiliation, how would Hitler have rallied his nation against the Versailles Treaty, stoking

an anger that lit the fires of Nazism and led to the Second World War and the Holocaust?

A conceptual user's guide is, however, required to do this sort of alternate work. Counterfactuals are propositions and hypotheses about events that did not take place. A writer cannot bring an unbridled imagination to implausible situations. Historical actors surely cannot be handed technologies that were unavailable to them. A historian must harness a disciplined imagination to project reasonable alternatives to what took place rooted in what is actually known of the time, place, and participants. Indirect evidence from verifiable sources must be the critical asset to write alternate history. Readers surely are asked to suspend disbelief, but when care is taken, "such exercises [provide] a keener appreciation of the huge differences that choices and fortuities make in the destiny of nations" and the fate of people. Moreover, through contemplations of the directions history might have taken, we not only learn much about the real past but also gain a more nuanced appreciation of the world of our times.⁴

With these strictures in mind, I am thinking out loud about American Jewish life from 1938 to 1967 had the Holocaust not taken place. My focus is on years that in the real historical narrative are redolent with meaning and emotion. Although my account of events that transpired before the crucially important August 1938 meeting in Munich among the Germans, Italians, French, and British is given as it was, the subsequent actions on many continents and among a variety of nations that appear in these pages are fiction. But my alternate history rests upon much of what is known of world history and American Jewish history during that calamitous and transformative era. To tell my story, I mine military and diplomatic histories coupled with social historical sources to ascertain the thought processes and political machinations—often hidden within the documents—that contributed to the decisions that changed people's lives. I look with particular interest at reasonable alternative plans that true historical figures articulated. Sometimes, the participants' actual words that were not heeded at the time are quoted. With a sleight of narrative hand, I have nations and peoples follow their demands or admonitions. To help my readers along the way, a real-time perspective detailing "what really

happened” is appended to every major twist, dip, swerve, and detour of this alternate history. When fiction and facts are thus linked, this challenge to the truth provides a greater understanding of how World War II and the Holocaust transformed and actually empowered American Jews.⁵

As just noted, the story begins in 1938 after the British and the French stood up to Hitler in Munich and refused to turn over the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to the Third Reich. The Germans, chafing for military action, embarked on a Czechoslovakian campaign that turned out to be an ideologically and propaganda-driven adventure for which the Reich was not properly prepared. Nazi aggression resulted in victory, but success was achieved at great costs. Their attack brought the French and the British, as per existing treaty obligations, and even the Poles lurking onto the Reich’s eastern borders, into early confrontations with the Nazis. The Czech imbroglio and the resulting unsure footing for Germany did not remove the Nazis from power, despite the feelings of high-placed German military officers who questioned the Fuehrer’s moves. This premature, multi-front battle led to a very different theater of operations, not the World War II that we know.

While the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia sparked a second European war in a generation, this encounter did not lead to blitzkrieg-style victories. Rather, the Nazis and their Western European enemies became bogged down in continuing battles on their borders, distant replays of the Great War of 1914–18. The Nazi struggles dismayed their Japanese allies, who questioned the vitality of German military might and their ally’s ability to fulfill its 1936 anti-Comintern commitment to cooperate in any future struggles against Stalin’s Russia. Skirmishes with the USSR in East Asia, in late 1939, impressed and depressed the Japanese with the extent of Soviet might. The Czechoslovakian adventure also led Stalin to disdain serious consideration about becoming Hitler’s ally. Without their devils’ pact, a Wehrmacht invasion of Poland and a subsequent anti-Russian offensive remained Hitler’s unfulfilled fantasy. Five to six million East European Jews did not fall into murderous German hands. However, when Stalin’s armies struck westward in 1939 against Poland, the cultural and religious identities of Polish Jewry were endangered—much like Soviet Jews had suffered since the 1917 Communist Revolution. The Russians now

controlled a buffer zone between the Motherland and any future challenge from the Third Reich.

While German and Austrian Jews remained under tyranny, they did not endure a Kristallnacht—at least not in November 1938, just a few months after Munich. The mass destruction of synagogues in the Reich was forestalled. The Nazis did not back off from their view that the Jews were the source of all of Germany's troubles, but at that moment there were immediate dangers to be addressed. Within the Reich itself, stilling dissident voices within Germany that questioned the Fuehrer's military plans became a primary focus. Government officials that were far less antisemitic handled the "Jewish question." The new European war of 1938 that dragged on several more years "resulted in far less destruction and fewer deaths," surely not the Holocaust. Jews under the sway of the Reich—in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia—found ways of surviving under difficult times.⁶

Early on during Hitler's rule, the possibility that German Jewry could live under adverse conditions actually was entertained by two very well respected Jewish scholars with great careers ahead of them. In 1934, the young Jacob Rader Marcus, whose field of study at that time was Central European Jewish history, marveled, in *The Rise and Destiny of German Jewry*, how those under attack were "exerting every effort possible as human beings to maintain its vitality in the face of overwhelming odds." Moreover, he had good things to say about "World Jewry . . . united as never before, if not as to methods, certainly as to the urgent necessity of bringing every resource, financial and political, and moral, to the aid of its stricken brethren." Projecting from his knowledge of the past, he predicted that "the lesson of Jewish history lends us further assurance that, barring wholesale expulsion or massacre, which seems rather remote even under the implacable hatred of the National Socialists, what has been called 'the Jewish genius for survival' will manifest itself in Germany." Marcus concluded in a similar tempered, optimistic vein: "There are problems and difficulties . . . but taken in the aggregate, and balanced against the elements of strength, it does not seem that their weight will be sufficient to turn the scales against survival."

His colleague, Salo W. Baron, destined to be the most influential Jewish historian of his times, would have comparable, if not greater,

regrets about his sanguine predictions that were published as late as 1937. Toward the end of the first edition of his opus *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Baron took part in his own brand of alternate history when he left “the firm ground of historical fact, ascertainable for the most part by objective methods of scholarly investigation,” to offer some “diffident” projections of what held in the offing for Jews worldwide. Looking at Germany, he was certain that its Jews would survive amid “the present confusion” with a “wholly unprecedented legal status.” A people who had long fought for emancipation had now suffered its abrogation. Yet, for the forward-thinking Baron, the onerous Nuremberg Laws of a year earlier had had the unintended consequence of strengthening the German Jewish family. In his projections, “the Nazi propaganda for procreation”—only with their own kind—“enforced abandonment of free relationships with non-Jews, and gradual exclusion from public amusements have all made the previously extremely individualistic German Jew more family-oriented.” He predicted that “in the long run . . . the growing number of youthful [all-Jewish] couples cannot fail to increase natality (German Jews in the 1920s had a very low birthrate) especially if economic conditions are stabilized and a specifically Jewish school system mitigates the sufferings of Jewish pupils.” In the years before they were completely excluded from Aryan-only schools, Jewish pupils were often berated by teachers and classmates. The historian was likewise impressed with the new forms of occupational self-help training that the community afforded its youth. Baron anticipated the day that Nazism, “notwithstanding its great temporary successes . . . will sooner or later go down in the insoluble contradictions of its capitalist and nationalist doctrines.” In the meantime, despite the “hard struggle ahead . . . there is no reason to despair” as German Jewry, he predicted, would “stand the strain,” awaiting the day when “a sufficiently large non-Jewish group of upright and intelligent citizens . . . may muster sufficient strength and persistence to cut off the hydra-like heads of the anti-Semitic monster.”⁷

According to my narrative, within the post-Munich world of the “upright” that Baron envisioned, the international refugee crisis abated considerably. Most critically, the British, now determined to intervene rather than to appease, shifted policies away from the Arabs and toward the Jews. In the months before confronting Hitler, London had begun

tilting toward the Arabs, concerned with their allegiance in a great new war. They had lost faith in their own 1937 Peel Commission partition strategy that planned to divide Palestine between Arabs and Jews. Anxious to placate the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and his followers, voices were heard in Parliament about cutting off legal Jewish immigration. After the 1938 Czech invasion, the British, able to accurately assess the strengths and weakness of Hitler's forces, were far less fearful of Nazi-Arab pacts. The mandatory power returned to its longstanding "equality of obligation" policy and played the rival national and religious movements off one another as the British bought time in the region. Most important, the doors of Palestine remained open to Jewish refugees. The British contended that the addition of up to 60,000 Jews annually would not destroy Palestine's absorptive capacity nor displace Arabs. Back in war-focused Berlin, the availability of Palestine as a refuge haven suited well the designs of those newly in charge of Jewish issues who wished to see the unwanted leave the Reich in a rapid, orderly, and even merciful way. Zionist officials and designated German authorities doubled down on an already existing plan to transfer to Palestine people, personal goods, and resources. A frustrated Grand Mufti of Jerusalem scurried around the Nazi capital in search of allies. Finding no one ready to join him in *jihād*, he returned to the Middle East intent on fomenting trouble for the British and the Jews.

Back in the United States, while Japanese imperialism and its atrocities against the Chinese concerned Americans, with Europe entangled in its own messes and not threatening the New World, this isolationist country was not consumed by an intense debate over intervention. From 1938 to late 1941, the Japanese-initiated war in Asia and the Pacific greatly expanded. Tokyo threatened and captured European-held territories. But Americans were not moved to commit to a war to help the British, French, and Dutch maintain their colonial holdings in the Far East. Most critical, late in 1941 a strategic decision was made in Tokyo war rooms to bypass the Philippines and other U.S. possessions. The most militaristic minds pushed for a quick strike that would force a disabled America to agree to an armistice favorable to them. But the fear that an aroused enemy, even if temporarily stunned and wounded, with its wealth of supplies and its millions that would be enlisted in its armed forces, would never sign a

dishonorable peace, undermined the argument for aggression. It was reasoned that—in the end—America would destroy the Japanese empire. The United States was thus spared involvement in an Asian theater of military operations; a struggle that lasted until the late 1940s. On Sunday, December 7, 1941, sailors of the USS *Arizona* sunned themselves on the deck of their battleship in serene Hawaii.

In 1940, America turned to new leadership to guide the nation. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sorely wanted to continue in office. However, with neither Germany nor Japan posing an immediate threat to the United States, he was unable to convince his party to break the American tradition of “no third term.” Republican Senator Robert A. Taft, a sage isolationist voice in the Senate, was elected. In his first term, he worked assiduously to bolster the country’s economy that had not completely recovered from the Great Depression and to keep America out of war. Still, the administration kept its eyes on developments in Asia. The British, in particular, needed help against the Japanese in the Pacific. As a staunch anticommunist, Taft also kept close tabs on Stalin’s machinations. He made clear that while America wanted no part of the war, a defensive build-up was necessary for national security against any and all potential foes. The construction of military hardware spurred U.S. industrial productivity.

For American Jews, the Nazis’ frustrations, the availability of Palestine for refugees, and the serene sense among Americans that they were sheltered from wars in Europe and Asia provided a welcome respite for an insecure community. Until the dramatic turnabout in Munich, American Jews were increasingly at loggerheads with their government and with the majority of their fellow Americans over their desire to see Washington aggressively intervene in the refugee crisis. Antisemites contended that a “Semitic cabal” controlled FDR and was pushing America toward a war on behalf of the Jews. Jews, like most of their fellow citizens, were now content to have the United States remain neutral. Germany, in their view, was still an evil state. But most American Jews shared Marcus’s and Baron’s view that those who remained in the Reich were not facing threats to their very survival. If anything, many millions of Polish and Russian Jews, who long endured local Jew hatred and now were under the control of the Soviets, were a greater worry. Monies that were sent to Central and Eastern

European communities did not smack of interventionism. Back home, those refugees who had made it into the United States before 1938 surely had to be supported. That concern, however, was solely a question of finding enough relief dollars during the Depression, and not changing immigration policy.

Similarly, for most American Jews, connection to the Yishuv (the modern settlement in Palestine), whose status stabilized under a more benign British authority, meant at most financial support for an infrastructure that was absorbing fortunate German émigrés. In the dark days before Munich, the national cause—a “homeland for the Jews”—had been temporarily a rallying point in the struggle to help endangered Jews in the Reich. But now more American Jews donated their limited charitable funds to local concerns.

While the refugee issue was held in abeyance, American Jewry still faced daunting internal concerns. Even if they were not pilloried as exploitative warmongers, so many Christians simply did not want them around at their workplace, in their better colleges and universities, at their clubs and resorts, and in their neighborhoods. With social antisemitism at its apogee, there were few opportunities for Jews in the late 1930s to early 1940s to prove their mettle as loyal Americans. Speaking only partially tongue in cheek, a leader of the Jewish War Veterans mused privately about “those better times during the Great War where Jews lived in barracks and fought arm in arm with their fellow citizens on battlefields” and demonstrated their patriotism. However, the nation was not on a war footing. Congress did not support FDR’s interest in a peace-time draft, and during his first term in the White House, Taft disdained the idea completely. Jewish soldiers were not called upon to serve as equals, and none were decorated as heroes among fellow combatants in arms. Jews remained on the narrow margins of mainstream society.

The place where American Jews felt at home was in their own neighborhoods, primarily in the large cities where most of them resided. An organic sense of belonging reigned in their circumscribed spaces. But to the great chagrin of leaders, most Jewish young people did not turn to their synagogues for social support. They certainly did not think much about their European roots, but if pressed they would toss a few pennies in a charity box for those in trouble in Germany or Eastern Europe.

The problem of disinterest in formalized Judaism was felt across a wide denominational spectrum. Some voices even supported the idea of committed Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews coming together to fashion a unified American Judaism. But their calls fell on deaf ears. The new arrivals from Germany and some who escaped from Eastern Europe brought a degree of religious vitality to their immigrant enclaves, primarily in New York. But elsewhere, most rabbis cried out about a “spiritual depression in the land.”

Zionist organizers faced even stiffer challenges. Ironically, the sudden encouraging news out of Munich and the ensuing British reconsideration of its Middle Eastern policies had an obverse effect on the movement’s popularity in the United States. There was a general decline in interest in the cause. The general sense on the American Jewish streets was that the refugee crisis that had moved many to join up in the early 1930s was now well in hand. Jewish nationalism was for Palestinian Jews and migrants from Europe who would now do quite well. The unvarnished reality was that Zionism could not sustain mass allegiances and organizational momentum among “isolationist” Jews who distanced themselves from events that were taking place six thousand miles away from their homes. Few American Jews perceived the movement as a source of Jewish allegiance. Meanwhile, Jewish radicals, and especially communists, had their own issues as they tried to stay aligned with Stalin’s shifting foreign policies. And they were frequently beset by an American government and society that questioned their right to exist in this country, while the vast majority of American Jews did not want to be tarred by their statements and activities.

These initial forays into an alternate American and American Jewish narrative show that a crucial turn in the historical road—the British standing up to Hitler in Munich—changed the destinies of so many nations on different continents and the fate of the Jewish people everywhere. According to my telling of a different history, reverberations from the not-so-great European war continued to affect the course of life worldwide and the nature of American Jewish life for decades.

In 1944, the war in Europe, now bogged down in its sixth year, ended with the assassination of Hitler. The assassination was a prerequisite for an armistice that members of the German High Command fostered to

bring Western and Central European nations together, with the goal of stopping Stalin's grand designs to dominate a weakened Germany and France and to extend communism even across the Channel to England. Fears of Soviet aggression forced the Taft administration away from isolationism and toward a more robust anticommunism in volatile postwar Europe. When the Russians, massing troops on their Polish border, held back because the Americans made them aware of a "wonder weapon" to "protect freedom on the continent," a long-enduring stalemate began. However, Stalin's stand-down did not end the war in the Pacific. The British, in particular, still fought a seemingly ceaseless battle against the Japanese. While London struggled to salvage its Asian empire, fears of future Russian infiltration into Asia Minor convinced them to turn to the United States for assistance in Palestine. The Americans were thus embroiled in the Middle East.

These allies, however, were unable to control violence in the region and in frustration relinquished control, leaving Arabs and Jews in 1947 to fight to the death. The United States' short interim tenure in Palestine fouled relations between America and the Yishuv and created a massive crisis of allegiance for American Jews. Most notably, when Jewish terrorists who violently opposed the new Anglo-American trusteeship in Palestine attacked American peacekeeping forces and installations, U.S. and Jewish Palestinian diplomats began staring each other down. American Jews were pressured to declare in no uncertain terms where their national loyalties lay. Most proclaimed that for them "America was first and foremost." Infuriated by American Jewry's refusal to assume a leadership role in the Yishuv's survival, David Ben-Gurion and other high-ranking Palestinian officials struggled alone in their War of Independence.

The question of American Jewish loyalties and of U.S. relations with the new Jewish state was in the minds of Americans during the 1948 presidential election. No one spoke about festering Jewish humanitarian needs in displaced persons camps. America had to do what was best for itself. Missouri senator Harry S. Truman said as much when he asserted that "back in 1938, I feared for the future of Jews of Europe under Nazism. I then believed that Palestine had to become a Jewish commonwealth because no other country would admit those whom Hitler threatened. But the Jews do not now pose a humanitarian dilemma for concerned citizens of

the world. Due to the courageous and fair British policy of ‘equality of obligation,’ so many German Jews have found refuge in Palestine. I stand unconvinced that the Zionist cause is within the sphere of our greatest interests as our nation opposes communism worldwide.”

When Israel was created on May 14, 1948, and succeeded in holding off the Arabs, Jews in America rejoiced from afar. But an enduring gap had been created between these two Jewries. Ben-Gurion was wont to say that there was “no future American Jewry without an Israel.” He encouraged young American Jews to immigrate to “Zion before it was too late.” But neither they nor their elders took up his offer. Few American Jews were comfortable asserting that they were Zionists. In fact, under the new administration of Democrat George C. Marshall—a retired general and no friend of Jews or Israel—American Jews dealt with charges of dual allegiance as never before.

Compounding these anxieties, by the 1950s some native-born Jews, generations removed from their immigrant roots, continued to suffer from a “spiritual depression.” Israel’s existence failed to enthuse them. Synagogues ordinarily did not attract them. In a staunchly anti-radical environment, American Jews, with the exception of a handful of ideologues, eschewed the politics of the far left. To the extent that the next generation felt a positive sense of belonging among their people, Jewishness was picked up, as before, mostly through informal interaction with one another in neighborhood streets. In suburbia, however, unlike the city, there were not as many sidewalks and very few apartment hallways for daily encounters.

The movement from the city to suburbia took place nationwide in the middle of the century. However, Jews were not always welcome in these new venues as their long-term social unacceptability continued. Many restrictive covenants remained in place. Recognizing the reality that many Christians did not want to live with Jews, the Levitt family made it abundantly clear when they built their “towns” in Pennsylvania and on Long Island that their properties were open to all white people. (Given the racism of the time, blacks were explicitly unwanted in the developments.) But, as they showed potential buyers around, the Levitts cagily steered Jews and gentiles into sharply demarcated sub-divisions. It became a strategic model for many such real estate initiatives. As a result, Jews still lived

mostly among their own kind. Though formal relationships with the larger American world increased and the nastiest of antisemitic street encounters with Christians decreased, Jews continued to live nearby but not comfortably among their gentile neighbors.

The American belief in “one nation under God” pushed some Jews toward synagogue attendance, especially when they had a chance to host an interfaith Thanksgiving or Fourth of July gathering. To do otherwise would be seen as unpatriotic. But their allegiance to their faith was not resolute. The next generation drifted even further away from positive religious connections. These younger folks, however, might show up for a while on the High Holidays in deference to an observant parent or grandparent. Dissociation was a searing dilemma that confronted rabbis of all movements.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding Soviet restrictions on emigration and America’s harsh national origins quotas, limited numbers of highly religious newcomers from Poland and Lithuania arrived in this country in the 1950s. Neither the president nor Congress heard much from a disengaged American Jewry about the plight of “Jews under Communism.” Nor did the best-known Jewish leaders of the time show much interest in campaigning to have America widen its gates for a breed that assiduously disdained integration. Many of these newcomers hoped for the day when they might return to their yeshiva or Hasidic worlds that still were very much alive in Eastern Europe. If they got the chance—and had the money—these Orthodox immigrants were far and away the contingent of Jews in America most interested in visiting brother communities on “the other side.” At the time, these newcomers lived in their urban enclaves and made every effort not to interact with gentiles—or, for that matter, with other less devout Jews. However, there was trouble on the horizon within their camp as well. Emulating the careers and life paths of Orthodox Jews who came to the United States decades earlier, their children who were growing up in the United States were evidencing affinities for compromises with American goals and values. These religious communities lacked both critical masses of adherents to ensure continuity and powerful, charismatic leaders to show the faithful how to avoid pressures to Americanize.

In the early 1960s, during the presidency of Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. (JPK)—the eldest son of the former U.S. ambassador to Great Britain—a

major Cold War challenge augured a new era of acceptance for the next generation of American Jews. The president's father was ill-disposed to his son's "kowtowing to the Jews," but to no avail. Under JPK's Republican predecessor, Richard M. Nixon, a far more pressing issue, Soviet successes in science and technology, frightened the free world. Washington turned to the country's major colleges and universities, demanding that its doors be opened to the "best and brightest" applicants. Up to that moment, these schools had maintained their longstanding reputations as bastions of social antisemitism. No matter their scores on qualifying tests, Jews had remained a small minority within ivy-covered walls. But now, in a desperate search for a class of students with the greatest potential to serve the nation, the doors of higher learning at leading universities opened wide for Jews. It was assumed that these newcomers would readily assimilate on campus and become true Harvardians or Yalies or Princetonians. Accommodations would thus not be made for these students to lead a robust Jewish social or cultural life on campus. But then again, most American Jewish applicants knew and cared little about their ancestral past.

In 1967, Arab nations posed the latest of their major military threats to the survival of the State of Israel. As always, Department of State officials clamored for White House neutrality, as the Egyptians massed troops on the border of the Sinai desert, while Syrian tanks were moved to the front of the Golan Heights, and the Jordanians signed a defense pact with Cairo. But President Kennedy, stung by criticism that in his second term he had become flaccid in failing to support his allies—in 1965, Saigon had fallen to Hanoi's forces—had the last say. America's verbal support for the Jewish state was redoubled and tactical aid was promised just in case Israel needed help against Arab enemies to the east, north, and south.

Given JPK's stance, it was clearly not against U.S. policy for American Jews to support wholeheartedly Israel in this crisis. However, except for the few religious Zionists living primarily in New York City, most communities and individuals continued their tradition of non-engagement with the Jewish state. Part of the problem was that community leadership was slow to perceive that a new era of a "special relationship" between the United States and Israel had dawned. Every State Department challenge to the administration's stance worried American Jewish spokespersons. Israeli observers bemoaned what they saw as "the continued fearfulness of

the American Jewish community.” And then, said these critics, there was the “unconscionable selfishness of American Jews” as even the most basic sign of support—philanthropy—did not rise appreciably during this crisis moment. Perturbed officials for the United Jewish Appeal—American Jewry’s largest charitable organization—reported that “in most places, Jews still prefer to give their dollars to the United Fund or the Community Chest. It makes them look good to their Christian neighbors. They show how dedicated they are to local needs. When they contribute to us, they often earmark their checks, likewise, for local Jewish concerns, particularly for ‘Jewish hospitals,’ even those medical centers that no longer serve Jewish patients. Here, too, they opt for institutions that serve the larger community’s needs as much as their own.” Similarly frustrated, functionaries for the Israel Bonds program, designed to solicit loans for Israel, complained bitterly to the Jerusalem home office that “U.S. Savings Bonds outstrip every effort we make to break through within Jewish communities throughout America. Their hearts are not with us.”

In 1947–1948, when the Jewish state fought for its independence, and then in 1956, when it was forced by America to give up most of the territories secured during a victorious Sinai campaign, Israeli officials had felt very much alone, bereft of the staunch backing of American Jews. Now, the irony was that the American government was more supportive of their cause than were their brethren in the United States. In the aftermath of a lightning-fast, preemptive-strike 1967 war that saw Israeli troops capture the Sinai and the Golan Heights and reunite Jerusalem under Jewish control, Jerusalem’s leaders extolled the valor of their boys in uniform. At the same time, Israeli officials had little good to say about the future of the Diaspora’s largest Jewish community in light of its “performance” during the run-up weeks before the war. In an off-the-cuff, widely reported remark, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol told a correspondent from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that “while we needed their monetary sustenance and unmitigated political support in the days before the IDF victory, what they did not do for us shows us that American Jewry is starving and near death from a lack of spiritual sustenance that only Zionism could have provided them. Their synagogues are empty, and their prayers for a ‘Next Year in Jerusalem’ are meaningless.” Echoing remarks that David Ben-Gurion had made twenty years earlier—which had infuriated American

Jewish leaders—Eshkol asserted that the sole survivors of a “community in dissolution” would be those “who leave their parents behind and settle in the Jewish homeland.” The tension between American Jews and Israelis had become ever more palpable.

Thinking over what had transpired in the prior thirty years and the prospects for their community in the years ahead, a group of American Jewish historians and sociologists—there were fewer than twenty-five such academics employed in the United States—met in New York in December 1967 to contemplate “our past, present, and future.” Professor Baron, who co-chaired the gathering with Professor Marcus, offered the most provocative understanding of the evolution and state of contemporary American Jewish life. “Our present-day challenges and opportunities,” he said, “go back to the *defeat* of Hitler in 1938. Though his regime would last six more tortuous years, the end of Nazism was predictable,” he explained to an audience that initially was perplexed by his choice of dates. “The fate of eight to nine million Jews in Eastern Europe, the rise of Israel, the issues that our adopted homeland, the United States, has faced over the past thirty years, and, most important, the nature of our lives in America are all connected to that crucial turning point in world history when the British stood up to Hitler in the Bavarian capital.” Baron then took his audience on an intellectual journey back to Munich and limned the path of consequences of that world-changing event. He explained in great detail the interrelatedness of world, American, and Jewish events that flowed from that decisive moment in time.

To understand Baron’s interpretation, we, too, return to 1938 and begin our story there.

A World at War, 1938

The year 1938 started out as a triumphant turning point for the Nazis' goal of control over all German speakers in Europe and a transformative moment in concretizing their policies toward finally removing Jews from their burgeoning country. The Aryan dream of a purified Greater Reich was alive and well. Their plans, however, failed to work out as Berlin had envisioned. By year's end, the regime was embroiled in costly military confrontations and faced with battles it was ill prepared to efficiently conduct. A reordering of national priorities was thus necessary. Encumbered with real foreign threats, the Nazi leadership realized that a solution to the Jewish question, often spoken about but not effectively managed, would have to wait. For their part, German and Austrian Jews found 1938 to be more perplexing than terrifying. There still was enough confusion among the Nazis to afford Jews the hope that their future was not entirely bleak. Rather than try to find a way to escape tyranny, their strategy now called for redoubling efforts to survive the way Jews had always done under unfriendly governments. More than ever, during their five years under the Reich, the talk on the Jewish street in November 1938 was that "all that Hitler business" was petering out. The Jews' palpable feeling was that they were successfully riding out the storm even as they had to avoid those angry and destructive brown-shirted storm troopers and work around the onerous Nuremburg laws.

But just eight months earlier, German Jews were far from sanguine. It was at that juncture, in March, that the long-feared Anschluss, the Nazi

takeover of Austria, occurred. The enemy was on the move and new challenges to the Jews were fomented. Now Hitler was taking a large step forward in fulfilling his vision of doing far more than just avenging the humiliating territorial concessions and military restrictions that the Treaty of Versailles had imposed on Germany. He was acting on a commitment articulated a decade earlier "to lead our people not for an adjustment of its boundaries, but to save it into the most distant future by securing so much land and ground that the future receives back many times the bloodshed." Actually, he was not even certain that blood had to be shed to achieve his goals. He was confident that the Allies that had defeated the Fatherland in the Great War were not disposed toward stopping him. After all, each of his aggressive moves to date had been met with silence. Hitler's rearming of his country, the reoccupation of the Saar, his proud announcement of the rise of the Luftwaffe (the German air force), the reintroduction of conscription, and the remilitarizing of the Rhineland had all gone unchallenged. In contemplating a move to incorporate Austria into the Reich, the Fuehrer was aware that the British, French, and Italians had committed to protecting Austria's political integrity in April 1935. At that point, with designs of his own on neighboring Austria, Italian leader Benito Mussolini ostensibly moved to preclude a German takeover. But Hitler was far from intimidated as he sensed that the signatories to a paper agreement, though possessed of military might, seemed to be suffering from acute attacks of war anxiety.¹

So empowered, in 1938 Hitler simply reneged on his pact with Austria of two years earlier, in which "Germany undertook to recognize the full sovereignty of Austria and each country pledged that it would not interfere in the internal affairs of the other." In return, its dictator, Kurt von Schuschnigg, had agreed to give the Austrian Nazi Party a place within his government. Though von Schuschnigg was no friend of the Jews, he was far from a devotee of Hitler and dragged his feet in emulating the full range of racist laws and provoking street hostility then regnant in the Reich. He feared correctly that the German-based movement would destroy his country's independence. Von Schuschnigg's worst apprehensions were realized on March 11, 1938. Days before his government could poll the Austrian people as to whether they wanted to come under Nazi sway, German troops crossed the border and occupied the country of

Hitler's birth. Mobs of supporters of another bloodless conquest reportedly "roared with delight" as Nazi street bullies punctuated the evening festivities by "heaving bricks into the windows of Jewish shops." As the Nazis marched on Vienna, the British gave their assent to this aggression through a pledge of neutrality. The French also did nothing to retard Hitler, while Mussolini, now a true comrade-in-arms, congratulated the Fuehrer on his acquisitions. All three nations ignored their pro-Austrian pact of three years earlier.²

For those within Hitler's regime who were directly concerned with solving the Jewish question, this conquest not only afforded them the opportunity to impose their will on 200,000 more Jews, 170,000 of whom lived in Vienna. It provided them with a renewed opportunity to enforce new policies to drive the unwanted out of a growing pan-Germanic state. It had long been a source of great consternation for the Nazis that for all their anti-Jewish attacks over five years in Germany—street violence, a boycott, removal of Jews from professions, Nuremberg laws, and so on—not enough Jews had left their Fatherland. While on so many fronts the Reich's moves had been crowned with success, the Jews, who in their view were the consummate enemy, were still very much around.

Every time the Nazis launched a new attack against their enemies, there was a spike in Jewish emigration. But then, as time passed, those who remained found ways and means to make their peace with changed circumstances and were determined to ride out the storm of oppression. Thus, back in 1933, amid the turmoil and uncertainties of the new regime and the inconsistencies of its early discriminatory measures, 37,000 Jews exited Germany. But the following year, the number dropped to 23,000. And remarkably, in 1935, notwithstanding the Nuremberg racial laws, only 21,000 emigrated. Perhaps the slight jump to 25,000 in 1936 and 23,000 in 1937 reflected the impact that laws slowly but surely were making on Jews. Nonetheless, a sense of stability that deeply disturbed the Nazis was discernible in Jewish circles. The *Schwarze Korps*, the official newspaper of the SS, the elite Nazi organization that would increasingly be involved in prosecuting the Jewish problem, noted with great chagrin in 1935 that "after the Nazi seizure of power our racial laws did in fact curtail considerably the influence of the Jews. But the Jew in his tenacity has seen this merely as a temporary restriction."

As early as 1933, Jews who wanted to leave faced serious problems in securing refuge. Their age, class, and occupation precluded the majority from pulling up stakes at all. So many of those who chose to stay were solid middle-class and middle-aged business and professional types. Moreover, German Jews in the mid-1930s stayed because, despite the present trauma, they were deeply attached to the Fatherland. Additionally, their network of community institutions that sustained them while they received support from American Jewish relief organizations helped mitigate the crisis. Stability during hard times was the key, and this was noticeably the impression in 1937 when an American Jewish reporter observed that “the Jewish situation in foreign lands has become more or less stabilized, albeit on a low plane; . . . and the community’s agencies for overseas relief and reconstruction have become geared to the changed situation,” permitting the American Jewish community “for the first time since the spring of 1933, when the present regime in Germany began, to again give a major part of its thought to domestic interests.”³

For Adolf Eichmann, a diligent and reliable mid-level operative who specialized in all aspects of the Jewish problem, this lack of alacrity was totally unacceptable. Rising through the ranks of the Nazi security service, he was charged with convincing Jews that they had no future in the Reich and with speeding up the emigration process. In August 1938, he set up a Central Agency for Jewish Emigration in Vienna. Austria would be a model for an expanding Germany. Very soon, Eichmann and his staff intimidated Jewish leaders with threats of concentration camp imprisonment and pressured the affluent to pay for both their and poorer Jews’ relocation. Once a Jew was convinced to leave, the ever-efficient bureaucrat set up an orderly, if decidedly unfriendly, emigration department, which in a few hours’ time processed the applicant out of Austria. The problem, both for Eichmann and those whom he abused, was that by the spring of 1938, few nations worldwide—including the United States—were interested in absorbing Jewish refugees. Cynically but perhaps also pragmatically, Eichmann suggested that Nazi antisemitic propaganda be toned down outside of the Reich to make Jews more acceptable as newcomers to foreign shores.⁴

The Evian Conference in July 1938 epitomized the policies of platitudes that world leaders offered to address the festering refugee problem.

Jews of Germany and Austria initially were heartened when President Roosevelt, just three months earlier, had called for an intergovernmental conference designed to alleviate the plight of the unwanted. The conclave eventually brought some thirty-two nations and a myriad of Jewish and humanitarian organizations to Lake Geneva. But their hopes proved false when no strong definitive plan, other than establishing yet another refugee organization, emerged from the deliberations. Only a few nations—and not the United States nor the British Empire—changed their immigration laws. Reviewing the year that ended on June 30, 1938, that same American Jewish reporter who wrote so hopefully just a year earlier opined that “the period [was] probably the most somber and disheartening twelve months for Jews since the close of the World War. Condemnations did not avail to stop or reduce the depredations of a criminal nation which appears to have no conscience nor regard for world opinion.”⁵

The unspeakable acts that were talked about included the destruction of the great Munich Synagogue in June 1937, the breaking into and looting of Jewish-owned stores, brown-shirt actions reminiscent of the difficult early days of 1933, the acceleration of removal of Jews from German business life, and mass arrests of Jews for specious crimes. So revolting were these latter moves that a month before Evian, the American *chargé d'affaires* in Vienna cabled the State Department that “since the morning of 27th [May] wholesale arrests of Jews. Many reported sent to Dachau. Action reliably attributed to direct orders of Himmler, and presumably intended further to demoralize Jews.” This official’s angst did not resonate with the American delegation in Evian.⁶

In Berlin, the democratic nations’ lethargy did not escape Hitler, who gloated thereafter that “it is a shameful spectacle to see how the whole democratic world is oozing sympathy for the poor tormented Jewish people, but remains hard hearted and obdurate when it comes to helping them.” It was also another encouraging reminder to the Nazi leader of the weakness of his opponents on the world scene. Hitler had every expectation that the French and English would be as flaccid as they were passive in Evian when he made his next aggressive military move. But he would be proven wrong. A fundamental and decisive reversal of fortunes would take place that changed the course of history for Jews, for the Nazis, and for

reenergized European democracies when the Reich overreached with its invasion of Czechoslovakia in October 1938.⁷

To Hitler, this multi-ethnic democratic republic situated on Austria's and Bavaria's borders was a prime new objective for both ideological and strategic reasons. If the Fuehrer was to fulfill his dream of a pan-German empire, then the three million ethnic Germans living in Czechoslovakia, primarily in the Sudetenland, the northwest section of the country, had to be brought into the Reich. Hitler told his Reichstag in March 1938 that Germany had to rise on behalf of "countless millions of German racial comrades" whose rights were being "brutally violated." The Reich's propaganda ministry filled the German newspapers and radio with stories of Czech atrocities allegedly perpetrated against those in the Sudetenland. To his military corps and Foreign Ministry operatives, Hitler confided two months later that he "was utterly determined that Czechoslovakia should disappear from the map."

Perhaps as important, the acquisition of Czechoslovakia would bring under his control a highly impressive and well-developed arms industry, essential raw materials, and a large and skilled labor force. Hitler needed their guns and bullets to eventually carve out additional "living space" for Germans, be they citizens of Poland, Russia, or any place else in Europe. Committed to war, if it came to that, Hitler began marshaling his troops on the Czech borders in the summer of 1938. But he also surmised that this takeover, like all his reoccupations and appropriations to date, could be a bloodless victory. Though this aggression would constitute the first Nazi attack against a sovereign state, and the Czechs ostensibly were protected through alliances with the French and British, if these allies continued to act in character, they would not resist his crossing territorial lines. The courageous Czechs, ready, skilled, and motivated to resist, would be left alone against his army.⁸

As Hitler viewed the world scene, the British and French petitioned him for an accommodation that would satiate Germany's appetite and head off war. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain spent much of the summer of 1938 in shuttle diplomacy, trying to broker a deal. The Englishman's initial flights took him back and forth between London and Berlin. Finally, in a mock spirit of cooperation, Hitler agreed to meet with Chamberlain and French prime minister Eduard Daladier with his friend

Mussolini at his side to see if “peace in our time” could be achieved. But the meetings of September 28–29, 1938, did not go off as the Nazi leader had imagined. Daladier, and Chamberlain in particular, had come to regret their prior complacency and displayed a stiffened resolve and determination that a stand had to be made. Though the prime minister feared that his opposition to Nazi aggression might in the near course lead to an attack against the British Isles, he recognized in the here and now—with the balance of armaments still in the British and French favor—that unbridled German malevolence had to be opposed. Critically, Chamberlain had in mind a military analysis which projected that within three months London and Paris would together have in excess of 200,000 more soldiers than Germany and close to 2,000 more airplanes; on the sea, the British Navy would continue—as always—to massively outnumber the Germans’ battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. So Chamberlain, with the French representative in his corner, warned a startled Fuehrer in no uncertain terms that invasion meant war. Perhaps even more for his people’s future than for the Czechs’ present, Britain and France would stand with the Czechs.⁹

Upon Chamberlain’s return to England, the British press, reflecting the public’s view that a war which did not endanger the empire should be avoided, initially attacked the prime minister. In the back of many minds was the fear that the Germans, if and when they attacked the English, would use poison gas. This horrific weaponry, which evoked terrible memories of the front during the Great War, had been unconscionably utilized by the Italian air force in its 1936 campaign against Ethiopia. Chamberlain had not assuaged the fearful much when he spoke weeks before Munich of the possible necessity of “digging trenches and trying on gas masks because of a quarrel” in Central Europe. But Chamberlain was heartened immensely when Winston Churchill, an early and consistent advocate of opposing Hitler, rose in the House of Commons to complement his erstwhile opponent for his steadfastness. In showing real backbone, Churchill said, the prime minister had indeed “set in motion consequences of which will travel far with us along our road. Surely, the equilibrium of Europe and the destiny of all nations and peoples has been altered. But in the length of time, the actions of the Western Democracies when weighed in the balance will be judged both correct and courageous.” Moved by the unyielding and defiant rhetoric, the members of the House

rose as one to hail both Chamberlain and Churchill, with the new comrades-in-arms embracing in the well of the chamber.¹⁰

Back in Berlin, Hitler, though angered by the British and French “weakling” warnings, was actually pleased with the breakdown of talks. He had wanted to go against the Czechs as early as 1937 and chafed as Chamberlain had wasted his time in the summer of fruitless talks. Now he was free to act. He had figured on fighting the French and British a few years down the road in any case. Thus on October 1, 1938, the Wehrmacht attacked Czechoslovakia.

The German army had superior weaponry and mustered more men into battle. But the Czechs were worthy opponents, fighting on their own home turf with a spirited regular army supplemented by committed reserve units and relying on their stockpile of armaments. In the very first week of the war, Providence smiled on the defenders as bad weather grounded the Luftwaffe, denying the invaders a quick upper hand. But, as the air and ground war proceeded over subsequent weeks and months, the Germans eventually gained decisive advantages and ultimate victory, but at the cost of severe losses. Meanwhile, all was not well for the Germans on their own northeastern border. Monitoring closely the developments in Czechoslovakia, the Poles—ever wary of Hitler’s designs—marshaled their army with their own sights on Silesia, Pomerania, and East Prussia. To protect their own flanks, several divisions were forced to stand guard defending the Reich. Strategists in Berlin also were watching closely any moves by the hated Soviets who had their own diplomatic agreements with the Czechs. The Russians did not move to relieve the Czechs in 1938; to do so would have required them to pass through—read invade—Poland, which watched their enemy to the east carefully. Moreover, Stalin’s army was in disrepair as its paranoid leader had just concluded a massive purge of his own upper military echelons in 1937. Still, they were a force to be reckoned with.

The French and the British, true to their words, declared war on Germany as soon as the Wehrmacht crossed no-man’s land. But neither army was actually prepared to offer the defenders of Prague tactical assistance. Nor did they immediately make any retaliatory moves against Germany’s western front. However, the battle in Czechoslovakia of 1938 was a profound warning to these democracies about Nazi ambitions and

military potentialities. Preparedness would be the byword in two languages as the French and English redoubled their defense efforts. Not incidentally, the fears of Luftwaffe bombardments of Paris and London proved to be unfounded. The German air force lost plenty of pilots and planes just fighting the courageous Czechs. This fight, which Hitler wanted so very much to start, ended up draining the Reich, both in blood and treasure, with collateral implications that would stymie the Nazis for years to come. Rather than a blitzkrieg that would have intimidated future opponents, it was the beginning of battles that would resemble the prolonged standoffs of the Great War of 1914–1918.¹¹

While the invaders struggled toward Prague, the regime had its own difficulties back home. To begin with, Hitler had to deal with the persistent carping of his own military. Many of his generals had worried aloud, before October 1938, that their country was not yet ready for a cross-border military adventure. The regular army was not fully trained nor adequately led. Equipment and resources were lacking, as were reserve units. There was enough firepower around to eventually beat the Czechs, but what of the Poles, the Russians, and the French, as well as the British lurking on the horizon? During the spring of 1938, the Germans had just begun constructing a West Wall—later known as the Siegfried Line—to defend their own Fatherland from a French and even a British invasion. Also, for all his public braggadocio and overriding desire for conquest, privately the Fuehrer let his worries be known about a secret agreement between the French and Belgian general staffs for a surprise thrust by the French high-speed (motorized) forces through Belgium and over the German frontier, so as to burst into the German industrial zone in the Ruhr. He also worried about the potential of another pact, between the British Admiralty and the Dutch general staff, for a surprise landing of British troops in Holland and a subsequent attack on the German northern flank. Hitler's generals had their own fears of debacle that they kept mostly to themselves. But quietly, they spoke of assassinating or otherwise removing the Fuehrer.

Others worried that the German economic base was not sufficiently robust to support a protracted war. As important, the German people had not been properly prepared for battle. Until October 1938, Hitler's militarism had not cost them any of their fathers or sons. Still, in the months before the invasion, SS officials commented upon a "war psychosis"

in the streets. Defeatist talk was noticeable, and even in that controlled society voices were heard about the negative effects of the regime's "adventurism." One critical observer of saber rattling within the Reich itself before the Munich breakdown had reported on a "gigantic restlessness," as people were "afraid that it would come to war and that Germany would go under." The fear was that an advance against Prague would precipitate "a war against the greater part of Europe . . . which Germany was likely to lose." These deep apprehensions did not abate when Czechoslovakia fell into Nazi hands. If anything, the struggle that bloodied Hitler's nose proved to the generals that many of their preparedness assumptions were correct. The future might well cast the Reich into a defensive stance on both its eastern and western fronts.¹²

The second-guessing within the German military and society gave a new lease on life to German and Austrian Jews. Though Hitler would never admit that the Jews were anything other than the ultimate source of Germany's troubles, he had to deal immediately with other powerful enemies to ensure the continuity of the regime. This had been certainly true during the first years of the Third Reich. In 1933, communists and socialists, challengers and opponents from outside Nazi ranks, and competing factions from within the party had to be immediately neutralized. The military had to be continually satisfied that Hitler was the right man to lead Germany. In fact, the SS, the elite security force that pledged direct and unyielding fealty to the leader, was initially empowered primarily to silence dissenting and threatening voices among Germans. Such troublemakers were the first prisoners in the Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps that the Nazis created early in their regime. Understandably the Jews, for all their abhorrence of Hitler and what his followers said and wanted to do to them, kept the lowest and quietest profile possible. They did their utmost to stay clear of the brown-shirted enforcers of the SA and the Gestapo. It was only when other threats were eliminated that the SS, with Hitler's ready assent, began to focus its malignant attention upon Jews. In the late fall of 1938, with Hitler facing internal criticism and external existential threats, SS energies were again redirected to clamp down on outspoken Germans.

On November 9, 1938, Adolf Eichmann was made keenly aware that times and priorities had changed when he received a directive from SS

head Heinrich Himmler, ordering him to halt his Jewish emigration program, to begin scrutinizing the activities of critics, and, when necessary, to round up “enemies of the state.” All thoughts of destroying synagogues on trumped-up charges were also put on hold. Eichmann, the expert on the Jewish question, was reluctant to shut down his highly praised bureau, but he followed orders and turned his attention toward rooting out disloyal “peacemakers.” The Jews of Vienna sighed in relief. A week later, all co-religionists in the Reich breathed more easily when Hjamlar Horace Greeley Schacht was appointed head of a new “Commission on the Jewish Question.”

Schacht was not a true believer in the Nazi cause and made clear where he stood when he showed up at official occasions not in jackboots and uniform but in civilian attire. He cut an “academic air” with his “suit, high white collar, shirt and tie, dark overcoat and bowler hat” at gatherings among the devoted and the ruffians. But he was well respected for his financial acumen and rigorous efficiency even among those who privately questioned his loyalties. His credentials as an economist well predated the rise of Hitler. In the early 1920s, he was instrumental in the new Weimar Republic’s temporary economic recovery from massive inflation. With the change of regime, this non-party official was instrumental in raising initial capital for Nazi rearmament. Among his other early portfolios, Schacht played an essential role in making food supplies more readily available to consumers. Appointed to the post of economics minister in 1934—his highest position in the Reich—he was ever the realist in dealing with Jewish interests. Though he accepted the widely held premise that the Jews were an “alien spirit” inimical to the Volk, he did not permit his—or anyone else’s prejudices—to influence what had to be done to build up the Reich. In fact, before assuming his position, he had the gumption to make his attitudes clear to the Fuehrer, reportedly inquiring, in his typical straightforward, unintimidated manner, “Before I take office, I should like to know how you wish me to deal with the Jewish question.” He took Hitler’s reply—“In economics, carry on exactly as you have in the past”—to mean that nothing should be done to the Jews that would stymie recovery.

In the years that followed, Schacht took on many of the hardline higher-ups in the regime. He despised what he called “irresponsible Jew-baiting,” which he said promoted inefficiency. He stopped Propaganda

Chief Josef Goebbels from liquidating several large Jewish publishing firms that had major international connections. Schacht sagely reasoned that their activities poured millions of marks annually into German coffers. He went very slowly against businesses that had Jewish names but many Aryan employees and stockholders. Though Jews did not always know of all the machinations and disputes about their status within the government, the irony was well recognized that the larger the Jewish firm, the more likely it was to be protected under Schacht's administration. He even approved granting Jewish concerns armament contracts.

However, as Hitler and those closest to him started talking more and more about creating "living space"—as the run-up to war began—Schacht, ever the conservative, increasingly fell into dispute with his Nazi colleagues and out of favor with Hitler. He resigned his post on November 26, 1937, and was replaced by Hermann Goering, a central figure in the inner circle of devoted Nazis closest to the Reichschancellor. But now, with the war issue back on the table and the leader's policies under scrutiny, the pragmatist on the Jewish question was called back to service.¹³

Upon assuming this new post, Schacht once again interrogated the Fuehrer, this time to precisely define the extent to which the Jews should be persecuted. The minister's question provoked Hitler into one of his not infrequent rages. "My struggle is to win a war against the Jews for the German people and for the survival of the world," he sputtered. "But at this precise moment in human history, I must concern myself with their surrogates, the British and the French and those within the Reich who would keep me from my destiny." Calming himself, he took Schacht aside and instructed him: "Do as you see fit."

Schacht still believed that at least some Jews could be useful to the regime, and that Eichmann's plan to force both the affluent and the poor out of the country was wrong-headed. At the same time, Schacht had a job to do to free Germany of its Jews. His reputation as a creative thinker and as an efficient administrator was on the line. He put his faith in redoubling energy into a plan that he had helped develop back in September 1933 that encouraged Jews to emigrate to Palestine. The Transfer Agreement, essentially a trade pact, was designed to both assist the fledgling German economy as well as meet Jewish needs, a remarkable concordat between the most unlikely of allies, Zionists and Nazis. This pragmatic

plan was rooted remarkably in their complementary ideological views of their respective opponents. The Nazis perceived the Zionists as uniquely honest Jews since they denied that Germany was their homeland and were advocates, for their own purposes, of emigration from Europe. Besides which, the rising Reich needed the favorable balance of trade that the initiative engendered. Schacht bought in totally to that aspect of party thinking. Zionists, for their part, were confident that they understood antisemitism and could look beyond malevolent words and deeds and deal rationally on the basis of mutual self-interest with those who hated them. They also needed the hard goods that the Germans could provide along with the increase in Jewish population that would benefit the Yishuv. So a deal was hatched whereby Jews who left Germany for Palestine were allowed to leave their resources in escrow accounts in Germany. When the Yishuv purchased goods from the Reich, they paid only half the price from their own resources. The remainder was borne by the monies from those German Jews now free and resident in Palestine. The new arrivals received half of the amount in their erstwhile bank accounts from the Zionist trust company, helping them get a new start on life in the Jewish homeland.¹⁴

Still, Schacht was convinced that more could be done to accelerate the rate of migration even as a hard-core antisemite like Eichmann asserted that such “benevolent relocations” would come back to haunt Germany and the world. The full-fledged Nazi predicted that a growing Jewish presence would ultimately lead to the establishment of a commonwealth—what he derisively called “a Jewish Vatican”—that would plot, as Jews always had done, to destroy the Aryan race. He fantasized that the best place for Jews would be remote regions of South America and Africa, where, he hoped, “the local populations would rise up against them and wipe them out.”¹⁵

Schacht ignored Eichmann’s jealous carping as he reviewed reports and charts that explored where German and now Austrian Jews had migrated since 1933. Understanding that hundreds of thousands had yet, and were still unwilling, to exit, Schacht noted that the countries closest to the Reich had the most Jewish expatriates. These were the optimists who were waiting out Hitler’s run, ready to return when conditions improved. Then there were the fortunate thousands who had found refuge in the United States, despite onerous laws and harsh implementation.

But America's doors and for that matter the gates of the British Empire would not be flung open to Jews. Evian had proven that. Fortunately for the Jews, and for the success of Schacht's mission, Palestine was now becoming a viable option. As a collateral result of Chamberlain's move away from appeasement, a reversal of fortunes was taking place in the Middle East. The talk in diplomatic circles was neither about partition nor about turning the country over to the Arabs. The now resolute British would be staying in the area over a longer haul. While Jewish immigration would surely be monitored closely, down the road there was the potentiality of a future Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Such a scenario—the nightmare that haunted Eichmann—had been discussed seriously just a year earlier, in 1937. Now it was back on the diplomatic table, starting in the British Foreign Office.

From the time the British were granted legal control over Palestine in the early 1920s, its policy had been one of "equality of obligation." The Mandatory power sagaciously played Jewish aspirations and Arab fears of Jewish domination off against one another with the hope of buying time for moderate voices and attitudes to emerge from the two antagonistic nationalist sides. In effect, the English hoped to keep a lid on Palestine, keep violence to a minimum, and arrest or expel the most provocative agents until Jews and Arabs started behaving—as the Mandatory might say in their imperialistic way—"like good Christians." This strategy had a reasonable chance of success through the 1920s when limited Jewish immigration to their homeland did not endanger Palestine's "absorptive capacity"—another diplomatic term that the British used—even if significant Arab riots, most notably in 1929, ensued when the Jewish settlement showed signs of increased political sophistication.

Hitler's rise destroyed the British fantasy. The Jews needed Palestine as a haven and the Arabs saw themselves as victims for the sins of European antisemitism. In 1933, some 30,000 Jews under attack chose Palestine, and not only those favored through the Transfer Agreements; that total was three times the number that had fled to the Middle East just a year earlier. And more Jews were on the way. In 1934, 42,000 migrated, and in 1935, the numbers reached 62,000. By 1936, the Arabs had seen enough. Encouraged by their religious-political leaders, riots broke out all over the country, leading to a British reevaluation of the situation.

The subsequent Peel Commission hearings in London determined that Jews and Arab could not long live together in any semblance of peaceful coexistence. The only hope for quiet in the region was the partitioning of the land into separate Zionist and Arab national entities. Neither of the antagonistic sides was happy with the proposal. For the Jews it was an abrogation and betrayal of their understanding of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which had promised them a national home in Palestine. They were being pushed to accept a curtailed presence in Zion and, more important, limited Jewish migration out of European danger. The Arabs would accept no concessions whatsoever that would legitimize Jews claims and grant them sovereignty. But for all their fulminations, the Arabs felt that time stood on their side. Looking ahead to a possible multi-continent war in the early 1940s, they knew that the Jews would have no choice but to support the British and other possible allies against Hitler. They were free agents. The policies of appeasement so visible from the mid-1930s on, and that were even more pronounced with the Anschluss and the talk without action that came out of Evian, only confirmed their confidence that the democracies cared much about them and little about the Jews. They would push for a White Paper that would effectively turn over the disputed lands to the Arabs. The about-face of the British and French at Munich and the subsequent problems that the Nazis faced in defeating the Czechs changed the geopolitical picture completely.¹⁶

The British Foreign Office now determined that an alliance between the Nazis and the Arabs of Palestine was not particularly troubling. In charting their new course, the Chamberlain government certainly recognized that a conscious return to a true "equality of obligation" policy would not play well in the Moslem streets. Realpolitik, in this critical area, meant that the British needed good relations both with the Egyptians who controlled access to the Suez Canal and with the Iranians who sat on millions of gallons of oil necessary to the English armed forces. Great Britain was likewise the master of twenty million Moslem subjects worldwide whose opinions could not be totally alienated. But in its post-appeasement mode of behavior, it was felt, more critically, that another twist in mandatory policy would not egregiously raise the hackles of the Moslem world. In effect, the English were saying that they were not leaving Palestine in the foreseeable future. Its strategic experts intuited that in the end,

the Egyptians, Iranians, and the others—for all their lip service to anti-Zionism—were far from fully committed to putting themselves on the line for the Palestinian Arab cause. So the old game of attempting to be “all things to all peoples” resumed. The Chamberlain government spoke strongly within Arab earshot that Jewish immigration to Palestine had to be curtailed. But in practice, to the tacit satisfaction of Zionists and the utter relief of oppressed Jews everywhere, the doors would be far from shut tight.

Dusting off a plan that Churchill had broached to the House of Commons in 1937—an approach that came to be known as the “Churchill Compromise”—the British would expend the energies necessary to put a lid on lawlessness in Palestine. The numbers of Jews to be allowed into Palestine would be fixed “at a certain number.” But Churchill had been quick to point out that whatever the exact figure, it would not displace, or otherwise endanger, Arab life and persistence in the land. Indeed, he and other members of the House of Commons had provided statistics that pointed out how the population of Arabs had increased during the Zionist migration to a degree “almost as great as that of the Jewish population.” The newcomers, they had reminded the House, had provided employment and other opportunities to the Arabs of the land.

Churchill estimated that Palestine could easily absorb 30,000–35,000 new Jewish settlers annually, three times the number that actually had been allowed during 1937. But what of Arab total intransigence to date? Perhaps most critically, the plan called for the Arabs to be told “quite plainly that unless they accept within a reasonable period of time a fair offer and cease to wage war upon of Britain, we shall have to carry out our plan.” Their uprisings were cast not only as attacks against Jews but against England too. The resolute Chamberlain government was now determined to proceed “not without regard to their rights but without any sense of special obligation.”¹⁷

Finally, there were a few old hands in the British Foreign Service who remembered the discussions that led to the Balfour Declaration twenty years earlier. Back then, it was argued that a far-reaching statement favorable to Zionism—ambiguous as the text was—would play well on the American Jewish street. It was further surmised, in some quarters, that Jews were highly influential in the Wilson government and that they could

push the administration first to enter the Great War on the side of the Allies and then to quickly bring American troops to Europe. Balfour himself told the War Cabinet that “the vast majority of Jews in Russia and America” were closely watching the unfolding events. One Foreign Office document of the time allowed that “international Jewry” was “unified” in support of the cause. For once in Jewish history, an antisemitic allegation of all Jews working together was turned on its head in the group’s favor. Attention before November 1917 was focused particularly on the major American Zionist spokesman, Louis D. Brandeis, who met twice with Balfour in Washington in April 1917. The first Jewish justice on the Supreme Court impressed the minister as he conveyed American Jewry’s interest in Palestine. Brandeis had also been credited with convincing President Wilson to support a Balfour-like statement, contrary to the opinion of Colonel Edward House, the president’s closest personal adviser.¹⁸

In the ensuing years, isolationism grew in strength, evident in its influence upon FDR’s government. Moreover, American Jews did not possess the clout they once had. Still, America watchers could not help but notice that the president had many Jews around him. Although the aging Brandeis was no longer a prominent figure within Zionist leadership, the inestimable Supreme Court justice possessed personal *entrée* to FDR, and the two discussed the crises of Central European Jews. With war in Czechoslovakia, and Britain’s active participation in the conflict on the horizon, Whitehall and Downing Streets looked for Jewish assistance abroad. The Chamberlain government did not expect Jews to involve the United States directly in a new European war. But it was reasoned that a move that helped ameliorate the refugee crisis, without opening either America or England to newcomers, would please influential American Jews who had some cachet in Washington. All told, the tilt toward noncooperative Arabs was over.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, longtime president of the World Zionist Organization, was not thrilled with the Churchill Compromise. Back in 1937, he had been one of a minority of very influential Jewish leaders who looked beyond the Peel Commission tilt to the Arabs and had recommended approval of the partition plan. Though the boundary lines on the table were not what the Jews wanted, early in the negotiations he had proclaimed, “Today in this place, we have laid the foundations of the

Jewish state.” All along, there was confidence and commitment in Zionist circles that whatever the territorial limits they had settled for in 1937, these frontiers would not be permanent. David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, had once explained that “the indivisibility of Eretz Israel [the Land of Israel] could never be in question.” Debates were only over process and speed. Weizmann even had an Arab ally in place. After the historic conference, President Eddé of Lebanon had extended his hand in friendship, saluting him as “the first president of the Jewish Republic.” But now under the compromise that Churchill ran by Weizmann before pitching it to the House of Commons, the crowning achievement of this Zionist’s work to create a Commonwealth would have to be deferred in favor of addressing the critical problem of refugees from Hitler. In 1938, some 25,000 Jewish newcomers arrived in Palestine and more were on the way. There even was hope that the numbers could reach some 61,000 in the coming years, a figure attained in 1935. While Weizmann was content in London, Schacht, over in Berlin, was enthusiastic about the turn in developments. He did not say to anyone other than his closest friends that the new facts on the ground in the Middle East were effectuated by his own country’s poorly planned, premature incursion into Czechoslovakia.¹⁹

Apoplectic over these nightmare developments was Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, the religious and political head of the Palestinian Arab rejectionist front against Zionism and the prime opponent against all plans to carve out space for Jews in their land. He was a scion of an aristocratic Jerusalem family with an abiding hatred for Zionists; to him they were invaders who had brought with them not only a Jewish lifestyle but a European one, which he also abhorred. His supporters had credited him with inspiring Arab uprisings against the Zionist invaders in 1921, 1929, and 1936, while his enemies had accused him of instigating bloodshed. In 1937, he had made Arab opposition to the Peel Commission’s recommendations abundantly clear at a Pan-Arab conference, calling for the undoing of the Balfour Declaration, the end of the mandate, and the quick establishment of an Arab state in Palestine. He promised only that the civic and religious rights of “minorities”—Christian and Jews—would be “guaranteed,” and belligerently warned that “Great Britain must choose between our friendship and the Jews. Britain must

change her policy in Palestine or we shall be at liberty to side with other European powers whose policies are inimical to Great Britain.”²⁰

Al-Husseini made clear that the British had made a choice that he found completely untenable. Looking for a supportive audience, he rushed to Berlin for what he hoped would be an alliance with the Nazis, banking on Hitler’s recent proclamation on behalf of the “defenseless Arabs in Palestine.” Whatever their differences in racial and religious prejudice, the Mufti and the Aryan Fuehrer shared a hatred of both the Jews and the British. While in Berlin, the Mufti took his complaints to a series of Nazi officials, including a sympathetic Adolf Eichmann, who just a year earlier had met Al-Husseini on a fact-finding mission to Palestine. But overall, the Mufti found his German experience to be frustrating. On one occasion he showed up at the Economics Ministry with a detailed position paper explicating all that was wrong with the Transfer Agreement, but Schacht was too busy to meet with him and, more important, not interested, sending instead a third-level secretary to accept the Mufti’s carefully argued missive. In the end, the Mufti was unsatisfied with repetitious statements from Nazi officials that “we share your views and grievances and our doors are always open to you, but we are not prepared to further arm you and our comrades as we are now coping with troubles of our own on the European continent.” He returned to the Mideast intent on stirring up trouble, but without any formal alliance with the Third Reich. He and his followers would be heard from again.²¹

Half a world away, Hitler’s Japanese allies were unhappy with German battlefield performance and worried that such premature adventurism would weaken their own military position and objectives. They had been at war since 1931. With the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, their continent-wide battles had begun. But the intermittent interference of the Russians both with guns and encouragement of their Red Chinese allies had stymied Japanese territorial objectives. A shaky truce in the region since 1932 belied Tokyo’s larger ambitions. To shore up their northwestern flank, which the Soviet Union occupied and monitored closely as Tokyo contemplated its next imperialistic move, the Japanese sealed an Anti-Comintern Pact with the Third Reich. This agreement, “a faithless” alliance that was ready for mutual “exploitation,” nonetheless united these fascistic regimes against the feared powers of Stalin’s troops.

The pact left the Japanese free to conquer Shanghai in August 1937 and then move on to Nanking. The world did not react. Still, the Japanese wondered how willing and able the Nazis would be to offer assistance should the Soviets respond strongly to the next military move, perhaps a strike against a far eastern territory such as Siberia.²²

Meanwhile in Moscow, the Soviet dictator, observing with pleasure how the breakdown of the Munich talks showed that the French and British were ready to fight Hitler, saw no reason to protect himself diplomatically from any imminent Nazi invasion of the Motherland. In the summer of 1939, Stalin turned away English and French delegations, which sought agreements with the Soviets to oppose Hitler. He instructed *Pravda*, his government-controlled newspaper, to characterize these western powers as “having no wish for a treaty of equality with the USSR.” The all-powerful Soviet ruler was highly insulted that a low-level delegation had come to his capital. But as far as reaching any sort of rapprochement with the hated Nazis was concerned, Stalin told his foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, to “talk the ears off” his counterpart Joachim von Ribbentrop, but to agree to no alliance with Hitler. Surveying the situation in September 1939, Stalin liked his position, though in his cold heart of hearts he was not totally confident of his own military strength. A year earlier, he had purged many of his senior generals, alleging disloyalty. Nonetheless, with other nations tied down with their own conflagrations, he was free to make moves against Poland. He wanted to pay them back in spades for their victory over the fledgling communist regime in 1920 and the Baltic States of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. If he desired, he could take on the Japanese in defensive or offensive maneuvers within his most eastern provinces. If Tokyo were to target the Soviet satellite of Outer Mongolia, the Soviet army would be ready. Stalin trusted General Blyukher, a hero of the Russian Civil War of the 1920s and an old Far Eastern hand who headed the Soviet mission in China back in the 1920s, to command a locally based army that would “maintain military operations without immediate help from European Russia.” Minimally, these maneuvers would keep the Japanese eyes and concerns pointed westward as it contemplated imperialist objectives throughout the region.²³

While the world was at war in Central Europe and the Far East in 1938–39, the United States, separated from the fighting by two large

oceans, avoided the nefarious attention of fascist and communist aggressors and could disengage from the diplomatic and political moves of their former Great War's allies. It was a good time to be isolated from the rest of the world's turmoil and to focus instead on ending the Great Depression, now plaguing the nation for close to a decade.

What Really Happened

In September 1938, Neville Chamberlain and Eduard Daladier abandoned the Sudetenland to the Nazis, who soon occupied that part of Czechoslovakia. "Peace in Our Time" was not achieved; World War II was averted for but a year. When Chamberlain returned to Britain, Winston Churchill excoriated the prime minister for his cowardice, though appeasement would continue to characterize British foreign policy. Thus, in the Middle East, the English, fearful of potential Arab allegiances with the Nazis in a forthcoming war, promulgated the infamous 1939 White Paper that effectively promised Palestine to the Arabs and ended most legal Jewish immigration to Palestine, a situation that would not be reversed until the rise of the State of Israel in 1948. The Grand Mufti was a welcome guest in Berlin in the early 1940s. Fearful, too, of growing Nazi strength, the Soviets in April 1939 agreed to a Neutrality Pact with the Japanese to secure its eastern borders, a deal that was only partially vitiated by the skirmishes in the Mongolian region. With that treaty on the books, Tokyo could look at Indochina and even as far as Australia as future conquests. Secure in its home territories, the Japanese could plan to engage the United States in battle as well. Pearl Harbor was but two years away. In August 1939, the Nazis and Communists signed the Hitler-Stalin Pact that opened the doors for both totalitarian regimes to invade Poland on September 1, 1939, beginning World War II. For the Jews of Germany, Austria, and eventually Czechoslovakia, their conditions under the Third Reich worsened appreciably, as Hitler had little reason to be concerned about world reaction to his policies toward a defenseless minority. In November 1938, *Kristallnacht* destroyed synagogues all over the Reich and whatever communal equilibrium the Jews still possessed. In the subsequent months, tens of thousands Jews would, more than ever before, seek refuge elsewhere in the world. The nations that dithered at Evian—most

notably the United States—continued onerous immigration policies. Eichmann remained in control of his Vienna station, earning the nefarious bona fides that he would put to evil use during the Holocaust. Schacht did not reenter the Nazi government and in 1946 was acquitted of war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials. In 1960, Eichmann was captured by the Israelis in Argentina, where he had been in hiding; he was convicted of crimes against humanity and executed in 1962.

As the world hovered on the brink of war in 1938 and the fighting in Europe began in 1939, isolationism was regnant in the United States, as most Americans prayed that their country would not again be drawn into an international conflagration.

American Jewry in the Late 1930s

A Respite for an Insecure Community

The resolve of the British and French at Munich, and Hitler's subsequent less-than-grand Czech adventure, could not have come at a better time for American Jews. The developments in Europe provided a welcome respite for a harried community that for much of the 1930s felt insecure in America, uncertain of their position among their fellow citizens, and fearful, for good reason, of growing antisemitism. Never before in close to three hundred years of Jewish life in America had Jews felt as out of step with those around them. They were the quintessential internationalists, anxious for the government to involve itself beyond hemispheric borders—especially in European affairs. American Jews worried about the fate of their endangered co-religionists both in the Reich and in Poland, who were impoverished as ever and often suffered under political and physical attack. The majority of Americans wanted little part of foreign problems.

Isolationism, a recurring American historical theme, continued to be strong within a nation that was largely concerned with finding its way out of a decade of severe economic depression. Making the situation more acute, the Jew haters among them twisted understandable American Jewish advocacy and support for their overseas brethren into conspiracy theories, plots that went beyond international affairs. There were allegations that a Semitic cabal was manipulating FDR, first through imposing a socialist New Deal upon the nation and then through instigating American involvement in unnecessary conflicts far away that would put American boys in harm's way. The most notorious prophet of an endangered

America was Father Charles Coughlin. From his radio pulpit in Royal Oak, Michigan, he preached to millions of attentive Americans. As early as 1936, he spoke derisively of “Roosevelt and Ruin . . . because the money changers”—implying Jews—“had not been driven out from the temple”—the government in Washington. In July 1938, two months before Munich, he showed his true colors when he began publishing in his newspaper *Social Justice* chapters from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the scurrilous forged document that alleged a nefarious Jewish plan to bring the whole world to its knees.¹

There were only a few avowed antisemites in the U.S. Congress, such as Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi, who praised Nazi racism on the floor of the Senate. At the same time, almost none of his colleagues—except for representatives from Jewish districts and some other sympathizers—were interested in altering the country’s immigration laws to ease Jewish escape from a foreign government’s bigotry. In fact, in the spring of 1934, no fewer than six bills were introduced, not only to refrain from opening America’s narrow doors any wider, but to decrease or end completely the flow of refugees. In any case, the existing national origins quotas for Germany and Austria were hardly being filled from 1933 to 1938. This was due to the requirement that a potential immigrant not become a “public charge” on the American community—a pressing concern during the Depression—thus reducing the number eligible for admission.²

During those very trying early months of 1938, American Jewish apprehensions increased as the festering international refugee crisis reached a head. Evian produced little more than gesturing and so was deemed a tragic lost opportunity for concerted world efforts to stop German persecutions. Even the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, the one achievement of the gathering on Lake Geneva, proved to be just another powerless, organizational sop. The Committee’s vague mission was to assist “all persons from Germany and Austria who must emigrate on account of their political origins or religious belief or racial origins.” Jews, the most obvious group under attack, were not explicitly mentioned. Thus, the Committee offered no real hope to Jews that its advocacy would lead to wide-open admission of refugees into the United States.³

Meanwhile, Nazi forces were looking maliciously at Czechoslovakia and beyond to Eastern Europe, at territories where millions of Jews

resided. Giving the lie to all that was said about American Jews and their supposed influence on Roosevelt, his government had yet to take a strong diplomatic stance against the Reich. Jewish and humanitarian pleas and remonstrations, both private and public, had largely gone unaddressed within the administration as the situation in Europe grew darker. But now, almost miraculously, that fateful Munich conference had altered the picture appreciably.

The tide of refugees was shifting again and a brighter future for embattled Jews was evident on the horizon. Palestine was almost certain to be reopened to many of those who wanted to flee Nazism. There was also hope that German and Austrian Jews would hold on, with even greater tenacity than before, and thus would not have to become problematic refugees. The Jewish question in a war-anxious Reich was becoming submerged beneath a welter of governmental concerns. All these favorable developments would augur that fewer Jews would be seeking places to live in America. American Jewish spokesmen could stand down from their battles against restrictionists that had soured their reputations, both within the halls of Congress and on the streets of America.

Indeed, the 1938 battle that eventuated in Czechoslovakia proved to be a further godsend for American Jews, notwithstanding their worry for their co-religionists caught between battling forces. The Nazis' military difficulties evidenced that for all of Hitler's bluster, his armies were not an overwhelming threat to conquer Europe. By 1939, few Americans feared that German totalitarian forces would ever cross the Atlantic to endanger America. And for Jews in the United States, it was reassuring that, amid a peaceful atmosphere at home, they would not be accused of pushing their country toward war while Europeans were gearing up for another complicated conflagration.

Similarly, among those in the country who were watching the Asian scene closely, the view was that the Japanese posed no imminent threat, either. While Tokyo militarists were making life miserable for the Chinese and were hatching plans for incursions into Indochina, Americans felt safely detached from struggles in the remote Pacific. Once again, for American Jews, fingers would not be pointed at them as instigating U.S. involvement in another foreign war. With its international concerns stabilizing, it was time, wrote a reporter for the *American Jewish Yearbook*

in 1939, for the American Jewish community to “give a major part of its thought to domestic interests.” And there was no question that much work remained to be done at home.

To begin with, the native-born Jewish community felt obliged—as it always had—to help settle and acculturate refugees from European tyranny. While the discriminatory quotas of the U.S. immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 had staunched the unregulated flow of Jewish immigrants, approximately 70,000–80,000 managed to arrive in the mid- to late twenties to begin their own American sagas. At that juncture, most had fled persecutions in newly reconstituted Poland. Agreements signed in the wake of the Versailles Treaty had promised Polish Jews protection as one of the state’s ethnic minorities, and Marshall Josef Pilsudski, who ruled Poland from 1926 to 1935, opposed antisemitism, but they suffered grievously as the Polish majority systematically reneged on its obligations. Impoverished and oppressed, Polish Jewry sought to emigrate. In 1930, a typical year, nearly half of the roughly 10,000 European Jewish immigrants to the United States hailed from Poland.⁴

Meanwhile, German and Austrian refugees came to the United States to escape Hitler. In the twelve months preceding June 1938, after the Anschluss but just a month before Evian, approximately 60 percent of some 20,000 Jews who gained admission to the United States came from Germany and Austria. By that time, only 1,650 Polish Jews received visas to enter in the same period, and yet, ironically, for all the Nazi tumult of the preceding five years, it was Eastern Europe, particularly Poland—where the largest numbers of Jews lived—that was the source of greatest concern for American Jews.⁵

The Polish Jewish problem stemmed from a nefarious combination of “the traditional, historic enmity of a Catholic people to the Jewish minority, economic competition exacerbated by crisis conditions, and a virulent form of nationalism that was influenced by fascist models,”⁶ with violence to degrees not seen in the early days of the Nazi regime in Germany. With democratic institutions like the *Sejm* (Polish parliament) in disarray in the mid-1930s, a range of right-wing parties vied for power, each trying to outdo the others in anti-Jewish rhetoric and policies. The situation deteriorated further with the death of Pilsudski in April 1935. Later that year, a boycott of Jewish stores was instituted all over the Polish countryside,

followed by outbreaks of horrific pogroms in Lodz and seven other cities. A year later, Jews in Cracow and Warsaw were attacked. Such violence, which continued for several years, only slightly overshadowed the miserable poverty of Jews. It was a desperate condition that Jews shared with their Polish neighbors as unemployment in the country reached close to 1.5 million toward the end of the 1930s.

To make matters even worse for Polish Jews, their chances of finding refuge in America were more difficult than for those who lived under Nazism. The quotas, onerous as they were, favored those whose national origins were Central and not Eastern European. Certainly with the unexpected and welcomed change in Palestine policy after Munich, some relief was in the offing for those so anxious to leave Eastern Europe. But unless America moved to an open-door policy—though a total revamping of its quota numbers was unlikely—most Polish Jews would have to stay where they were. American Jews were thus challenged to continue their history of overseas aid, one of their most honored traditions. Notwithstanding their economic issues at home, American Jews poured millions of dollars into relief efforts, principally the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, an amalgam of relief organizations founded initially during the Great War to succor these same troubled Jews. Efforts would be expanded as the 1930s drew to a close.

And, of course, back home, American Jews were sure to take care of their own. No one wanted these refugees to stand out and undermine the Jewish reputation in America. Despite the Depression, philanthropic organizations were in place to assist German and Austrian newcomers. With the implementation of New Deal social welfare measures, needy immigrants also now had the government on their side. Further mitigating the problems of transplantation and adjustment was the proud resourcefulness of former German Jews who sunk their roots in America. For example, in New York in the mid- to late 1930s, those from the Reich were not billeted within the longstanding and often dilapidated hub of the Lower East Side. Rather, these Jews took full advantage of a glut in the real estate market in Washington Heights, in the northwest corner of Manhattan, where affordable housing was available in an unblighted area of town. The deal was that before the Depression struck, speculators had not properly gauged the demand in the neighborhood and built too many apartments

for too few middle-class occupants. Landlords, during financially hard times, desperately courted tenants with attractive prices. Some even tendered a month's free rent. Responsive to this offer, German immigrants pooled the incomes of several breadwinners to pay the rent. Often, they were all members of an extended family or they brought in boarders who occupied a part of the dwelling and shared food expenses. Once a foothold was secured, in typical fashion, a chain migration ensued. By the late 1930s, Washington Heights had acquired the moniker of "The Fourth Reich," speaking to the visible presence of German Jewish refugees.⁷

But if world affairs, late in 1938, were suddenly turning their way, American Jews still faced daunting personal and communal dilemmas at home. Most were still quite unhappy with their place in America. They obsessed over discrimination and prejudice while their religious leaders worried about the community's spiritual future. Even if the palpable negativity toward their advocacy of interventionism were to dissipate, the problem that galled them most was that so many Americans just did not like Jews and did not want to associate with them. Social antisemitism in America reached its peak in the 1930s, preferred by a majority who would never take to the streets against Jews. Rather, they simply made the best schools, finest residential areas, the most coveted jobs and professions, and the most favored prestigious clubs and resorts off-limits.

Examples of discrimination were everywhere. Paltry numbers of Jewish admissions to Ivy League colleges in the 1920s and 1930s chilled the dreams of many high school valedictorians. Jews were not wanted because they were seen as unable to fit in. Devoted students they might be, but they were outsiders who were not considered to look like the elite gentlemen these schools were dedicated to produce. Even if an ambitious and cagy youngster changed his name on his application and fibbed other personal information, a photograph that revealed his "Semitic features" were dead giveaways to attentive admissions officers that he was Jewish. The situation was deplorable even at Columbia, the Ivy League school in New York—the nation's largest Jewish city—where discrimination reduced the percentage of Jewish students from 40 percent in the early 1920s to 22 percent ten years later. At Yale, the situation was even worse. Ironically, at its renowned medical college, a Jew blocked the door. Dean Charles Winternitz made it into an elite preserve and quickly closed the portals

behind him. An equal anti-opportunity discriminator, he also had no use for Italian Catholics and African Americans. His “passionate transferred loyalties” led *Time* magazine to characterize him as an “ante-Semite—the person born a Jew who comes to think ill of Jews.” He could never get over how his background had limited his entrée into “smart society.”⁸

Law schools of almost every rank accepted more Jewish applicants. But prestigious law firms felt it was just not right to have Jews represent their clients. Perhaps there was room for the scholarly Semite in the research department buried under a stack of legal tomes. They were not wanted as the outfit’s public face at trials or in conference rooms, however. Once more it was clear that when an American profession defined its community, Jews were left out.

Jews likewise felt that they were outsiders when they ventured away from Jewish neighborhoods on vacations, only to be turned away red-faced from inns that posted signs reading “No Jews or dogs allowed.” Other establishments discriminated more subtly, advertising that they catered to “selected clientele.” Similarly, the Queensboro Corporation, which built “the nation’s first garden apartment suburb . . . for upper-middle-class New Yorkers” in Jackson Heights, Queens, used code words such as “Restricted Garden Residential Section” and “Social and Business References Required”—in advertisements on the rapid transit system in America’s premier Jewish city.⁹

In American small towns—especially in the South—Jews carried some positive cachet for their contributions to the local economy. Certainly, they did much better than African Americans, who suffered from prejudice and even violence for merely looking the wrong way at a white person. Still, Jews put up with stereotyping that cast them as being money-hungry, untrustworthy, and controlling. More importantly, wherever they went, they were reminded that they were outsiders in community life. Often Jews were barred from the local country club, or a just a few members were admitted. There was a sharp edge to every interaction between Jews and their neighbors. To compensate, Jews turned to each other for social support even if such a narrow social life led to some Jews being accused of clannishness.¹⁰

But then again, the phenomenon of Jews living together, working among their friends and family, enjoying the warmth that comes from

interpersonal, informal encounters while they were largely differentiated from the American majority, was true nationally. The good and comforting news was that in the largest cities, where Jews predominated in their own enclaves, they felt that they were inexorably connected to one another. Situated hard by other neighborhoods where gentile neighbors lived and where conflicts and confrontations were a lamentable way of life, there was a discernible sense on the Jewish streets that their whole world was fundamentally their own. Men and women, boys and girls also knew that there were gentiles out and beyond their concrete borders. But they were, more often than not, both out of sight and out of mind.

That sense of belonging, of playing with, bumping into, and gossiping with those who shared the same background and fate had its own lamentable limits, however. At least that was the view of religious leaders of all Jewish denominations who often complained that friendly affiliations rarely carried over into full-fledged identification with Judaism. The bad news for them was that this generation did not feel any tug that their ancestors felt toward the synagogue. It was not that the immigrant generation had followed all of the faith's traditions. Only a hard core of the truly devoted followed so many of the rules to the best of their abilities. Still, at the turn of the century, sweet memories and the bittersweet sights and sounds of the religious past brought the masses to services, especially on central Jewish holidays. Even if that seasonal piety did not extend to daily and weekly attendance at the synagogue, these masses of Jews, new to this country, would never give up their ancestral allegiance. For an immigrant synagogue was likewise a place where the new Americans reconnected socially and spiritually with the brethren from the old country. If some Jews were drawn to the synagogue to speak to God, so many others were there fundamentally to speak to their friends.

These Jewish folk values were almost totally lost upon the children of immigrants. The desire to be American, to not stick out in the crowd, particularly when others questioned their pledges of allegiance, had done immeasurable damage to religious life. Perhaps in some cases, Judaism's "code of ethics" remained meaningful to them. Still, these young men and women observed few customs and were decidedly less interested than their elders "in the preservation of existing religious organizations."¹¹

The Depression made matters even worse. Parents who in the past had shepherded their often uninterested youngsters to services began to suffer from acute spiritual depression. They “did not seem to care anymore” for religious observance. The pressure to find a job—any job—and their frequent failures to secure work caused them to lose their faith. If employment became available, Sabbath work included, they would hustle to the shape-up line, leaving prayers for others to recite. They had become ill disposed to thank God for providing them with all the necessities of life. The rank and file in one Orthodox synagogue was described as “people who do not work on the Sabbath, but they didn’t work on any other days of the week either. They were too old or too frail to work.”¹²

American rabbis in the 1930s did their utmost to lead that lost generation into their half-filled sanctuaries. Many put their faith in a new enterprise, the synagogue center. Within this “translation” of Jewish sacred space into a social place, wrote Israel Levinthal, a leading Conservative rabbi of the day, “all the members of the family would feel at home during the seven days of the week.” It would be a place where “they could sing and dance and play.” The strategy was that those who came to play might be convinced, over time, to stay and pray. But by decade’s end, the putative “magic” that supposedly would motivate the “many who come for other purposes than to meet God” had yet to turn the tide of disaffection. Lay people, it was observed, who had “only a certain amount of energy” at their disposal, often felt that they had actually contributed to religious life when they showed up on Wednesday for a card game or spent a Sunday afternoon in the gym. These venues were especially attractive to unemployed people. To their dismay, they had plenty of hours to take advantage of synagogue offerings. However, their leisure activities did not bring them back to the sanctuary on Friday night or Saturday morning.¹³

Given this depressing state of affairs, where even on the High Holidays there were more Jews standing outside the synagogue than inside praying, rabbis had cause to wonder—and they complained loudly—whether an enfeebled Judaism rooted predominantly in friendly neighborhood relationships or fun-and-game institutions would long survive in America. This crisis mode led to a tentative concordat among some Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform leaders who in prior generations had spent much of their time in theological and institutional struggle over the paths

Judaism might take in America. The result, the Synagogue Council of America, united all groups to “further religious concerns.” For example, in 1935, the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Conservative United Synagogue of America, and the Orthodox Union hatched plans for a “Loyalty Sabbath.” The idea was to have every Jew “present and accounted for” in their pews just as Christians were rallying their own communicants “to reaffirm faith in God and their fellow men” during the “depths of the Great Depression.” In pushing this event, Jewish leaders hoped to inspire their own folks to recommit to Judaism even as they hoped to manifest to the entire country how Jews were in step with the needs of the time.¹⁴

For Rabbi Samuel H. Markowitz of Fort Wayne, Indiana, this sort of previously unparalleled cooperative spirit caused him to predict that “Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform are coming together, not because they are recognizing themselves in agreement, but because they face a common enemy, assimilation.” An increasingly united front was rising—and was desperately necessary—since “the main current in Jewish thought and life today is assimilation.” Orthodox rabbi David De Sola Pool, a vice president of the Orthodox Union, was not nearly as ready to project all Jewish movements, as one Reform rabbi put it, “as gradually coming close together, flowing down different streams into a river yet to be, whose depth and broad reach will comprise them all.” But De Sola Pool did openly admit that his movement, “American Orthodoxy[,] no longer mirrors east European life. It is adapting itself to the American environment.” Perhaps, a hybrid of innovative ideas and plans to which all those interested in religious life could agree would be the salvation of an American Judaism in difficult straits.¹⁵

Amid the aridity and disenchantment of Jewish religious times, there were limited numbers of second-generation Jews—exceptions to the rule—who continued the traditions of their parents and European ancestors. Against the odds of the pressure to assimilate, they were dedicated to maintain their old ways in America. They aspired to limit their engagement with the secular world around them. These devoted communities were circumscribed primarily to Brooklyn’s Williamsburg and Brownsville sections. They stood out among their fellow neighborhood Jews who cared little for strict observance. Their young men were most noticeable when they stepped away after a long day in school from their key institutions,

the Mesivta Torah Vodaath and the Yeshiva Chaim Berlin. In their classrooms, the traditions of the past were inculcated and “general studies” were soft-pedaled, offered merely to satisfy state education protocols as well as the desire of some pupils to have enough secular training to someday pursue careers. In Upper Manhattan, the Yeshiva High School and College experimented with a more modern approach to training its pupils. Its leaders approved of their devout young men learning how to be comfortable both in the world of the Torah and in contemporary American realms. There were, however, no sister schools for Orthodox young women who, like all other neighborhood youths, attended public schools. There they coped with their teachers’ efforts to lure them away from their religious backgrounds. The ranks of these strictly Orthodox American Jews increased somewhat in the early 1930s when some fortunate refugees from Central Europe who shared very traditional values made it to the United States. But the influence of these immigrants who kept their eyes on European centers of Orthodoxy made little impact upon the largely declining Jewish religious polity.

American Zionists were also bedeviled by their own inability to galvanize consistent mass support for their cause even as the Palestine issue was raised high on the world’s political agenda during the 1930s. They simply could not sustain mass allegiances and organizational momentum as Jews in the United States oscillated in their interests while important events took place six thousand miles away from their homes.

Initially, the Jewish national movement had experienced great difficulties gaining traction in America. Its European postulates, that the bounties of emancipation were ultimately illusions and that only in their ancient homeland could Jews be free and secure, did not resonate with immigrant Jews. They had chosen America over Palestine and had found both liberty and opportunities for individual advancement in the United States. However, around the Great War, under the auspices of the Federation of American Zionists and subsequently within the Zionist Organization of America, a new attractive definition of Zionism evolved, spurred on by Louis Brandeis’s advocacy. Often referred to as “Palestinianism,” it emphasized the obligation of American Jews to assist their European brethren who were settling in the homeland. This philanthropic ideology also provided Jews estranged from Judaism with a new

ethnic identity congruent with the American values of cultural pluralism. Articulated by the Jewish philosopher Horace Kallen, cultural pluralism emphasized the importance of maintaining a group identity in the United States. It thus behooved American Zionists to study their people's history and attend rallies that glorified heroic Jewish pioneers in Palestine, similar to America's own legendary frontier settlers.¹⁶

Palestinianism crested during the Great War, especially after the Balfour Declaration of 1917. At its early peak, the Zionist Organization of America boasted some 175,000 card-carrying members. But soon the numbers declined precipitously. Internal ideological conflicts were somewhat to blame. More critically, there was a sense among American Jews that with the British guarantee, the Zionist movement had fulfilled its mission. The Herzlian dream of a national home for the Jewish people, particularly for oppressed European Jews, was in the offing. The job of those in America was to extend philanthropic arms to improve the infrastructure of the Yishuv. That sort of financial obligation was codified in 1929 with the establishment of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Now American Jews, starting with rich, old-line, and influential German Reform Jews, who had previously opposed Zionism, could extend their largesse. There was, however, during the 1920s and early 1930s minimal momentum or enthusiasm within American Jewry's rank and file to do more.

In fact, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) saw its ranks drop from 25,000 in 1925 to 18,000 in 1929 and 8,900 in 1933. Some who declined to renew their memberships were all too worried that any sort of political agitation—or even just affiliation—might give credence to the image of the “international Jew.” Such a canard that smacked of “dual loyalty” was a favorite of antisemites such as Henry Ford, who first brought the *Protocols* to America, and later Father Coughlin. The small number who remained American Zionists included a few youthful stalwarts who spoke Modern Hebrew, read Hebrew books and magazines, and passionately supported the Jewish settlement in Palestine. A few thousands actually migrated to Palestine. The centers of young Zionist activity were Brooklyn neighborhoods such as Flatbush or Boro Park. Perhaps most important, those who stayed in America promoted Jewish nationalism as a means of group identification in America. But most American Jews did not share their views or visions.¹⁷

The rise of Hitlerism only altered slightly the fluctuating fortunes of Zionist popularity in America. The movement was heartened when the ZOA's numbers returned to the tens of thousands in the mid-1930s. For many of the new members, affiliation was an act of defiance against American antisemitism and a statement of concern about the even more frightening developments in Germany and Poland. But hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of American Jews were not moved or engaged in pro-Palestine efforts. They were not sufficiently outraged even when the British started tilting toward the Arabs with the Peel Commission of 1937.

The sudden good news out of Munich and the subsequent British reconsideration of its Middle Eastern plans, of course, augured a brighter day for the Yishuv. And American Jews cheered from the sidelines as the Grand Mufti was sent home empty-handed from his ministrations in Berlin. These unexpected, if welcome, developments did not, however, inspire a new efflorescence of Zionism in the United States. If anything, the unanticipated turnabout in Europe had an obverse effect on the fortunes of American Zionism, leading to a decline in popular interest. Some gave monies to the Yishuv, but the general sense was that Jewish nationalism was solely for Palestinian Jews and migrants from Europe. There was little talk about how Zionism could provide so many children of immigrants with a new dynamic ethnic identity more profound than informal neighborhood Judaism. Once again, the national cause had lost its momentum among American Jews.¹⁸

Meanwhile, as 1938 drew to a close, uncertainty reigned for Jews on the political left. As the Nazis—whom the *Daily Worker*, the organ of the Communist Party of the USA, called “fascist warmongers”—faced off against their equally abhorrent capitalist opponents in Britain and France, those within communist cells awaited their marching orders from Moscow and slavishly watched what Stalin would do. Small in number but outspoken and provocative, those most sympathetic to the regime in the USSR actually spent much of their time that year defending what the great “Old Man” was doing in Russia and beyond. Socialists, followers of Trotsky, and other left-wing opponents of the Soviet leader charged that his bloody purges in 1937–38 of his own erstwhile Bolshevik comrades, as well as his economic oppression of Russian and Ukrainian subjects through poorly planned and brutalizing agricultural collectivization, were stark evidence

that Stalinism had perverted the teachings of Marxism. In their view, the dictator's regime had created neither a democratic nor a worker's state.¹⁹

Jewish Stalinists retorted that their hero in Moscow was not only all-knowing but that he presided over an emergent ideal society in Eastern Europe, the only true bulwark against Hitler and other forms of fascism that was dominating Europe. And as universalists, they possessed a world-view that transcended any sort of national identity. They found Zionism to be anathema, and they could be vicious in their opposition. For example, back in 1929 when Arabs had rioted in Palestine, massacring Jews in Hebron and elsewhere in the Yishuv, the American-based party described the uprising as "a class war . . . against British imperialism and Zionist agents." The Yiddish communist newspaper in New York, the *Freiheit*, carried political cartoons that depicted "hook-nosed and bloated Jews sadistically attacking Arabs," images worthy of Nazi propaganda in Germany.²⁰

Looking beyond their ancestry, Jewish communists in the United States did not monitor closely the shifting fates of Jews in the Reich. For the most committed radical, such specific examples of fascist abuses—such as the anti-Jewish boycott of 1933 or the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 or Eichmann's forcible emigration labors after the Anschluss—would only be rectified as byproducts of an overall international communist solution to the world's problems. Still, as men and women concerned with the oppressed under Hitler whomever they may be, radicals may have harbored some satisfaction that now, because of the Czech adventure, Nazi persecutions of Jews were abating somewhat. However, their crucial concern was that they stay far away from the capitalist-fascist war of 1938. In their own way, living as they did in the United States, they initiated their own form of isolationism, a sensibility that was separate from the right-wing movements that preached no involvement with European conflagrations and certainly from the anticommunist demagogue Father Coughlin. Radical isolationists qua pacifists would hold their own ground, if and until Stalin might call upon them to assist in the defeat of Nazism and fascism. But late in 1938, such a move did not seem in the offing.

In the summer of 1939, American Jewish communists were deeply perturbed when rumors reached the United States that Stalin was contemplating the unimaginable: a non-aggression pact with Hitler. After all, as late as March 1939, at the 18th Party Congress, the Russian leader had

asserted that he would not permit the USSR “to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.” Still, they wondered what was afoot when, in the summer of 1939, first British and French delegations turned up at the Kremlin seeking agreements against Nazism and, subsequently, even more troubling German-Soviet trade talks began. A front-page editorial in the *Freiheit* that blasted those who “chew[ed] the dirty lie of an ‘agreement’ with Hitler when the facts have always shown that this is a lie” was only somewhat reassuring. Yet it was not until word reached America late in August that the Von Ribbentrop-Molotov talks were but a charade to keep the Nazis off balance that communists in the United States understood what their wise Stalin was up to. They could continue to trumpet the Soviet leader as the world’s foremost force for world peace. Radicals of Jewish ancestry, who for a while may have felt particular twinges that a betrayal was imminent, could put aside any special fears they might have had for the fate of their “people” if Stalin joined hands with Hitler. There were, after all, more than six million Jews, living and in potential danger in the areas bordered on the west by Germany and on the east by the USSR. American Jewish communists, like all good comrades, could reassume a stance of watchful waiting as Stalin contemplated his future foreign policy options.²¹

All told, the late 1930s were a partial respite for a troubled and conflicted American Jewry as the forces of Hitlerism were stifled by their miscalculated military advance at the wrong time and place. Still, the Jews in the United States entered the 1940s feeling less than completely “at home” in America while the world was at war on many foreign fronts. They were not physically endangered. There would be no pogroms in this country’s cities, towns, or villages. But if full integration with their fellow citizens was their goal, they still had many social hurdles to overcome. At the same time, with their community already a generation or more removed from their immigrant roots and with no expectation that America’s doors would be flung wide open, American Judaism was in acute danger of spiritual disintegration. Moreover, the haven was simply not there for the rise of an enduring Zionist identity. Most American Jews did not connect to its form of cultural identification. With the refugee crisis receding somewhat into the geopolitical background, the Palestine solution to the needs of

European Jewry was taking care of that previous pressing Jewish need. American Jews were not being called upon—through Zionist organizations—to take an international lead. Concomitantly, Jewish radicals, many of whom were divorced from their ancestral past, could continue to see the world as their homeland while the most committed communists were keeping their eyes trained on Moscow, ready to respond to what Stalin had in mind in promoting a new world order for the future.

What Really Happened

The last years of the 1930s were not a respite but a very troubling time for American Jews. The refugee crisis that already dominated the world scene before Munich grew even worse. The 1939 Palestine White Paper effectively closed off the Jewish homeland, and the world community showed little interest in opening its many locked doors. Polish Jewry continued to suffer under its own increasingly anti-Jewish governments. Those Jews in the United States who protested on behalf of their European brethren found themselves at odds with their increasingly isolationist American fellow citizens. The U.S. Congress showed no interest in rolling back its immigration laws. If anything, the momentum on Capitol Hill was toward stiffening the restrictions. President Roosevelt, who was often tarred as being under the influence of too many Jews, showed no interest in fighting a losing battle against congressional opponents. Indeed, he often had to fend off allegations that he was surreptitiously leading America toward involvement in a forthcoming European war.

On the domestic front, American Jews labored valiantly to assist those Central European Jews who had made it to U.S. shores. Despite Depression woes, the indigenous community helped support German Jewish refugees who themselves made yeoman efforts to gain a foothold economically in a new land while holding on to their imported traditions. At the same time, Jews who had been born in America faced daunting barriers to their full integration. They had fulfilled their social contract with America as they had assimilated that country's cultural values, often at the expense of abandoning their ancestral ties. But the America of the 1930s did not value their participation. So many doors to elite schools, jobs, and residences were closed to them with no sign that they would soon be opened. Socially

insecure, Jews found relief and comfort among their own kind within neighborhoods separated from other ethnic groups, who occupied their own enclaves. These areas of American cities were defined by “no-man’s lands” that only the intrepid dared to cross.

But the organic sense of belonging did not carry over to affiliation with synagogue or other religious institutions. In so many instances, Jewish folk religious values had been lost in the children of immigrants’ unrequited quests to be accepted as 100 percent Americans. Desperate to find ways of bringing youngsters back to some sort of fidelity to Judaism, rabbis and lay leaders experimented with many sorts of social and recreational activities to attract the unfaithful. These latter quests brought leaders of all Jewish expressions together to emphasize their common dilemmas and, in some cases, to find formulas for varieties of unified, new American Judaism. Some of the newcomers to America brought with them strong religious feelings and commitments to maintain old practices. But their lifestyles and influences were restricted to the immigrant neighborhoods that they occupied.

The American Zionist movement, too, had its staunch supporters. But those who read and spoke Hebrew, kept tabs on developments within the Yishuv, and used Jewish nationalism as their form of Jewish identification were a circumscribed lot. On the other hand, as the refugee crisis intensified, there was a significant spike in membership in the Zionist Organization of America. By 1939, 43,000 members were enrolled, up from 8,900 in 1933. It was a way of fighting Nazism and responding to American antisemitism even as Palestinianism maintained its American coloration. Zionism in America, as during Brandeis’s era, remained a movement to help oppressed Jews overseas through philanthropy and to help build up the Jewish presence in Palestine. However, almost all American Jews, for all their insecurities in the United States, would not be giving up on their adopted country by migrating to the Jewish national homeland.

As the war approached and the British showed no signs of support for international Zionist designs, a vital debate began within the world movement over what might be its position or degree of support for the Mandatory Power should a new world war visible over the horizon envelop Europe and perhaps the Middle East, too.

August 1939 was a time of acute testing for American Jewry's radical community. The unimaginable indeed took place when the Nazis and Soviets signed a non-aggression pact, which quickly precipitated the invasion of Poland and the start of the Second World War on September 1, 1939. Stalinists of Jewish ancestry in America were hard-pressed to explain the move of their leader in Moscow, and Jewish leftists of various ideological stripes had to come to grips with the reality that a treaty had been signed with the world's arch antisemite that could leave not only German, Austrian, and Czech but now also Polish Jewry in the hands of Adolf Hitler.

When the war began, an insecure and declining American Jewry, living in a country still in the throes of its own debates over isolationism, would witness from afar the initial fragmentary reports about the murder of what would eventually be six million Jewish victims, primarily in the territories that the Third Reich had conquered.

Conflicting Challenges for an America at Peace, 1938–1944

Josef Stalin had several major scores to settle with the Poles. As commissar of the Southern Front that had attacked Warsaw in 1920, he remembered how the communists' defeat had chilled an incipient regime's dreams of quickly spreading radical revolutions worldwide. The "Red" Bolsheviks who had just finished staggering through its own civil war against the "White" Mensheviks really were in no shape to control and impose communism on twenty-five million Poles. If Lenin's troops had tried to fulfill his fantasy of quickly overrunning Germany after subduing Poland, the Allies of the Great War would have pushed them back. That predictable outcome might have ended the USSR's then very short existence. Yet that defeat long rankled Stalin. Russian comrades would have to be content in the 1920s and 1930s to build "Socialism in One Country" and to project what they accomplished as a model for the world. But now, at the end of the 1930s, the prospects for an international communist revolution were very much alive. The renewed push could start with bringing Poland into the Soviet sphere of influence, if not occupying their neighbor to the immediate west outright.

Poland was likewise in Stalin's crosshairs because he believed that in the first decade and a half of his regime it had frequently sought to undermine the Soviet leader. The treaty of Riga that ended the Russian-Polish war of 1920 had established the two country's borders, but control of Ukraine and Belorussia continued to be a source of sore dispute for years thereafter. Large segments of these territories remained under Polish rule until 1939, but the bulk of Ukraine was mandated as a Soviet state.¹

Ukraine had become, in the 1920s, Russia's breadbasket as its massive agricultural output was directed toward Moscow. But the flow of food took it far away from Kiev, causing the deaths of millions within that region's peasant population. Starvation became a way of life and death in the steppes, now denuded of the very basics for subsistence. Ukrainians also hated the Stalinist regime for its enforced collectivization schemes, designed to prove that the socialist approach to agricultural productivity was the wave of the future. Again, countless millions died in those ultimately arid, experimental laboratories. Dissenters who questioned the harshly imposed system were often deported as far to the east as frozen Siberia, which added to Ukrainians' despising Russian power. Observing the plight of a neighboring people under the cruel hands of what the Poles called "the Hunger Tsar," opportunistic Polish governments in the early 1930s first dispatched spies and agitators to encourage the oppressed to revolt against the communists. Soon thereafter, Poland created a subterranean Ukrainian-Polish army that was poised for joint attacks against the Motherland of Russia at the very moment when Stalin was increasingly occupied with monitoring the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. That Asian incursion threatened his long Siberian border. So it did not take much for Stalin to believe rumors that circulated within Moscow in 1932, that a secret agreement was afoot between the Poles and the Japanese for a joint attack against the USSR. Such an alliance would have created a long-feared two-front war. Although these allegations proved to be unsubstantiated, they did move Stalin to conclude a cold peace treaty once again with Poland. Nonetheless, for much of the 1930s, the two neighbors looked suspiciously at each other while Poland suffered through acute financial depression. Still, Poland possessed enough of a military presence to station troops on the border with Germany while Hitler struggled with the Czechs.²

Surveying the field, in 1939, a confident Stalin moved expeditiously not only to preclude any future Polish move against him but also to create a territorial barrier between the Motherland and a far greater potential threat: the Third Reich. The consummate nightmare scenario saw Poland at some point becoming a satellite or an occupied German territory. Such a hostile "neighborhood" would serve as a springboard for a Nazi invasion, threatening Stalin's rule. Thus, to avenge real or imagined dangers and to ensure the safety of Russia in September 1939, Soviet troops crossed their

southeastern border. The invaders announced that their rationale was their sincere concern over the fate of Ukrainians and Byelorussians in the eastern parts of Poland, while Stalin's eyes were also fixed on Warsaw in his efforts to "liberate the Polish people." He also stared menacingly at Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania and even as far north as Finland as potential lands to be freed for communism. A new phase in the European war that started just a year earlier was now under way.³

The Poles were unable to withstand Russian troops. In those newly liberated territories, Stalinism was quickly imposed. Most ruthlessly, in the spring of 1940s, in a forest near Smolensk, called Katyn, 4,100 Polish officers, who had surrendered and who expected humane treatment under the Geneva Convention, were summarily executed. The "continuous executions" soon applied to an additional 22,000 Polish soldiers of all ranks. Any counter-revolutionary civilian was sent off to Siberia. The exiled cohorts went beyond erstwhile Polish officials to include Polish and Jewish intellectuals and those with sympathies for the Nazis and professionals. The Russian secret police even trained their eyes on veterans of the 1920–1921 war, punishments for offenses that only Stalin remembered.⁴

The head of the USSR also felt strongly empowered in his relations with the Japanese, who previously had threatened Russia's far eastern expanse. But he would deal with that opponent in subtler, more diplomatic ways. Here, too, the desire to redress old grievances factored into Stalin's attitude. Though a Georgian by birth, as a Russian nationalist he remembered the humiliation that his country had suffered through its defeat in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. And as a communist, it stuck in his craw that the Japanese had coveted Russian territory while the Bolsheviks had fought their bloody civil war. However, in 1939, after the Soviet victory at Khalkhin-Gol, where victory was achieved even with only a skeleton officer corps in place—so many of his top military men had been purged—Stalin was certain he could ensure that Siberia would never be endangered by those eastern imperialists. Government leaders worldwide were also impressed that even a "decapitated" Red Army could defeat the Japanese. Stalin emerged from that skirmish more determined than ever that if, and when, the Japanese looked again for territories and natural resources to fuel and fire their militaristic ends, they would be pointed southward. Russia would be deemed off-limits.⁵

In the meantime, there were islands in the nearby northern Pacific that both countries desired over which the USSR could gain at least partial control. In August 1939, the Russians and Japanese signed a non-aggression treaty, which both sides initialed while they privately crossed their fingers, to divide the oil- and coal-rich Sakhalin and Kuril Islands. Stalin also had his eyes on a future, larger prize, the Korean Peninsula.⁶

As the Soviets aimed to direct the Japanese southward, the fate of China, a colossal geographical prize, lay in the balance. Here the USSR played a double diplomatic game with the Kuomintang Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong's Red Chinese, antagonists who had been at war for years over control of China. Moscow's dual goal was have to these Chinese armies keep the Japanese occupied while Stalin extended Russian influence in the area. Setting ideology aside, the Russian leader maintained a working relationship with Chiang, the Asian archenemy of communism, encouraging him to fight on against the Japanese aggressors and to stand down in his ongoing fight against Mao. This concordat cut Mao to his core; he stopped just short of accusing Stalin of treason against the world communist cause. Reluctantly, he, too, accepted the premise that the Japanese had to be repelled. He would deal with the Nationalists at a later date within a different battle theater. Smiling broadly back in the Kremlin at this alliance of necessity among Chinese adversaries, Stalin took one additional step to ensure his eastern boundaries. In April 1941, he initialed a non-aggression pact with Tokyo.⁷

Though the world was aghast at Japanese atrocities as they occupied cities like Nanking, as the 1930s came to an end Tokyo worried about their own military endgame against the Chinese. This coveted land prize was becoming "a prolonged military conflict which required the mobilization of all possible resources of the country." The foremost concern was Japan's paucity of natural resources—such as oil, tin, and rubber—required to fuel their war machine to fulfill their destiny as the supreme Asian empire. With Russia holding sway to their northwest, military planners and strategists looked south and west to British and Dutch possessions in the East Indies, such as Singapore, Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, and Hong Kong. The oil fields under Dutch control were particularly inviting. The reasoning in the Nippon war rooms also was that the long-time colonial powers, engaged in their own war with the Germans, would be ill

equipped to fight effectively thousands of miles from home. Tokyo had long fantasized that French Indochinese possessions were nothing more than a “useless burden” for the European imperialists. The Japanese were willing to “assume such a territorial responsibility.” Securing invaluable natural resources became the mandate of the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the structure for incursions and control of the area.

But what about the Americans: their possessions, their treaty obligations, and their moral interests in the region as Japan made its moves? The president and the American people were none too pleased with Tokyo’s imperialism, particularly as they became aware of the extent of Japanese brutality.⁸ The White House and the Pentagon were likewise concerned with the fate of their own prized Asian possession, the Philippines. Even in an isolationist era, in 1940 FDR banned U.S. exports of scrap iron and steel to these aggressors and placed an embargo on oil shipments. There also was chatter around the White House that the government might soon freeze all Japanese assets in America if aggression in China did not cease. With cordial relations falling apart between the two countries, a critical debate ensued within Tokyo’s highest echelons that carried the most far-reaching implication. On the table was the question of whether Japanese objectives, as masters of the East, could be achieved without taking on the United States.

General Hideki Tojo, convinced of the inevitability of what he ironically called “an Oriental version of Manifest Destiny,” argued that America had to be attacked, its possessions seized through sudden aggressive maneuvers, in order to bring the United States, which had no stomach for war, to the negotiating table. Then and there, the Japanese could demand that a favorable trade relationship be restored. He also had every expectation that FDR would not be in charge. The end of his second term was growing near and, in keeping with well-known American political tradition, he would be out of office early in 1941. But the key to success had to be a blitzkrieg, a sudden, decisive attack. Tojo had heard that term on a mission to Berlin, where Hitler had spoken often of his military conquest fantasy. In other words, even Tojo, this most militaristic of Japanese leaders, understood in his heart of hearts that a prolonged battle against the Americans, who harbored unlimited natural resources and millions of potential combatants, would end in defeat for Imperial forces. He thus

advocated an attack on Hawaii, to destroy much if not all of the American Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, an invasion of the Philippines, and a few quick, major battles to establish Japanese supremacy. Any other course would bespeak cowardice, the consummate loss of face for a Japanese leader.

Though fearful of being labeled a coward himself, Prime Minister Prince Fumimora Konoe, with the support of some major admirals, offered an alternate and ultimately compelling argument. Like everyone else at the meetings—even Tojo—he had no faith in a prolonged war. And he was far from certain that an aroused America would quickly sue for a dishonorable peace. Konoe and his colleagues' strategic solutions were to avoid confrontation with the United States, to bypass the Philippines, and to avoid a Hawaiian incursion completely. Their consensus was that they could attack Dutch and especially British properties in Southeast Asia with impunity. There was enough "America First" isolationist feeling in the United States and in both houses of Congress that FDR would have a devil of a time lining up support for a war to bail out their putative European allies. One look at the European scene showed that the battles between Germany and the French and British Allies in 1938–1939 had not drawn America into that conflagration. The Japanese were certain that the American people and their elected officials were not ready to commit soldiers and treasure to protect even an ally's distant colonies. Out of these top-secret debates, the Japanese looked toward committing forces where they felt sure to succeed and to acquiring all the oil and other materials they needed at the expense of the preoccupied British and Dutch while subjugating 150 million people in East Asia. Imperial forces would presently leave the Philippines alone and stay clear of Hawaii. Tojo and the extreme militarists would have to wait to take on America. Perhaps they never would fulfill their imperialistic destiny. Meanwhile, as Tokyo looked southward, Russia redoubled its design toward gaining more territory north of the Japanese islands and possibly dominating Korea.⁹

While the Japanese strategized their own next moves, on the European western front in the winter of 1938–39, the Nazis were uncertain where the trails of war would lead them. Moving beyond their hard-earned achievements in Czechoslovakia, Hitler's dreams of conquest remained intact. The humiliations of the Great War had to be avenged with blood and confiscated treasure. But the military men around him continued to have

reservations about the extent of their own might. Their most modern weapon for a new war, the vaunted Luftwaffe, had done its best in the 1938 campaign. Still, realists argued that the air force needed time and more fuel to direct its attention at Western European foes. Both commodities were in short supply when Hitler demanded an immediate reassembling of troops for a fight against the French and the Low Countries. The initiative had to be taken before his enemies were fully up to strength. The Fuehrer's worst fear, which alternated with his fantasies of glory, drove him to assert that unless the Reich moved quickly, the old Allies of the Great War would move against him. With a war map before him, it seemed logical that that same Rhineland he reoccupied without protest just a few years earlier might now have to be defended. His regime was clearly at risk.

Putting aside reasonable apprehensions and convinced that victory was his destiny, Hitler laid out a most daring plan to his general staff. The German army, with the mechanized forces that were available, would invade in February 1939 through the Ardennes Forest, driving across the Meuse River into the heart of Belgium, on the way to Antwerp and the Atlantic seacoast. Such a maneuver would create a Nazi bulge between France and the Low Countries, forestall British intervention, and quickly win the western war. Horrified that their leader's fantasy was about to become operational reality, Hitler's generals were first too shocked to speak. It remained for Albert Kesserling, a hero of the Great War, to courageously remind Hitler that "the German Army has not mounted an effective winter offensive since Frederick the Great," the eighteenth-century Prussian military icon. But putting history aside, the seasoned general pulled out his list of available resources and instructed Hitler, albeit in the most polite and deferential way, that the Wehrmacht had at its disposal but "three badly battered Panzer divisions"—left over from the Czech struggle—"three light divisions in not much better shape and four motorized divisions": not an impressive mechanized force.

Talked down from that great initiative, Hitler was nonetheless determined to strike. He placed his faith in the abilities of the noble German infantry. They would carry the day with a push into the heart of France to the Somme River. Hitler could not look beyond distant replays of battles that turned the tide in the previous enormous European struggle. They captivated his thoughts. Now, his troops would move on into a region that

had seen some of the most vicious battling in 1916. Only this time, his forces would emerge victorious. The result of that military incursion, however, was far from an unqualified triumph. Once again, as in Czechoslovakia, ultimately the German “doctrine and training” outlasted their opponents, but no dramatic breakthrough was realized. At the cost of tens of thousands of lives on both sides, by the beginning of 1940 the Nazis had reached the Somme, albeit with a fatigued army. The conquest of Paris, a victorious march under the Arc de Triomphe, and the imposition of a humiliating armistice upon the French—Hitler’s consummate dream of conquest and harsh retribution—were nowhere near coming true.¹⁰

Hitler was also highly perturbed that his Axis allies were not holding up their ends of the alliance. He was none too pleased that the Japanese had signed that 1939 non-aggression pact with the Soviets. He would have liked Tokyo to have kept Russia occupied toward the day when he was ready and able to move against the communist threat to German hegemony. The Nipponese defeat at Khalkhin-Gol was certainly a great disappointment. It raised questions in Berlin about Japan’s presumed military abilities. But even greater concerns were expressed in the Chancellery about the performance of their Italian comrades. Hitler personally liked Mussolini and all that he stood for. The victory of this self-styled new Caesar in Ethiopia in 1936 had opened Hitler’s eyes to what he deemed as the cowardice of the British and French. He took note that neither they nor the ineffective League of Nations had helped out an African ally, Haile Selassie, the ruler of Abyssinia. Would they really move to prevent the Nazis’ own planned march into the Rhineland? More important, Mussolini had been loyal to Hitler in Munich in 1938 when the Allies unexpectedly showed their mettle. Mussolini subsequently supported the Nazis—albeit more in words than in deeds—through the subsequent Czech invasion, setting aside his own dreams of Italian possession of parts of the Central European republic. But as the 1939–1940 campaigns dragged on, Hitler was increasingly disappointed with how poorly the Italians fared in critical battles. Il Duce’s declaration of war on the French and British, a true sign of loyalty to Hitler, immediately made his country an enemy of those Western European powers. The poorly outfitted Italian fleet was no match either for the Royal or French Navy. The weak Italian air force was unable to give much cover or support to their vessels. And the Italian army

hardly had a record of successes and could not be relied upon for support. As the Nazis battled to hold and advance their own positions, they were under pressure to help out Mussolini. Hitler and his generals felt very much alone.¹¹

The slow-moving western front also posed major problems in the office of Joseph Goebbels, the Reich's propaganda minister. Throughout the 1930s, he had trumpeted that the Nazis were the salvation of the Aryan race, standing up to the looming international Jewish-Bolshevik threat. Hitler had warned in the most uncompromising terms as the Czech struggle morphed into a Western European battle that if the conflict expanded and plunged the world into another world war, the end result would not be the triumph of Judeo-Communism with civilization at its feet but the elimination of the hated Jewish race from the face of the earth. Yet, as Nazism's staunchest supporters watched military developments and the toll it was taking upon their soldiers and their families, they wondered how it was that the Jews within their own midst seemed to continue to exist, relatively untrammelled within Germany. These true believers in the Nazi message were chagrined at the soft-touch administration that Hjalmar Schacht had brought to the Jewish question. Adolf Eichmann had been more to their liking.

Most critical, Goebbels's boss, the Fuehrer himself, was becoming increasingly frustrated with both the war room reports and his sense that the German street was concerned that his policies were amiss. In his totalitarian regime, questioners kept their opinions largely to themselves. Arresting the outspoken was relatively simple; the Gestapo was surely competent in that regard. But what was the Reich to do with a nagging popular sense of discontent? Goebbels, the German people, and perhaps even their leader needed a new propaganda stimulus to keep them all focused and aggressive.

Goebbels and his associates had dealt with such problems before. Back in 1933, the thuggish Brown Shirts, who had helped Hitler battle his way into power against communists and others in the streets of Germany, were surprised, confused, and chagrined that the new government did not move immediately against the consummate enemy, the Jews. Hitler, Goebbels, and the other members of the Nazi upper echelons harbored the same antisemitic sentiments, but the exigencies of office had moved

those newly in power to first take action against real and present political opponents. The Jewish question had been held in abeyance. But to keep those ready for action committed to the ultimate cause, the regime cynically involved them in an April 1, 1933, boycott of Jewish stores and businesses. The announced rationale was that “this righteous outpouring of national anger was in response to the defamation of the Reich carried on by international Jewry.” The street fighters had their day in the sun, which siphoned off some of their energies. But back in the Chancellery, analysts subsequently agreed that the event had not really come close to solving the Jewish question. Discriminatory laws and racial regulations—like the Nuremberg Laws of 1935—followed, each attack pleasing those who hated the Jews most viscerally. But for all the difficulties Jews faced day in and day out, they persisted. And as this new war was under way, Jews were still to be seen in the Reich.¹²

Ever the creative propagandist, replete with big lie stories to calm a restless public and support his Fuehrer, Goebbels thought long and hard in the fall of 1940 about the fact that the present war was becoming a repetition of the Great War, within some of the same battlegrounds that had become killing fields for German soldiers. This scenario was perfect for twisting facts. Why were the Germans, he asked rhetorically and hysterically, not yet triumphant given their racial superiority and courage against armed enemies? Borrowing from *Mein Kampf*, the Reichsminister’s answer was that just as the Jews in 1918 had stabbed the noble Germans in the back, now they were again at their nefarious, conspiratorial work, undermining the country’s present heroic struggle and glorious destiny. Over Schacht’s objections, Goebbels asserted, with SS men like Eichmann and his bosses heartily agreeing, the Jews had to be punished publicly.

The relationship between Reichsvertretung (RV)—an umbrella organization that united Jewish community councils throughout Germany—and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—an international Jewish relief organization in New York—became the focal point of Goebbels’s conspiratorial fantasy. He never liked the RV, which supported the oppressed with American monies, facilitated immigration for those who could get out, and aggressively defended whatever rights German Jews still possessed. For example, when the Nuremberg Laws were promulgated, the RV was unafraid to pronounce its willingness to work

with the Nazis for a “modus vivendi” so long as German Jews remained in the Reich. It also did not help the RV’s standing in the Propaganda Ministry that Schacht worked well with it since Goebbels hated Schacht and his approaches to government and Jews. The RV personified the potential and actuality of Jewish persistence under fire.¹³

The elaborate fantasy that was hatched out of Berlin linked the RV, the AJDC, and a network of intermediaries in a massive spy and money transfer scandal, in which international Jewish money did not end up in German Jewish hands but found its way east and west, into the hands of Jewish agents who worked for the British and French on the existing front and Soviet hands that threatened the Reich from the east. To personify the alleged Jewish perfidy, they arrested and staged a show trial against an indigent Jewish student who Gestapo agents were able to show had passport stamps indicating that he had frequently traveled back and forth since 1935 from Hanover to Paris to Frankfurt, with stopovers in Belgium and on to Paris and so on. He also held an incriminating Polish passport, useful, said the indictment, to link up with other agents in Eastern European countries. His peregrinations, said the prosecutors, was clear evidence of how far back Jewish agents had been working on their treachery. Once they got their defendant in the dock, the ever-diligent Nazis boasted that they had broken the back of the cabal.

The truth was that this young man was on the move for five years largely in search of an education. Born in Hanover, Herschel Grynszpan had attended a state primary school until Nazi discrimination forced him to leave at age fourteen, in 1935. He and his family thought Palestine would be the ideal place for him. He was a member of several Zionist groups in his hometown. Awaiting the day he could be free to settle in the Jewish homeland, he attended a yeshiva in Frankfurt before moving to Paris where he lived with relatives. After a short sojourn in Belgium, he returned to Paris but was ultimately ruled an indigent alien by French authorities and ordered to return to Germany. But the Reich did not want this stateless Jew, either. So he lived basically underground, without legal papers, until he fell into the German web when he ventured to visit his parents back in Hanover. Early in November 1940, Herschel Grynszpan confessed under severe duress to a series of treasonous crimes, hatched in France, Germany, and Poland. He was subsequently convicted and sentenced to

death. Proof of Jewish treachery precipitated renewed intensified hatred and a new wave of violence directed at Jews.

Goebbels used this opportunity to break the back of the German, Austrian, and Czech Jewish communities. Asserting that all Jews were somehow complicit in Grynszpan's offenses, he demanded that all community assets be seized and that all synagogues be closed, with the real estate turned over to the military. But before the transfer was affected, Nazi street bullies broke the stained-glass windows and stripped other forms of Jewish iconography and identification from the houses of worship. No signs of Jewishness would be allowed to remain on the appropriated new government installations. This spate of brutality led some outraged foreign observers to refer to these brutalities as "Days and Nights of Broken Glass." Subsequently, many of the leaders of the RV were rounded up and sent to German concentration camps, like Dachau and Buchenwald. The Nazis did not have to explain to anyone how those sentenced to hard labor had any connection with Grynszpan, who had no evident relationship with the relief organization. The prison into which RV worthies were dumped had been in existence since the rise of the Hitler regime, populated primarily by political enemies of the Reich. Now, it would billet Jewish traitors.

Outraged, Hjalmar Schacht rushed to Berlin and demanded a meeting with Hitler. But Goebbels prepared the Fuehrer for a predictable pushback with questions about Schacht's own degree of fidelity to the cause. Seeing his authority totally undermined, Schacht resigned. Waiting in the wings to reassume his administration of the Jewish question was the SS, most notably its resident expert, Adolf Eichmann. Efficient as always, he managed the identification of central Jewish leaders and their deportation to camps. The Jewish communities under Nazi control were well nigh destroyed in 1940. But it was a bittersweet return to power for Eichmann. According to his calculations—and he was very good at keeping statistics—this attack had come two years too late. In the years 1938–1940, more than 135,000 Jews had found their way to safety and freedom, many of them to Palestine. He was ready to ride roughshod over the fewer than 100,000 who remained, even if his demographic charts showed that those now within his reach were primarily the elderly, the infirm, and the indigent. Still, when Eichmann and his boss, Heinrich Himmler, met with Hitler in

the days after the roundup, they put the best face on their actions. And Goebbels told the German people that, with the cabal smashed, victory was ahead for their gallant troops. In the war rooms of Berlin, military analysts and planners were not so sure.

These multiple fronts—the Nazis battling the French, Dutch, and the British while the Italians proving to be incompetent Allies for the Reich; Japan's brutal occupation of China while coveting British and other colonial possessions; and the Soviets renewing the communist dream of world conquest—perplexed both the American people and their government. FDR surely wanted to help his English friends, both in their European fight and in their looming struggle to preserve Britain's Asian empire. But that complex objective had to be achieved short of putting American boys into battle. The public was not ripe for military engagements. But Roosevelt also knew that whatever power and influence he might have on future events was limited since his second term was ending. Meanwhile, isolationist forces and politicians were more powerful than ever, as so many around the country were unsure whom to support in wars that were not theirs. As the 1940 election cycle began, the intertwined questions of presidential succession and where the new president might direct America captivated politicians and voters.

FDR would have liked to continue the lead the nation, precedent be damned. He certainly had friends and admirers who had considered how Roosevelt, as a former president, could continue to influence events. Thomas H. Beck, president of the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, tendered one of the most attractive offers to the White House. Under contract to *Collier's*, a highly influential magazine of the day, the ex-president would write twenty-six articles a year on subjects of his own choosing, for a fee of \$75,000 per annum. It could be his enduring pulpit for criticizing or commending the actions of the next man in office. There was also serious talk of that publishing group serializing FDR's anticipated memoirs. The incumbent had preliminary thoughts about establishing a presidential library in Hyde Park, in order to memorialize his tenure in America's highest office. FDR let it be known to some close associates that there were financial reasons for his wish to return to private life—that his mother was digging into capital to keep the place at Hyde Park going. But in January 1940, when discussions with Beck began, FDR's ambition to remain on the

stage of history trumped the commentator's role. Though he told party leaders that "I have not today, and have never had any wish to remain in the office of the president, or indeed anywhere in public office, after next January," FDR indeed harbored dreams of extending his administration.¹⁴

However, there were multiple forces inside and outside his administration that ultimately stymied his attempt to garner a third term. The radical right—and some respectable conservative elements, too—had long painted the incumbent as a "dictator" ready to use his power to control America and perhaps undermine the U.S. Constitution. FDR's false step in his court-packing scheme of 1937, which was designed to bring justices more favorable to his New Deal initiatives to the highest bench, was for his enemies proof positive of his nefarious plans. In 1938, a National League to Oppose the Third Term for the President was incorporated in New York. A Gallup Poll that December found that seven out of ten voters opposed a third go-around. Many of those surveyed did not hate the incumbent and may have applauded what he had done for the nation. But the precedent of two terms—though not in the Constitution—was a tradition that most did not want to see abridged. Even within FDR's closest political circles, a combination of principle and aspirations led some of his advisers to oppose his contemplated move. Postmaster General James A. Farley, who doubled as chairman of the Democratic National Committee and who had been a key operative in directing the successful 1932 and 1936 campaigns, told his boss that he was "unalterably" opposed to the break with the electoral past. For his part, Farley had his own presidential ambitions. Of course, at the same time, the president's strongest supporters within and beyond his White House brain trust feared that without FDR in charge, conservative forces in the country would quickly undo the warranted New Deal policies. Despite those who encouraged him to ensure that America would be "safe on third," in the end, the president could not convince enough Democratic delegates to change the unwritten rule and draft him for one more term. That's how FDR wanted his nomination efforts played and projected. Ultimately, with neither Germany nor Japan—or, for that matter, the USSR—posing an imminent threat to America, Roosevelt could not stave off those who steadfastly opposed his renewed candidacy.¹⁵

But having turned FDR away, the Democrats were left in disarray with several candidates vying for the top spot on the ticket, each with a

different vision of where to take America—whether it meant a New Deal status quo, extension, or rollback, or steering America through difficult diplomatic and military waters. As with all presidential aspirants, there were personal and/or philosophical concerns that weakened their candidacies.

Early on, Vice President John Nance Garner announced his candidacy, even before Roosevelt bowed out. By then, he was no longer an ally of the president, having broken with him over the court-packing scheme. He had made himself scarce during the height of that imbroglio and only after a long sojourn in his native Texas reluctantly assented to a plan that would maintain the court's independence. He also did not see eye to eye with his boss on economics—such as the New Deal's deficit spending. He, far more than FDR, had difficulties with organized labor, especially its combative leadership. For a while, Garner was the darling of the most conservative Democrats. But the vice president was sixty-nine years old when he began to pursue the presidency. Notwithstanding his still robust health, questions were raised about his endurance on the job. Others wondered how he could ever handle organized labor.¹⁶

Farley, the Gallup Poll reported in 1940, had substantial public support. But he too was not in FDR's good graces, and so could not count on the president's support. He had never spoken up strongly on behalf of the New Deal and had also opposed the court-packing plan. But most significantly, Farley was a Roman Catholic. A protégé of former New York governor Al Smith, Farley would have to endure the unyielding prejudice of Americans against one of his faith, as Smith had as the Democratic presidential nominee in 1928. Farley knew that such antipathies would destroy his chances. Still, he threw his hat into the ring. To have his name in nomination, in his estimation, it would be the crowning achievement of the life of "an Irish boy with only a high school education to have come so far" as to be hailed at the Democratic convention.¹⁷

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes had the personal affection and ear of FDR, but he lacked, even in his friends' estimation, the charisma and force of personality to sustain a successful race. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, likewise, had the bona fides for the job. He had earned high marks for his careful control of foreign policy as wars broke out around the globe. He was also one of several cabinet members who believed that FDR

wanted him to succeed him as president. Actually, the president was sometimes critical of the secretary's measured slowness, an asset at the State Department but not in the White House. He, too, scored low on the charisma chart. His age—like Garner, he was sixty-nine—and his discernible slight lisp also did not hold him in perfect stead as a presidential candidate.¹⁸

If FDR had to back anyone, it was going to be Henry Wallace, his loyal and supportive secretary of agriculture. Wallace was known as a staunch anti-Nazi internationalist and was dedicated to New Deal principles. But party regulars were not happy with his Republican background; he had become a Democrat only in 1936. More injurious to his candidacy, there was a strangeness about Wallace. He once described himself as “a searcher for methods of bringing the inner light of outward manifestation and raising outward manifestations to the inner light.” This mystical side, which led him to “plumb the occult” and become involved with all manner of “séances, symbols, rituals, astrology and Native American religion,” frightened even some of his closest associates.¹⁹

As the Democratic Convention drew near in July 1940, a dark horse figure emerged, and his devoted supporters packed the rafters at Chicago Stadium. Hoosier Paul McNutt was far from an FDR favorite. In fact, the president, in the prior years, had arrayed a variety of tests and obstacles before the Indiana governor from 1933 to 1937 perhaps to test his mettle, or to disqualify him as a future vice presidential candidate. In 1937 FDR appointed him to the position of High Commissioner for the Philippines, that crucial Asian outpost. Then, in 1939, FDR recalled him and appointed McNutt head of the newly created Federal Works Agency, which oversaw the maintenance of public buildings, the running of federal highway projects, and the coordination of federal housing initiatives. On the surface, such a demanding and visible job could help build his presidential résumé. He already had foreign policy experience in a global hot spot. But friends of McNutt feared that Roosevelt, through this second post, “was purposely giving [him] enough rope in an exceedingly unpopular task so that he would eventually ‘self-destruct.’” There seemed to be some truth behind these apprehensions. For all of McNutt’s activities and competencies, when once asked privately whether the Hoosier was presidential timber, FDR apparently had responded with a definitive

thumbs-down. The Hoosier was also lampooned in the media. Popular cartoonist Rube Goldberg caricatured him as “Boob McNutt”—an intellectual lightweight.²⁰

Far more problematic, McNutt carried some troubling political baggage that he had accumulated while governor of Indiana that needed to be overcome. His detractors alluded to his affection for the trappings of fascistic dictatorship. Reporting for the Washington *Evening Star*, the widely read columnist Joseph Alsop and his colleague Robert Kintner had pointed out McNutt’s “curious fondness for marching the National Guard about the state [and] declaring martial law at a drop of a picket sign in labor disputes.” Even more injurious was his establishment in Indiana of the controversial “Two Percent Club,” which Alsop and Kintner and many other pundits and politicians decried as “a feature of the ironclad Indiana dictatorship” that required kickbacks from state employees to the political party.²¹

Nonetheless, McNutt, a true favorite son, survived these attacks. In an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, he averred that his fundraising techniques compared favorably with those of “Republicans . . . who blackjack[ed] corporation in return for special privileges.” His sympathetic interviewer bought his line, as he remarked that the “McNutt machine does not differ . . . from the practices and most other great political machines.” Such simply was the way of American politics.²²

Meanwhile, his supporters made a dramatic impact on the convention. When his name was put into nomination, cheers erupted from the floor. *Time* magazine observed later that it was “the greatest ovation of the convention.” The *New York Times* correspondent concurred, calling the outburst “the best so far.” By contrast, when Wallace’s name was called, there was only a smattering of applause and even some booing. Now the convention seemingly chanted as one: “We Want McNutt.” The histrionics continued for twenty minutes after the organ and bands ceased playing while the handsome candidate, dripping with sweat under the hot arena lights, acknowledged the outpouring of support and gestured for the crowd to be silent. McNutt’s camp had helped pack the mammoth indoor arena by handing out 3,500 unofficial tickets to enthusiastic backers who were able to gain admission by storming the gates en masse.²³

Putting all shenanigans aside, what bolstered his candidacy most was that McNutt had compelling domestic and foreign policy platforms, which

convinced those on the floor of the convention. Though FDR had his issues with McNutt, the contender was a New Dealer. An in-house campaign biographer spoke of him “as a moderate liberal [who] has supported the Roosevelt administration faithfully but has not been identified with the group of extreme reformers.” Supporters argued that his “thorough understanding of public administration [would] appeal to the substantial business interests in the country.” On the questions of war and peace, he positioned himself as a supporter of “strong national defense . . . passionately devoted to the American principle of keeping America out of foreign wars.” But “he [was] not an isolationist.” That meant “adequate military and naval defenses” were essential and the president had to be prepared to “engage in frank dialogue when dealing with foreign powers . . . without serious danger of war.” His positions approximated the thoughts of many Americans who wanted the United States to stay out of the war but saw the logic of supplying armaments on a “cash and carry” basis for those countries with which they sympathized.²⁴

As McNutt’s bid gained momentum, a troublesome party irregular with a shadowy reputation rose to use his connections and money to block this advocate of nuanced internationalism. Party bosses did not like Joseph P. Kennedy, erstwhile U.S. ambassador to the Court of St. James. And he had little use for those whom he disparaged as “the career boys” in Hull’s State Department. Ickes would write in his diary that Kennedy believed that “the State Department did not know what was going on in Europe and that there was no use trying to keep them informed.”²⁵

No one in the administration’s inner circle thought well of the often uncontrollable Kennedy, who had long advocated appeasement and isolationism. Truth be told, from the very moment FDR had sent Kennedy’s name up to Capitol Hill to be confirmed as ambassador, opponents of the nominee and those who questioned FDR’s judgment had wondered aloud how many times FDR would reward his supposed ally. Kennedy had pumped millions from his own fortune into Democratic coffers and had convinced some of his Wall Street friends to do likewise at a time when the party sorely needed his help. For his support, FDR had appointed Kennedy chairman of the Maritime Commission and then as the inaugural head of the Securities and Exchange Commission. One view of Kennedy was that FDR had sent the nettlesome appointee off to England to get him away

from D.C. No matter, Kennedy was thrilled to go. It would be for this Irish American the crowning moment of his career to present his credentials to the king of England. But in London, he became problematic to his own administration, which was trying to find a way to deal with totalitarianism short of war.²⁶

In the dark days between the Anschluss and Chamberlain's standing up to Hitler, the State Department had to lean on Kennedy to tone down his public declaration "that the great bulk of the American people is not now convinced that any common interest exists between them and any other country . . . that the U.S. has no plans to seek or offer assistance in the event of war." Kennedy altered his statement only a tad under noisy protest; however, his isolationist views were well known, both aboard and at home.²⁷

Similarly, when the Munich talks unexpectedly broke down and the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia, the ambassador fought with the State Department over his desire to announce that he did not see anything in that struggle remotely worth the shedding of American blood. Most importantly, when in 1938 the German air force did not immediately show its overwhelming supremacy, Kennedy still stood by arch-isolationist aviator Charles Lindbergh in assessing the Luftwaffe as "stronger than that of any country in the world." In the two years that followed, while the western front stalemated, Kennedy retained his pessimistic view of its outcome for the British. In his unbridled view, they were a weak people for whom he bore no sympathy. With the outcome of the western campaign still very much in doubt, he now advised that it was the wrong move for "democracies and dictatorships to widen the division now existing between them"; rather, they should focus on "solving their common problems." These opinions offended many English people. Member of Parliament Josiah Wedgwood spoke for his country at war when he characterized the ambassador as "a rich man, untrained in diplomacy, unlearned in history and politics, who is a great publicity seeker and who is apparently ambitious to be the first Catholic president of the U.S."²⁸

In a different America, it might have been possible for an Irish Catholic with money and influence to become a serious presidential candidate. Possessed of an outsize ambition and ego, Kennedy had been heartened back in 1938 when *Liberty*, a popular magazine, had depicted

him as having "the brains, personality, driving force, and habit of success" to be the chief executive. But he took greater heed of a 1940 public opinion poll that placed him fifth among likely candidates if FDR would not seek a third term. Like Farley, in the end Kennedy realized that the country was not ready to elect a Catholic. Even if he could capture the Democratic nomination, he would not submit himself to the humiliation that Al Smith had endured in 1928. The ambassador would content himself with a role for which he had always been enamored, comfortable, and successful. He would be political kingmaker. In 1940, that meant first that it was essential to knock McNutt off the board.²⁹

Kennedy disagreed totally with McNutt's nuanced internationalism. It smacked of Roosevelt's policies and implicitly linked the United States with the fate of the British and their threatened empire, a future about which Kennedy was highly pessimistic. Looming beneath the surface but apparent to those who knew the ambassador's sentiments was Kennedy's staunch disapproval of McNutt's friendship with Jews. The Democratic candidate had an impressive record of sympathy for both Jews in America and those who were refugees overseas. The quintessential white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, McNutt was born and raised in a state that was home to more than its share of racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, but he shattered that stereotype early in life. He and his father actively opposed the hooded "Secret Empire" in Indiana. He would later explain to audiences in his state that while the Nazis abroad and the Klan at home spoke reverently about the values of "solidarity," they did so by scapegoating, "finding an enemy within." For the tolerant Hoosier, "the Jews, an old historical group, surviving through the centuries, represent an ideal object for that purpose." He predicted that the Hitler regime "would go the way of other extinct regimes that had elected to persecute the Jews." Most crucially, when he had the opportunity to help the Jews, as high commissioner in the Philippines, he had assisted some 1,200 refugees escape Nazism and resettle in Manila, working aggressively and deftly against the harsh administration of immigration laws that was so much part of State Department policy. Most of his Asian efforts took place in the spring and summer of 1938, during the darkest days for German and Austrian refugees, before the unexpected diplomatic turnabout in Munich. His efforts brought him in direct contact with leading American Zionists such as

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and officials of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Opponents of McNutt, however, severely criticized his campaign's distribution of a pamphlet before the Democratic National Convention that documented his overseas efforts; they called it a blatant appeal for Jewish voters and their money.³⁰

In contrast, Kennedy was a rock-ribbed isolationist who consistently favored appeasement of growing German power for much of the 1930s, and during his ambassadorship he had nothing but praise for Hitler's revival of Germany. His views on the subject were passed on to his eldest son, Joseph Jr., who would write glowingly back to his father in 1934 that Hitler was building a spirit in his men that could be envied in any country. Joseph Sr. heartedly agreed. As far as Nazi antisemitism was concerned, the Kennedys believed that the Jews "had brought it upon themselves." In fact, the ambassador told his German colleague in the diplomatic service that he "understood [Nazi] Jewish policy completely; he was from Boston and there, in one golf club, and in other clubs, no Jews had been admitted for the past fifty years." When confronted by the media about his anti-Jewish feelings, the senior Kennedy would disingenuously rattle off a list of influential Jews who were his associates and brag that "he was the only non-Jewish member of the Palm Beach Country Club." He joined because it "was near his [Florida] home."³¹

McNutt managed to overcome Kennedy's opposition, however, and when the governor claimed the nomination, Kennedy exited angrily through a back door of the convention hall. Though a life-long Democrat, he could not countenance McNutt's outlook and dramatically switched his allegiance to the Republican side, at least for this crucial election. In June, when the GOP had assembled in Philadelphia, a slew of isolationist candidates vied for the party's nomination, with Senator Robert Taft of Ohio ultimately emerging as their standard bearer. He won on the sixth ballot in a bitterly fought campaign. Indiana's Wendell Willkie was the one Republican internationalist opponent who put up a good fight to the very end of the balloting. The delegates had resonated to his criticism of the administration's handling of the Depression and his attacks on New Deal inefficiency and the expansion of government. But his passionate warnings about the war in Europe—with all its complexities as of 1940—did not gain sufficient traction in an America still largely convinced that it could

and must stay out of war. While sure to promise that if elected he would never send our soldiers “over there”—as President Woodrow Wilson had in 1916 during the Great War, prior to the German sinking of the *Lusitania*—Willkie asserted that British interests coincided with many of our own and they deserved special treatment and favored status. “Germany,” he cried, was “a power hostile to our way of life.”³²

The majority of delegates, however, were more attuned to outspoken, hard-core isolationists who had a totally different view of the Nazi threat. Former president Herbert Hoover, seeking a last hurrah as a mold of public policy, struck the common chords that “the 3,000 miles of ocean is still protection. The air forces, tanks and armies of Europe are useless since they cannot transverse the Atlantic and our navy can stop anything in sight now.” Surveying the struggle on the western front, his advice was for America “to stand aside and . . . wait as the stalemate continues and then exercise our weight to bring about a peace without necessarily removing Hitler from control of his Reich.” In a comparable vein, Taft spoke out against the Roosevelt administration and his possible Democratic successor, asserting that “there is a good deal more danger of the infiltration of totalitarian ideas from the New Deal circles in Washington than there ever will be from activities of the communists and Nazis.”³³

The fall campaign became a dual referendum on the New Deal and widespread American isolationism, as many feared entanglement where the United States did not have a fully defined stake. McNutt found himself in a double bind. Though he had put some distance between himself and FDR’s domestic policies, as the Democratic standard bearer he found himself defending the incumbent president to a populace that was not yet out of the Depression. And though tall, famous, and articulate, McNutt, who cut a dashing figure, did not possess FDR’s charisma and connectivity to the electorate. Equally important, the party did not close ranks around him; candidates for local office in key states as well as erstwhile members of the president’s political insiders separated themselves, as best they could, from the administration. McNutt, of whom FDR was not particularly fond, ironically found himself profiled as the arch-defender of the New Deal. On the war and peace issue, McNutt’s nuanced internationalism and his tacit affinity for the British cause both in the European and emerging Asian fronts frightened too many voters. Taft was consistent in his

promises to keep the United States out of war, and his isolationist party rallied around the Ohio senator. Wendell Willkie was the sole, loud, dissenting voice among Republicans. When he was roundly attacked in the Republican press for his so-called “One World” interventionist stances, Willkie broke ranks and supported McNutt. His principled stance effectively ended his short career as a Republican leader; he had been a Democrat until the mid-1930s. Willkie lived four more years and died of a heart attack on October 8, 1944, at the age of fifty-two.

As the hard-fought battle reached its climax, the Jewish question entered the debate. Kennedy rallied the strongest, most fearful “America First” elements to the cause of stopping McNutt. He made public all the details of the Democrat’s intercessions in Manila, adding a most pejorative spin. Essentially, Kennedy argued, McNutt was the Jews’ choice. Under their sway, America would end up fighting for “them,” not sitting at home securely. Antisemites among the isolationists were horrified, their rank-and-file increasingly had their doubts, and voters across the country had enough concerns to turn the election.

Taft did not comment on Kennedy’s whispering campaign. He had his own Jews who actively supported him and he was not pressed on this sensitive subject. Kennedy did not publicize that Rabbi Michael Aransohn from Cincinnati had delivered the invocation at the convention. Perhaps Kennedy was mollified since this “good Jew”—whom the ambassador could claim as one of his friends—had spouted the isolationist line when he prayed that “we [not] offer up our sons and daughters on the altar of Moloch. . . . Let us not let ourselves be sucked into the maelstrom of war.”³⁴ When the votes were counted, McNutt carried his home state of Indiana, New York, and the always solid Democratic South. But Taft owned the Midwest and West and did surprisingly well in the mid-Atlantic and New England states, as internal strife weakened Democratic strongholds. In November 1940, Robert A. Taft was elected the thirty-third president of the United States.

When Taft assumed office the following January, his presumed agenda was to get America solidly and securely back on its financial feet while staying out of war. But events around the world had their ways of imposing hard, unanticipated choices upon the avowed isolationist president. In Asia, Japanese aggression intensified. Although Tokyo left American possessions, such as the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island,

untrammelled, Dutch and especially British possessions came under severe attack. In six months' time, from the early fall of 1941 through the winter of 1942, two centuries of the Union Jack flying triumphantly over most of Indochina ended. The Japanese parlayed their technological skill, spirited aggressiveness, and readiness to fight within jungles into smashing victories against previously complacent enemies that had underestimated Nipponese abilities and were hamstrung by poorly trained and inadequately led troops. This colonial power was not ready to fight a modern, intense war against the battle-hardened Japanese who had ten years of combat experience under their belts, and the Dutch resembled the British in this regard. A jewel of English control fell in December 1941 when the Crown Colony of Hong Kong was occupied. Several months later, Singapore was taken over. Five hundred miles of dense jungle had not deterred the intrepid invaders who stepped off from Malaya, a former British colony that had been lost in the early fall of 1941. Perhaps even more humiliating, the proud British Navy witnessed the destruction of two of its largest ships, the HMS *Prince of Wales* and the HMS *Repulse*. Insufficient air cover was blamed on the loss of more than 60,000 tons of wreckage sent to the deep in December 1941. Now, Downing Street feared that Burma, India, and perhaps even Australia and New Zealand were in mortal danger.³⁵

As Singapore teetered on the brink, the British public demanded a change of leadership. Neville Chamberlain had proven a worthy prime minister through the early days of the new European war, but he had died of cancer in November 1940. For much of the next year, Parliament struggled with a series of Conservative governments, none of which inspired a now hard-pressed people until the provocative Winston Churchill reenergized the troops and nation from 10 Downing Street. Initially, Churchill's uncompromising efforts to rally British forces seemed to intensify, not militate against, disaster. Among his first orders to the embattled Singapore garrison was that "the honour of the British Empire and the British Army is at stake." Those under fire in Singapore were told that "every unit will be brought into close contact with the enemy." Seeing this fight as "involving" the "whole reputation of our country and our race," he essentially told the fighters in Asia that they should battle to the last man. Beyond that, the English people were put on notice that hard days lay ahead of them if the empire was to survive.³⁶

But for all his bravado, Churchill knew that his island and empire could not sustain itself without American support. It was crucial for him to reestablish the type of favorable hearing within the White House that the British had under FDR. While the former president had recognized that not a single important political leader of either party would support a war to protect an ally's position in Southeast Asia, Roosevelt had done his utmost publicly and sometimes surreptitiously to aid Great Britain. Likewise, he tried to prepare America to be ready to fight if war were to come. But he was frustrated that as a lame duck in the summer and fall of 1940, he was unable to muster enough residual political strength to have the first peacetime draft initiated in America. However, he did succeed in doubling and redoubling naval construction, a boom to the American economy. And on the way out of office, in October 1940, he had introduced a ban on the export of scrap iron and steel to Japan to undermine its war-making abilities. Still, Churchill wanted more from his friend: a "loan" that would enhance if not guarantee Britain's future.³⁷

The two leaders worked on a lend-lease plan. Under this agreement, the president could authorize the "sale, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of, to any such government any defense article deemed necessary to American defense to an ally." At the present moment, Britain had to cough up cash for military materiel, a setup that had been required by U.S. Neutrality Acts in the 1930s. Now, the United Kingdom was strapped financially by wars on opposite sides of the world. To the utter dismay of the British, however, Roosevelt had been unable to get the bill passed by the isolationist Congress.³⁸

Once out of office, FDR attacked those who opposed helping the British in all ways possible short of war. Week after week, from his *Collier's* pulpit, he promoted lend-lease. Just as critical, he called upon the Japanese to get out of China, except for the province of Manchuria that they had conquered early on, and insisted that they must scotch any designs on Indochina. Protecting American interests explicitly, FDR wanted the next administration to pressure Tokyo to renege on its own alliance with Hitler and Mussolini that called for them to fight alongside Germany and Italy if war between these dictatorships broke out against the United States. Roosevelt was now a full-fledged and unencumbered interventionist.

For President Taft, the Japanese victories and the accompanying British failures, retreats, and entreaties gave him significant pause. Facing the facts before him, he now reasoned that even if war did not come to the U.S. mainland, ultimately the Philippines and other American holdings would have to be protected from an ever empowered and triumphant Tokyo. In the back of the president's mind, there was the fear that the Nazis would break out of the deepening quagmire on their western front. Watchful waiting also was required with regard to the Soviets lurking in Eastern Europe. Thus, a subtle shift away from full-fledged isolationism in foreign policy was required. In 1941, Churchill made the case not only to revive lend-lease for British efforts but to come out strongly against Tokyo. He wanted both an absolute embargo on the selling of petroleum to the enemy and an FDR-like ultimatum, comparable to the former president's statement that appeared in *Collier's*, directed against their future aggression. In a speech before Congress during his American visit in August 1941, Churchill pleaded that for the sake of civilization the Japanese had to be stopped.³⁹

Taft stuck to his guns when it came to American involvement in the European military theater. He was unalterably convinced that "European quarrels are everlasting." Using the words of George Washington to bolster his position, he was sure to quote frequently the first president's observation that "Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation." He held true to his own belief that "the Great War had destroyed more democracies and set up more dictatorships" on the continent. Besides which, he firmly believed that the English, for all of Churchill's abhorrence of Hitler, could hold their own in their ongoing protracted struggle against Germany. He predicted that the conflagration would be "terminated by a compromise settlement." But Japan was another matter entirely. Although Taft roundly criticized FDR for moving the country close to war—America was spared to date only because Tokyo had decided to "island hop" over U.S. possessions—the new president was concerned about the fate of the Philippines and America's future position in Asia. Seeking to chart a middle ground that would neither alienate his isolationist base nor turn his back on the British as America's battlefield surrogates, he reprised a set of priorities that had been his calling card when he was elected senator. America, he

proclaimed, would continue to remain out of war unless it was attacked. A defensive build-up at home was acceptable if not warranted. Left unsaid was that the construction of ships, boats, and planes—most to be situated, just in case, on the Pacific coast—would aid the American economy. Taft approved a congressional appropriation for 6,000 aircraft, exceeding what FDR had proposed. Finally, “aid to Britain as much as possible” was deemed meritorious, “consistent with the policy of staying out of the war.” Thus, Taft acceded that a narrow-form of lend-lease, to be used solely for the Asian battles, was “deemed necessary to American defense.” Churchill, however, was very unhappy with this arrangement, which left his empire very much endangered. He was even more chagrined when Taft told him at the conclusion of their meetings that in his opinion it would be wise “to contemplate renouncing fighting for some symbolic, but not strategically important, possessions to the Japanese. Such a move, in anticipation of a future peace settlement in Asia, would give the enemy in Tokyo the face it needed to come to terms that would aid all who were concerned with world peace, starting with the U.S.” The prime minister understood that in the end he and his people would have to struggle alone and looked ahead unhappily to several more years of war in Indochina and the Pacific.⁴⁰

Meanwhile in Berlin, Hitler both marveled and was distinctly envious of Japanese victories and the traumas that they had inflicted upon the allies. He described with awe Tokyo’s rapid triumphs in Indochina and beyond as “blitzkriegs” and only wished that the same could have been said about his European battles. But he had no time to dwell on his jealousies as the Western European front wore out his troops and as his Italian compatriots failed to help the Nazis at all. In June 1940, as a good and supportive Axis partner, Mussolini sent some thirty-two divisions up through the Alpine forests and along the Riviera to engage French forces. But Il Duce was humiliated when only six French divisions held off the invaders. His fighters were “halted in front of the first French fortifications which put up some resistance.”⁴¹

Most critically, in 1941–43, the Germans had to expend masses of troops and assign some of the Wehrmacht’s top generals in what proved to be a fruitless effort to bail out the Italians, who failed in their most important mission to occupy and hold North Africa for their alliance.

Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt led across the British-controlled Suez Canal to the Middle East. Victory in the desert would have opened up the region to Axis control, perhaps leading to occupation of oil-rich Iraq and Iran and the fuel essential to their army machine. Still projecting himself as a twentieth-century Caesar, in September 1940 Mussolini sent his troops against weakly defended British outposts in Egypt. After initial successes that drove the English back on their heels in the sand, the resilient British counterattacked in December 1940. By mid-winter 1941, Egypt was free of all Italian troops. It remained for Hitler to send in his army and air force into this new front, pitting his army led by Erwin Rommel, the Fuehrer's favorite general, against the British under General Bernard Law Montgomery. The battle, which sapped Nazi strength, lasted long into 1943 until the Nazis abandoned that engagement. The British, who were weakened, too, by these years of battle, had prevailed and had kept the communication and materiel lines open to the Indochinese front through the crucial Suez Canal. A substantial and enduring triumph had, once again, eluded the Nazis. Nonetheless, Hitler pressed on in the Western European theater.⁴²

While Hitler surveyed his war maps and took counsel both with his closest advisers and even with astrologists in search for the path to ultimate victory, he relegated to tertiary priority German work on a secret wonder weapon that could have done far more than break him out of the quagmires of France and lead him on a march through Paris. Hitler's failure to embrace expanded funding for work on nuclear capabilities proved to be his greatest blunder of the war. Possession of an atomic bomb could have made him the master of Europe and perhaps the entire world. But he failed to see its ultra-dynamic possibilities.

As the war in Europe extended into its fourth year, the loneliness of the Reich, lacking effective allies and worried about paucities in war stockpiles, expressed itself logistically in assigning strict limits to economic expenditures. Thus, the scientists who were working in Germany's atomic energy program were curtailed, since—in the narrow view of the Ministry of Munitions—"the work [studying the use of uranium] is making demands which can be justified in the current . . . raw materials crisis only if there is a certainty of getting some benefit from it in the near future." The researchers knew how unimportant they were, or how sorely

uninformed military leadership was of the potentialities of their labors, when a party hack was appointed to oversee their laboratories. Seeking to raise the profile of atomic endeavors, a scientific research council attempted to take their program to the Nazi inner circle. Hermann Goering, head of the Luftwaffe, Martin Bormann, Hitler's deputy, Heinrich Himmler of the SS, high-ranking generals and admirals, and Albert Speer, the Reich's grand architect, all listened intently when one of the presenters argued that he and his colleagues were "on the track for a weapon that could annihilate whole cities." But when asked for specifics on "how could nuclear physics be applied to the manufacturer of atomic bombs," the scientist waffled in his response, admitting that while "the scientific solution had already been found . . . the technical prerequisites for production would take years to develop, two years at the earliest, even provided that the program was given maximum support." Most important for the future of the program, Hitler had the greatest of reservations. In conversation with Speer, Hitler was not only skeptical about the time and cost benefit of the project, but also "plainly not delighted with the possibility that the earth under his rule might be transformed into a glowing star." He mused that the "scientists in their unworldly urge to lay bare the secrets under heaven might someday set the globe on fire." Though much time would elapse before that possibility might eventuate, Hitler was convinced that "he would certainly not live to see it."⁴³

Unfortunately for Hitler and his Axis allies, in Allied capitals their own secret scientific plans carried much greater weight and the atomic bomb would, in due course, have much to do with the immediate future of the Europe and the world that Hitler dreamed of dominating.

What Really Happened

On September 1, 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland, starting World War II in Europe. The USSR followed suit two weeks later, invading Poland from the east. The German and Soviet campaigns there ended in six weeks. Almost immediately, three million Jews fell into Nazi clutches—six times the number they had controlled and persecuted back in the Reich. Soon random murders and round-ups took place, leading in a few months to the erection of the first ghettos for Jews in Eastern Europe. The Jews of

Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia continued to suffer under the hand of the SS.

During the conquest of the eastern parts of Poland, the Soviets massacred 4,100 Polish officers in Katyn. The murders were later blamed on the Nazis, reports that were largely believed in the West. The executions of thousands of Polish soldiers followed. Stalinism was imposed in the new Russian territories and countless numbers of “counter-revolutionaries” were deported to Siberia. Jews were not singled out for ill treatment, but they suffered wartime deprivations, as did all other Poles.

In the Asian theater in 1939 and to the chagrin of Hitler, the Japanese signed a non-aggression treaty with the Soviets. The Nazis had wanted Stalin to confront the possibility of a two-front war, if and when they decided to invade Russia. Now, their supposed ally had backed away from such a potential conflict. However, with their own northwestern borders seemingly secure, the Japanese focused on their ongoing conquest of China. In Asia, the new Great War had started some three years earlier. Tokyo lusted after the natural resources available within Dutch, British, and American possessions and territories in their region.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1940, Germany successfully invaded Western Europe. Their blitzkrieg operations, quite different from their slow-moving attacks of the Great War, caught the French, Belgians, and Dutch off guard. The Italians joined in with their fascist ally but proved ineffective as a fighting force. Seeking to help their own allies, the British dispatched an expeditionary force to the continent only to have their troops surrounded at Dunkirk with their backs pinned along the English Channel. Miraculously, a flotilla of thousands of boats and ships of every size and description rescued the trapped soldiers, saving Britain to fight another day. On the seas, however, the English more than held their own, inflicting losses on the Italian and German navies. The Nazis marched on Paris, occupying the City of Lights in June 1940, and forced the French to sign an unfavorable armistice agreement. Hitler thus got his revenge for Germany’s defeat in the Great War.

Hitler next trained his eyes on Great Britain, in July 1940, starting with nightly air raids that he hoped would soften the island for a subsequent invasion. Though enduring great losses, the Royal Air Force stymied the Luftwaffe, and the British people, inspired by Prime Minister

Winston Churchill to fight even when they felt most alone, held off the Germans.

The fall of France and the battle of Britain took place as the United States, still neutral and largely isolationist, prepared for the 1940 presidential election. Though seven out of ten Americans as well as members of FDR's inner circle opposed a third term for an incumbent, the president was determined to run. In his view, the course of war developments called him to continue to serve even if he told many of his associates in the months prior to the Democratic convention that he would step down. At the 1940 convention, Paul V. McNutt, with an army of supporters in the gallery, was prepared to have his name placed into nomination for president until he was informed that FDR had decided to seek another term. McNutt called upon his supporters to help Roosevelt. In accordance with his orchestration, FDR was nominated by acclamation. Remarkably, despite the strong isolationist sentiment in the GOP, Wendell Willkie, whose views on foreign policy did not differ much from FDR's, won their nomination. After a spirited campaign in which Willkie criticized FDR's New Deal liberalism but said little against his opponent's careful, measured interventionist stance, Willkie was defeated. But the loser would back FDR's efforts to involve America in support of its allies, most notably Great Britain. Robert A. Taft, who lost out to Willkie at the GOP gathering, returned to the Senate, where he would remain a staunch isolationist.

In the beginning of his third term, FDR attended to the plaintive appeals of Churchill. Lend-lease became a reality and the president clamped down hard on Japanese imperialistic and militaristic objectives, which led his isolationist opponents inside and outside Congress to argue that the incumbent, despite his campaign pledges of "no war for our boys," was leading America into battles against Tokyo, Berlin, and even Rome.

In June 1941, the European war escalated beyond all limits when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Operation Barbarossa brought the Wehrmacht within a short distance of Moscow, Stalingrad, Leningrad, and countless other Russian centers. In 1944, the Soviets began their counteroffensive that ended ultimately with the capture of Berlin in the

spring of 1945. In the end, the strength of Soviet manpower and use of conventional weapons carried the day. Neither side had atomic weapons in their arsenals.

The vicious battles left in their wake millions of military deaths and millions of civilian casualties. In addition, the vast majority of Jews who were ensnared within those parts of Poland and Russia that the Nazis controlled between 1939 and 1945 were murdered. Polish ghettos in the years 1940–1943 led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands, primarily through starvation and disease. When the invasion of the Soviet Union began, mobile killing operations (*Einsatzgruppen*) followed behind the Germany army. In 1941–1942, these elite SS cadres, often assisted by Wehrmacht units, gunned down close to a million and a half Jews. Others were stuffed into vans and died when carbon monoxide was pumped into the back of the cramped vehicles. The Nazi's so-called "Final Solution" began in 1942, along with the deportation of victims from Polish ghettos and eventually from Hungary and other Nazi satellite countries to death camps located primarily in Nazi-occupied Poland. Although a few prisoner revolts hampered SS efficiency, the assembly-line killing in infamous locales such as Treblinka, Sobibor, Majdanek, and Auschwitz lasted until the Nazis and their local accomplices were overrun by Soviet troops on their victorious march toward Berlin.

On December 7, 1941, the United States was brought into the war when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and moved immediately to occupy the Philippines and other American possessions in Asia. Tojo and his allies had won the argument in Tokyo war rooms. America would not be spared the fate of the British and the Dutch. Neutrality ended overnight in the United States and a mighty fortress of freedom began to do battle against the enemy. In the Asian arena, the war would not be a short conflagration but a struggle that lasted some four years with Piccadilly Circus and Times Square united against a common foe. The Americans proved very willing and able to fight, and Japan's worst predictions of a long, drawn-out battle against powerful American industry, technology, and science became their sad and terrible reality. Four days after Pearl Harbor, Hitler declared war on the United States. In 1942, the first American troops took on the Nazis, complementing the British in driving the Germans and

their Italian allies out of North Africa. The next stop would be Sicily, starting in May 1943. Up the boot of Italy the British and Americans would climb until war's end in 1945. In the quest to defeat common foes, the English and U.S. democracies joined uneasily with the Soviet Union. The quest of these Allies was for unconditional surrender of the fascist regimes even as the Russians worried much that their new compatriots would surreptitiously negotiate a separate peace with the Nazis while the Red Army bore the brunt of the battles.

Without the “Boss”

American Jewry’s Concerns, 1940–1944

The Jews of America were dismayed and apprehensive about the outcome of the 1940 presidential election. They were highly perturbed, to begin with, by FDR’s decision not to seek a third term. For eight years, a man who they believed was a true and devoted friend had occupied the White House. One New York rabbi had enthused that when Roosevelt took office in 1933, “the Messiah of America’s future” was now guiding the United States. In most Jewish circles, the sense was that such a joyous prophecy had been fulfilled. Jews had been proud that the president had brought with him to Washington more Jewish advisers and confidants than any prior chief executive. Despite constant antisemitic allegations that the Jews were dominating the president and thus ruling the country, FDR kept officials like Bernard Baruch and Henry Morgenthau within his inner governmental circles. Most important, New Deal social welfare legislation proved that their idol was a great humanitarian. Many Jews believed that the teachings of moderate Jewish socialists in his home state of New York had sensitized FDR to the concerns of the elderly, the dispossessed, and the unemployed. They recognized that his efforts had only contributed to his critics characterizing important federal initiatives as the “Jew Deal.” But Roosevelt, Jews marveled, had stood his ground.

Love for the president was palpable among Jews and was reflected at the ballot box. In the 1932 election, the Democrat garnered close to 85 percent of their votes. In 1936, he did even better, with over 90 percent. Only the most hard-boiled Jewish socialists and doctrinaire communists,

as well as a minority of Jewish Republicans, stood apart from this bond with the White House.

Roosevelt's reticence to embrace the Jewish rescue crisis in the years leading up to the unexpected turnaround at Munich perplexed many of his Jewish supporters. He had not challenged the immigration laws, and in most quarters the Evian Conference was deemed to have been an exercise in diplomatic doubletalk. Moreover, notwithstanding the president's repeated declarations that he and the American people would hold Nazism responsible for its persecution of the Jews, his administration's inactivity brought him down a step from his pedestal as a great humanitarian. But much of the blame was placed at the feet of State Department officials and at a Congress that had no interest in admitting more Jews. The respite in 1938–39 calmed anxious Jewish worries and restored confidence in their leader, since progress was being made in solving the refugee issue. But what of the future? Those German Jews who were still stuck in the Reich remained a source of great concern. Even greater consternation was felt about the fate of those three million Polish Jews now under Soviet domination. When added to the three million Jews who had long suffered cultural deprivation under Stalin, the entire Eastern European community was endangered. Nonetheless, there was a residual optimism that with FDR at the helm, Jewish needs would sooner or later be addressed. However, with their friend in the White House retiring, there was much concern about who might champion their causes.¹

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the head of the American Jewish Congress, was particularly articulate about the end of the Roosevelt "magic" and the "heavenly inspired strength" that he believed FDR possessed. As important, he worried about Jewish access to power once a man whom he privately referred to reverently as "The Boss" was out of office.²

There had been abundant sympathy within Jewish quarters for the McNutt candidacy. He had earned his bona fides during his tenure in the Philippines. Jews were especially pleased that, in the dark days before Munich, he had battled effectively against the U.S. State Department to admit as many Jews as possible into that refuge haven, given the tight immigration strictures. Had American Jews known more about his long-standing pro-Jewish sentiments and statements back home in Indiana, they would have supported him at the ballot boxes with additional fervor.

The wealthy among them would have been very forthcoming with campaign contributions. But on Election Day, McNutt did not ascend to the Oval Office and his Jewish connections turned out to be an electoral albatross. Antisemites, in particular, twisted his close association with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee into proof once again of Jewish control and conspiracy. Even Democratic regulars and political operatives, in the aftermath of the defeat, were wont to blame this issue as having doomed McNutt's candidacy.

Thus, when Robert Taft assumed the presidency in January 1941, American Jews wondered whether this arch-isolationist would be at all attentive to their concerns. Certainly, the Ohioan was no Charles Lindbergh, the darling of the America First movement whose antisemitism was widely feared. Taft also had his own Jewish supporters in his home state who had backed his senatorial and presidential candidacies. But he was not an avowed friend of the Jews. Indeed, early in his career as a fledgling attorney, when Taft considered joining a prominently Jewish law firm, he readily allowed his father, former President and Chief Justice William Howard Taft, to talk him out of such close association with lawyers who did not "stand high enough, or that the kind of business that they do is what you like."³ The young man listened to the advice. Such also was the tenor of social exclusion of the time at the upper-class Connecticut prep school Taft had attended, as well as Yale University and Harvard Law School. Most important, Jews were apprehensive that they might be punished in the coming administration not only for their support of McNutt, but for their alleged funding of Willkie during the hotly contested Republican convention. Joseph P. Kennedy surely was on the scene to stoke continuing suspicions of the Jews and their motives. Jews also took note that during the struggle for the White House, Taft had not put clear distance between himself and Kennedy's anti-Jewish campaign.

But while Jews in the United States carefully watched and cautiously gauged the new president's sympathy for oppressed Jews under totalitarian regimes overseas, they also worried about their own place in America's supposedly open society. For all their efforts to fit in, almost everywhere Jews turned they confronted barriers to their full acceptance. In other words, the ongoing problem of social antisemitism of the 1930s, separate and apart from what was transpiring aboard, still plagued them, though

the Jewish refugee issue was not on everyone's lips. Even if a Jew was not hypersensitive about disparaging gentile remarks and actions, newspapers and magazines were there to remind them of their marginality.

For example, *Fortune* magazine and other such media outlets were quick to publicize American opinion polls about Jews. Though this pulse taking was used originally to predict electoral contests, editors and publishers found that their subscribers bought editions that spoke about Jews. The questions frequently offended American Jews. The answers disturbed them much more.

When queried, all too many Americans found "qualities objectionable in Jews." In 1940, 51 percent perceived Jews as "unscrupulous." Another 20 percent focused with disdain on their "aggressiveness." So many of the Americans polled believed that this minority group was exceedingly greedy and would do whatever it took to seize control of businesses even if that meant using "dishonest or questionable means." Such canards certainly were not new. Jews had suffered such attacks throughout the ages. But now, more than ever before in America, the word on the street was that Jews were out to "control business, property, and finance," according to the polls. From there it did not take a long leap of faith for Christians to discern that Jews—deemed clannish as always, and perhaps even conspiratorial to a fault—had "too much power in the United States." That was the recorded view of close to one-half of Americans surveyed in the first two years of the new Taft administration.⁴

It thus made a whole lot of difference to Christians whether Jews worked alongside them. In surveys from April 1940 and December 1942, more than four out of ten Americans said they did not like the idea of laboring in the same industry with Jews. Rarely were Jews, the pollsters found, "credited with the typical workman's virtues: discipline, reliability, and unquestioning obedience to orders." Over and again, Christians spoke about Jewish unscrupulousness and hyper-aggressiveness. Although thankfully, for American Jews, such perceived negative proclivities made very few Christians ready to support "a campaign against Jews," it did not mean that they necessarily wanted a Jew living next door. Looking ahead to the next generation, a full quarter of Americans were content with the idea that colleges had the right to restrict the number of Jews admitted, regardless of their abilities. Aggressiveness in pursuing academic goals

was held against them. Reading these reports, Jews were made keenly aware of how intolerant America was.⁵

Then there were the avowed haters of Jews who would never let go of the idea that Jews and interventionism were synonymous and who held fast to their canard that Jews had done their utmost to undermine America through the "socialist" New Deal. Antisemites were also sure to allege that if America were drawn into war, Jews would be the last to line up and serve as patriots. Joseph P. Kennedy's inferences were typically refined, albeit sly and disingenuous. Such gentility was totally absent from Father Charles Coughlin, who was still warning America about Jews, the British, and the prospects of war even if FDR had retired. In the early days of the Taft administration, Coughlin opted to warn the new chief executive, as an Irish "Dutch uncle" might do, that he should hold true to isolationist principles and not surround himself with Jews.

Jew-hating Protestant minister Gerald L.K. Smith not only shared Coughlin's point of view but went further still: he threatened that he would undermine Taft's electoral base if the president were to steer one iota from an unflinching isolationist stance or let the Jews control the White House as he said they had done under FDR. He boasted that he could form a nationalist party that would protect American interests against "merchants of death," "enigmatic financiers," and "war promoters," with a coalition of famous Americans that would start with Lindbergh and also include former Great War flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker, the respected Senator Gerald P. Nye, and perhaps even the rabidly antisemitic leader of the Silver Shirts, William Dudley Pelley. Smith conspired to have the America First Committee morph into an America First Party that would unite and energize all former Roosevelt-haters, "Jew baiters, Anglophobes, and Russo-phobes." If Taft did not make sure that "the poor man's taxes [not be used] to save the British Empire," Smith warned that he would personally take the battle into American streets.

Ultimately, in 1944, Smith made good on his threat when, notwithstanding Taft having successfully kept America at peace, he ran for president as a member of the America First Party on a platform that not only warned Americans that the incumbent was weak on national security but explicitly recognized a "Jewish Problem" in America. The new party called for an investigation into the "role of Jews in Communism, the media, and

the New Deal.” FDR’s overarching governmental social construct was, for Smith, a “Jewish blot on American Freedom” that now, with the dictatorial Roosevelt out of office, had to be rolled back. In the end, the White House deemed Smith and others of his ilk to be but menacing annoyances, and Taft ran on his peace record. But the Jews in America were hard-pressed to ignore what these noisy haters were constantly saying about them.⁶

Given these troubling atmospherics at home, the sad recognition that nothing could be done for Jews in the greater Reich, and great uncertainty about the future of those under Russian control, American Jewish leaders divined that until the president made clear how truly isolationist he intended to be, the first years of the Taft administration were not the right time for any special pleadings on behalf of European Jews. But should that wait-and-see attitude also apply to the status of Palestine?

Since late 1938, under the favorable terms of the Churchill Compromise, Palestine had declined as a critical world pressure point even though it became a prime refuge for Jews. The 25,000 Jews who arrived almost immediately in 1938 were complemented by 60,000 or more in 1939, and others were in transit or had been settled in 1940. Was it time now, Zionist leaders in Palestine contemplated, to make good on their hyperbolic statements that the Jewish state was in the making? Revisionist Zionists—that faction of the Jewish nationalist movement that was most outspoken in arguing for Palestinian Jewish independence in the here and now—felt in 1941 that with the British Empire in disarray, that the hour had come to make a dramatic move. Significantly, these followers of Vladimir (Zev) Jabotinsky, both prior to Munich and even in its aftermath, had been the Jewish nationalists most distrustful of the Mandatory power. Testifying before the Peel Commission in 1937, Jabotinsky had said testily that if the British were incapable of living up to their international obligations, “we will sit down together and think what we can do.” He also stridently accused Zionist leaders who advocated compromise that they were giving up “nine-tenths of Jewish national territory” to the Arabs at a time when European Jewry needed a haven and, more than a homeland, a state. In his view, Jews had the historic right to lands and territories on both sides of the Jordan River, not the divided map that British and other world diplomats had drawn.⁷

When Chamberlain and Churchill suddenly changed English Middle Eastern policy, Jabotinsky was as surprised as anyone, but he was gratified, as were all Zionist leaders. However, with his preternatural suspicion of the non-Jewish world, he still worried how long this pro-Jewish Palestine stance would hold. So in the months prior to his death in August 1940, he made clear to his devoted followers that they should push for the consummate goal of statehood.

Peter Bergson, a Jabotinsky disciple par excellence, heard these orders loud and clear. In the spring of 1941 he traveled to London, fought through a bevy of security and diplomatic barriers, and laid out an imaginative, secret, and dramatic idea that first shocked and then fascinated Churchill. The prime minister was inured to hearing unconventional ideas from Revisionists. Back in 1937, as a decision on the Peel Commission report was being weighed in the House of Commons, Churchill had met Bergson's mentor and been intrigued by his eloquent radicalism. Indeed, Jabotinsky's articulate opposition to partition convinced Churchill that the Peel recommendations would be a disaster, and he proceeded to draft his own compromise, which became British policy after Munich. Looking back at that critical turning point, Jabotinsky would reflect "without undue pride . . . that the defeat of the partition scheme in the House of Commons was to a considerable extent assisted by our own work. This is not my opinion alone."⁸

Now, in 1941, the young Palestinian Jew argued that the prime trouble spot for the empire was certainly not in the Middle East or even in Europe but in Asia. The Italians had been pushed back in North Africa and while German relief was on the way, Downing Street could have confidence in General Montgomery. The western front was still shifting back and forth. But in the interim, the Japanese were making immense strides in Asia. What Bergson proposed was that an army of Palestinian Jews under Revisionist control be dispatched to where British needs were the most profound, to East Asia and Indochina. Some reserve units, explicitly loyal to the Crown, would stay in Palestine. Bergson's ultimate goals were clear. If Jews had an army, ipso facto, they would have their commonwealth.

Churchill feared what this plan might do to shaky relations with the Arabs. He worried particularly of Egyptian reaction: could he sustain their loyalty, even if right now the Suez Canal was secured? Just as important,

the English needed a continuing flow of petroleum from the Anglo-Persian Company's reserves to keep British war ships afloat and engaged. Nonetheless, the prime minister did not rule out of hand Bergson's suggestion that he could rally American Jewry to more actively support the empire's cause. Sagaciously, Bergson spoke of the Great War of 1914–1918, where presumed Jewish influence over Wilson had impressed Downing Street's policy makers. The Revisionists claimed that he had the charisma and connections to bring American Jews around. While Churchill was keenly aware that Jewish power had decreased in the United States, he believed that it was conceivable that a "conciliated" American Jewry could "aid in combating isolationist and indeed anti-British tendencies in the United States." Thus, he was willing to give Bergson the opportunity to prove his diplomatic mettle, among his own people in America. He told Bergson confidentially that if American Jewish money and influence were brought into play, the Jewish army *quid pro quo* would be given the highest consideration. He mused to himself that he would, if necessary, put off the Arabs with a suggestion that Jews fighting under a blue and white flag in Asia did not a commonwealth make. Adopting the longstanding British policy that had been tested in the 1920s and 1930s, he would work to buy time and preach "equality of obligation" to both sides. Meanwhile, encouraged and enthusiastic, Bergson set off for New York to build support for his army. His endeavor turned out to be a quixotic mission.⁹

Though Bergson projected to Churchill an image of a united American Jewry, a vision that fed deeply into British stereotypes, Bergson knew that garnering widespread support for his plan and for his faction's administration of the army was fraught with difficulties. He knew all too well of the roadblocks that had been placed in front of Jabotinsky just a year earlier when he had come to the United States to rally his troops and establish a financial base for Revisionism. Still, Bergson persevered while his opponents rolled out again the welter of criticisms that had undermined Jabotinsky. The calmest critiques emanated from the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs—a combine that had brought together leaders of most of the domestically based Jewish nationalist groups. The Revisionists, they contended, were "seeking to duplicate or parallel" their work on behalf of a Jewish state. Surely, these outsiders projected an exciting plan, but it was ultimately unrealistic and would never gain world

acceptance. In its wake, these interlopers were weakening Zionism's position. In the Emergency Committee's view, Zionists had to keep the international community mindful of the "final goal of the movement which is statehood" but not to press the case too hard during wartime. When the moment was ripe, those who had established longstanding and solid relationships with government would lead the way.

Behind the scenes, Stephen S. Wise and Nahum Goldmann representing the American and World Jewish Congress and Louis Lipsky from the Zionist Organization of America authorized far more vitriolic efforts to quiet, discredit, or intimidate Bergson's supporters. In many cases, the internecine Jewish battles that ensued were as much personal as organizational and conceptual. The Americans resented a Palestinian Jew arrogating to lead their community. They were deeply appalled by Bergson's frequent assertions that these men, who saw themselves as the community's respected caretakers, were rather an unfeeling "oligarchy" that did not have the best interests of the Jewish people at heart. In less angrier moments, the longstanding leadership reminded all who might listen that American Jewry was sailing in uncharted territory. The man whom they trusted, FDR, was out of power. Who knew what the reaction of the isolationist Taft might be to a plan—if American-based money were involved—that could be construed as a way whereby the Jews were altering the balances of power in Asia? This course of action, isolationists would contend, might eventually lead an angered Tokyo to bring America into the war.

To counteract the Revisionists, the Emergency Committee used its considerable pull to quiet Anglo and Yiddish journalists who were displaying a "hospitable" attitude toward the foreigners. A special fund was even created to underwrite "anti-Revisionist literature." Those who signed on with Bergson, or even "unofficially" expressed sympathy for an alternative leadership, were attacked and in some cases threatened to lose his or her livelihood if they did not dissociate from the Bergson group.

Though deeply chagrined, these calumnies did not really surprise Bergson. In his view, Wise, Goldmann, Lipsky, and their subordinates with their underhanded efforts were just carrying water for David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann, who, as leaders of the Yishuv, had a long history of seeking to discredit Jabotinsky and his followers. Bergson, therefore, stuck to his guns and attempted to enlist "groups of people who [had] previously

been indifferent to Zionism and non-Jews of high social and political position.” He looked to attract celebrity spokespeople. Bringing Ben Hecht on board was a fine coup. The Broadway and Hollywood playwright talked up the cause with actors, producers, comedians, and others with immediate public recognition that they hoped would create a Jewish and larger American groundswell of support. On the political stage, Bergson and his associates found common cause with a score of national representatives, starting with a devout Mormon, Senator Elbert Thomas of Utah, who was known to opine that “your heroes are my heroes.”

Going beyond reaching out to celebrities and politicians, Bergson also accepted the support of the notorious. Hollywood underworld figure Mickey Cohen loved the “idea of Jews ready to knock the hell out of all the bums in the world”: a bit of hyperbole, but a statement that tough Jews liked to hear. New York gangster Meyer Lansky put up money for the cause because he liked the scenario of Jews in their own uniforms, but also because he resented terribly how men like Wise had treated him. Lansky would tell anyone who would listen how, in the mid- to late 1930s, “commandos” from his mob, Murder Inc., had broken up German-American Bund rallies in Yorkville, Ridgewood, Queens, and Staten Island. But to his great chagrin, his “paramilitary efforts” received no credit from respectable Jewish leaders for his stand on the community’s behalf: “They wanted the Nazis taken care of but were afraid to do the job themselves.” Lansky continued: “I did it for them. And when it was over they called me a gangster. No one ever called me a gangster until Rabbi [Stephen S.] Wise and the Jewish leaders called me.” He thus empathized with Bergson, an outsider too, who had difficulties with those who jealously held on to control of the Jewish community. Lansky’s \$25,000 contribution helped Bergson put together several rallies and paid for the peripatetic Revisionist deputations to both legislators and the beautiful people on Broadway and the Sunset Strip.¹⁰

Bergson’s largest problem, however, was with galvanizing American Jewry’s rank and file. Ironically, it was the same dilemma that perplexed the efforts of American Zionist leaders whom he opposed. The two groups did not compare notes. But they shared the unhappy fate that neither contingent had been able to gain enduring traction for the cause. In recruiting participants for a rally or demonstration, Bergson counted mostly upon

foot soldiers from Brooklyn's Zionist and Orthodox communities. The Revisionists' largest support came from among that minority of second-generation American Jews whose connection to their people and traditions was far stronger than most Jews. These often nameless activists were the committed that would go door to door to solicit signatures on petitions, asking also for a dollar's contribution to the movement. They were also ready and willing to ride the subways to Manhattan to express their pride in Zionist assertiveness. However, Bergson's cachet among the Orthodox was far from completely compelling. If anything, the streets of Flatbush, Williamsburg, and Boro Park resounded with arguments between the "moderns"—they called themselves "Religious Zionists"—who believed that it was not only permissible but warranted for Jews to do their utmost to assist the Almighty in reestablishing Jewish sovereignty in their ancestral land, and "old-line" Orthodox who held to the medieval belief that God alone will save Israel.¹¹

Elsewhere in America, Zionism, whether it was Bergson's or Wise's version, did not garner much of a sustained hearing. Among Reform Jews, a discernible dichotomy of interest prevailed. In 1937, in the very dark days before Munich, a small majority of its rabbis, meeting in Columbus, Ohio, had gone on the record as supporting "the rehabilitation of Palestine" as a refuge providing "the promise of new hope for our brethren" and affirmed "the obligation of all Jewry in its building a haven for the oppressed."¹² Some of the delegates were disciples of Wise, young, enthusiastic, Jewish nationalists who had earned their rabbinical degrees at his pro-Zionist school, the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. Other, older rabbis who had been trained at the once decidedly anti-Zionist Reform institution, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, came on board because of the growing refugee crisis in Europe. But their affinity for the cause did not carry over widely to the men and women in the pews.

Early in the 1930s, the Reform national congregational association had taken a long, hard look at constituents' religious values in the eleven largest U.S. cities. This examination of Jews, including those of German descent, and first- and second-generation Eastern European Jews who identified with their movement, revealed that only one out of five members called themselves Zionists. Some belonged to the Zionist Organization of America or Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization. But the culture

of Zionism and, more importantly, the fate of the movement were not a prominent part of most temple members' lives. The overwhelming majority had no facility with or interest in Hebrew, the linguistic lifeblood of the movement. If and when they came together to discuss Jewish issues or topics, they were far more likely to focus on what was going on with their local Federation of Jewish Charities than on events in the Middle East. Almost everyone had a stake in their "hospitals, Old Folks Homes, Orphan Asylums etc.," not to mention the activities at the "Jewish city or country club," especially in towns where many "Gentiles-only" clubs would never admit them. Fear of antisemitism at home was a more pressing concern—along with unending gossip about temple politics, the most popular topic almost everywhere—than "problems connected to Palestine." In the years that followed, as Hitlerism entered the international scene, the availability of the Jewish homeland for refugees became more of a point of discussion around dining rooms and kitchen tables. Still, in the late 1930s, even those rabbis who at their national convention were most supportive of the nationalist cause realized that there was much work to be done among their laity back home.¹³

Whatever tension and interest that the refugee crisis evoked among Reform laity declined after what some started to call the "Miracle in Munich." The statehood question was far from a priority for these very Americanized Jews. It was sufficient that the British had widened Palestine's gates for those in dire need. If lay people were thinking through foreign policy issues in the years after 1938, they were discussing—like so many of their fellow citizens—what level of support might this safe and secure country grant its best allies, short of leading America into a war. What American Jews should do, advised Irving Lehrman in 1939, was to pray for a year of peace. This head of the Jewish Welfare Board, with his close connections to the U.S. military through its support of chaplaincy, reminded his fellow Jews that "our President has called upon all Americans to cooperate in keeping America out of the war [and] in loyalty and love of country, we shall give that cooperation."¹⁴ Two years later, under Taft, Jews certainly were not interested in throwing support behind a Jewish army. If there was to be a Jewish state, it would evolve in due course. There was much frank apprehension that the most feared canard—dual loyalty—would be leveled at their community. Gentiles might well presume "that

the Jewish army is intended to be composed of Jewish citizens in America, thus raising questions which did not exist of the loyalty of Jews to their country, mischievous in their effect on the status of America Jews.”¹⁵

So disposed, and clearly reflecting their rank and file's viewpoint, when a group of staunchly Zionist Reform rabbis proposed a resolution at the 1942 gathering of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in support for a Jewish army, they were roundly defeated. The failed effort was unable to “add . . . voice to the demand that the Jewish population of Palestine be given the privilege of establishing a military force which will *fight under its own banner*.” Worried from the outset that significant and articulate opposition would come their way, the advocates had brought the resolution to the floor of the conference for consideration only when 102 of the 236 men who were registered were present. But even then, with the room half-packed, with those most sympathetic to the controversial resolution, the Zionist Reform rabbis lost by a tally of 64–38. Disaffected from their colleagues, those outvoted broke with the Central Conference of American Rabbis and established their decidedly nationalist organization, the American Reform Council for Zionism. Rabbi Wise and the forceful Zionist senior rabbi from Cleveland, Abba Hillel Silver, were elected co-honorary chairmen.¹⁶

These most forceful Zionist efforts lost because missing from Reform Jews and their rabbis, and, for that matter, from most American Jews' consciousness, was any sense that European Jewry was facing impending doom. With Palestine open though not yet a Jewish commonwealth, that nightmare possibility—of destruction and no place for the afflicted to go, which could have been a call to action from the pulpit for mass activity—had not become reality. After all, by 1942, it had been a decade since Hitler had come to power, with all his threats and his dictatorial machinery that surely had made life miserable for Jews. Moreover, Goebbels's state-managed media veiled precisely what now was being done to the Jews—largely the aged and infirm who remained in the Reich. Foreign journalists now were generally not welcome in war-torn Germany. Most European Jews—close to six million of them—lived under the control of the Soviet Union. True, they could not get out. However, their spiritual and cultural endangerment—but not physical existence—was not new even if the population of Jews under the Hammer and Sickle had doubled

in 1939. Jews had suffered under communism since 1917 and who knew what the future would bring? The Russians' own controlled media did not help either; only meager and unreliable information would emanate from its sources.

Devoid of the most compelling imagery of Jews destined for death, Bergson, for all his enthusiasm for a vision of powerful Jews on the march, had great trouble filling his demonstration venues. Ben Hecht could write him a dramatic script. Leonard Bernstein would compose a moving cantata; Vincent Price might cast a dour look in reading his lines accompanied by the still-attractive Stella Adler from the old Yiddish theater and Hollywood's Jane Wyatt. But the masses, largely concerned with their own local Jewish issues, did not evince pride in the prospect of uniformed Jews with guns and the Star of David affixed to their sleeves, which Bergson had envisioned as the nascent army of a future Jewish state in Palestine. At the end of 1942, a downcast Revisionist head returned to Palestine convinced that a surely flaccid, perhaps intimidated, and possibly selfish American Jewry could not be counted on to support his cause.¹⁷

Meanwhile, rabbis who ministered to this community preferred to speak of a continuing communal malaise. The Spiritual Depression of the 1930s had not lifted. Speaking to his colleagues in 1941, Louis Mann told his conference of Reform rabbis that the "movement has not grown in the United States in proportion to the Jewish population or in proportion to its opportunities." He complained that "no sufficient effort has been made to keep Reform alive and alert, creating ever larger opportunities." Ironically, he contended that he and his associates erroneously believed that "the spread of [general] education and the liberal atmosphere of the American scene would naturally cause Jews to leave orthodoxy behind."

Orthodox leaders complained similarly in their own circles that their sanctuaries were also more than half-empty. Furthermore, those who did show up did not come close to living up to that traditional movement's strictures. In 1944, a Midwestern rabbi lamented that the only times he saw most of his congregants was when they ventured in for the three "Y"s: *Yomtov* [holidays, usually the High Holidays], *Yizkor* [the memorial prayer recited on holidays], and *Yahrzeit* [the anniversary of the death of a close relative]. Rarely could he or other observers of the Orthodox scene find

"devout, observing Jews to whom the service is sacred and to whom the synagogue is the House of God."¹⁸

Conservative Judaism was doing no better. Speaking to his colleagues of the Rabbinical Assembly of America in 1940, Rabbi Max Arzt said regretfully that "we fail to see evident signs of a spiritual awakening. . . . Synagogue attendance has to be artificially stimulated . . . and Jewish community life is dominated by escapist elements who are determined to live a non-Jewish life among Jews since the world will not permit them formally to desert their people." The "Back to Synagogue" effort of the mid-1930s had not caught on. In other words, except for some pockets of commitment—as before, Brooklyn's Orthodox stood out in their fidelity to the faith—leaders of all denominations complained that there were few truly devoted Jews in America.¹⁹

Thus, in the 1940s, to the extent Jewish life in America had a strong pulse, its vibrancy was felt in the informal neighborhood experience or in friendly, family relationships. In so many places Jews still resided and worked collectively—social antisemitism played its negative role in keeping Jews together—but Jewish involvements were minimal as they focused on their personal concerns and lived out their lives in an uncertain American environment. These grassroots elements, which no one had effectively cultivated, lacked energy and enthusiasm to stand up for a Jewish cause.

Luckily, Zionist leaders, bereft of a committed nationwide rank and file, found an unexpected friend in President Taft. In actuality, support for Zionism intersected with one of the president's longstanding positions: the necessity of keeping America's doors closed to immigration. Ironically, the very issue that encumbered the Jewish community a generation earlier now turned around most favorably as the president supported a Jewish Palestine. For Taft, it had never been antipathy toward Jews but rather his unyielding perception of American needs that had led him to argue while still a senator that the "United States' . . . unfortunate experience with immigration [had made him] loath to vote for any modification of the policy." As a staunch fiscal conservative, he had counted out, with dismay, the potentially huge sums of governmental monies that would be spent on newcomers in a New Deal era of scarce employment and on millions already here needing welfare assistance. He thus called early on for the

world community to place refugees “in a distant site” and subsequently approved of the rejection of the Peel Commission of 1937 and applauded the Churchill Compromise, though he was wary of Arab reactions. But it remained for Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver to help his fellow Ohioan take the logical, if dramatic, next step of supporting a Jewish commonwealth. That day, of course, would not come immediately but would arrive eventually—if the president had a compelling say—once the European and Asian imbroglios resided.²⁰

Despite Silver’s respect for the sincerity of Bergson’s efforts, he was no supporter of the Jewish army plan. The politically astute rabbi knew that such aggressiveness might be deal breakers for any potential agreement with Taft. Silver cajoled Bergson to “join our activities . . . [and] integrate our work” in establishing a united Zionist front in America.

Turning back to enlisting the president for the cause, Silver’s convincing argument was that a Jewish state would eliminate—or at least mute—any future calls for Jewish immigration to America. There might still be German, Austrian, and Czech Jews who after Hitler’s fall would surely desire a new start in a new land. Then there was the yet-to-be-determined fate of East European Jews falling under Soviet control. Palestine and not America, Taft was reassured, would be the ideal place for those who could get out. In other words, a positive stance toward a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine had to be on the White House’s agenda.²¹

So persuasive was the rabbi’s pitch that Taft was willing to move off dead center from his most renowned position—isolationism. The president had been consistent in asserting, as late as 1943, that no country “should insist on interfering with the internal affairs of other nations unless it is prepared to submit to the same interference itself.” Yet here the United States would be dictating policy toward an ally, Great Britain. Silver underscored two compelling factors that carried the day and set the course for the future. First, he pledged that with the president’s strong position in favor of Zionism, he would help Taft break the Democratic hold on the Jewish support that had passed from FDR to McNutt and, it seemed, would continue to the next Democratic nominee. Rather than punish the Jews for their former political predisposition, Taft was convinced to court them, looking forward to the 1944 campaign. As *prima*

facie evidence, Silver reminded the president how he had helped him win past elections. In 1940, the candidate had made a resounding speech from Silver's own pulpit in Cleveland. In truth, it was uncertain whether Silver could deliver future votes. Far more important was the fact that the Republican believed that the Jewish influence at the polls was real. As critical, Silver was able to reassure the isolationist spokesman that his nation's actions would not end up with American boys fighting in the Middle East. With the British in control of the area and with the Italians, to Hitler's unending chagrin, in disarray in North Africa, Arab loyalties were declining in importance for the region's stability. Taft was led to believe that if "a small Jewish state" were to be established, the "Arabs would . . . be unable to make any effective protest." Thinking about the British, he knew that American political and diplomatic arrogations would not sit very well on Downing Street. But, projecting forward, that ally might be amenable to resolving this festering conflict while the British were occupied so grievously holding off the Japanese in Asia. As he cajoled and negotiated with his "boss," Silver was far from adverse to brag within American Jewish leadership circles that someone other than Stephen S. Wise had the ear of a president. And Silver's chief executive was still in office.²²

Ironically, as 1944 began, Palestinian Jews' greatest support in the United States came not from the masses of Diaspora brethren but from a president who, due to the intercession of a well-connected Zionist spokesman, had become sympathetic for his own ideological and political reasons to the rightness of the Zionist cause. While the allegiance of the most powerful ally was now aligned, however, the actual move toward the rise of the State of Israel would await a series of dramatic and unanticipated shifts in the European balance of power and developments in the Asian war theater.

What Really Happened

During his third term, as a wartime president, Roosevelt continued to have the trust of most American Jews and their leaders even as the almost incomprehensible reports of the murder of millions of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe filtered into the United States. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise

retained his confidence in the president, though he had his moments of doubts and certainly distrusted the motives, activities, and lethargy of operatives in the State and War Departments. Most Jewish arguments were countered by officials' allegations that they were doing all that was possible to save Jews and that American Jews could best assist the endangered by participating enthusiastically, with their fellow citizens, in the war effort.

Although Jews as loyal, patriotic Americans went off to war en masse—more than a half-million Jewish GIs fought in the European and Asian operations—they were often accused of shirking their duties. For example, a biting piece of contemporaneous folk humor had it that while the first American killed at Pearl Harbor was named Hennessey and the first American to give his life for his nation in the swamps of Guadalcanal proudly carried the name O'Brien, the first American to scrounge his way to get four new tires during a time of national rationing of rubber was Abraham Lipshitz. That was but one of the canards that avowed antisemites such as Coughlin, Smith, and others leveled at Jews, along with allegations that Jews still controlled FDR. Smith did mount a weak third-party candidacy against Roosevelt. FDR brushed off that nuisance and focused on defeating Republican Thomas Dewey. Social, occupational, residential antisemitism continued to grow in America, continuing the trend that was so regnant in the 1930s.

In 1940, Peter Bergson arrived in the United States, initially to promote the concept of a Jewish army ready to fight under its own flag, not only in Asia but in all areas of Allied military operations. The Churchill government concerned with Arab allegiances was none too supportive of the plan even as the war in North Africa, with American assistance, had turned favorably for the Allies. There was no support within FDR's circle for discussing this non-issue with the British. While in America, Bergson became keenly aware of the dimensions of the Holocaust then being perpetrated in Europe and switched the focus of his group's advocacy. Perceiving the Wise-led Jewish establishment as unwilling forcefully to challenge FDR and his administration, Bergson and his followers set off to rouse American Jews and their Christian friends to protest governmental malfeasance. With the issue of rescue his prime concern, Bergson enlisted the help of celebrities—Ben Hecht was a particularly strong supporter—to

help him stage dramatic protest meetings designed to embarrass the White House into greater activity on behalf of European Jews. The Revisionists' most impactful effort was a pageant, "We Will Never Die," performed first in Madison Square Garden and then across the country, including at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. The Bergson Boys, as they became known—although women were also part of his cohort—also ran angry advertisements in major American newspapers, again to push FDR and his reluctant assistants. After the war, when the Revisionists turned their attention back toward pushing the British out of Palestine and demanding a Jewish state, Bergson enlisted some underworld figures to help him. Meyer Lansky, whose tough guys had intimidated the German-American Bund in the 1930s, hated Wise for calling him a gangster, and he retained that animus until his own death several decades later.

In 1943, a group of Orthodox rabbis acted much like the Bergsonites and, with their assistance, marched on Washington demanding action from FDR and Congress. Meanwhile, Wise and his groups also staged more respectable campaigns to alert Americans of the destruction in Europe and to cajole the president, whom they believed ultimately had Jewish interests at heart, to make every conceivable effort to save Jews. Bergson, of course, did not trust the president. The Orthodox rabbis who descended on Washington were not as overt and articulate in their own distrust of the gentile world.

While most American Jews on the homefront during the war were concerned first with the fate of their own loved ones in the service, and like all Americans did their utmost to support the war effort, to the extent that they occupied themselves with Jewish affairs beyond their own localities they were mightily concerned with the fate of the doomed Jews in Europe. Both Wise and Bergson were able to muster large crowds for their very different types of rallies. One barrier to even greater mass participation in the protests was the lack of believability of the magnitude of destruction. The mainstream media was far from helpful. For example, although the *New York Times* published during World War II some 1,147 stories about the murder of civilians and other Nazi atrocities, rarely was the persecution and extermination of the Jews highlighted. That myopia persisted up to and including the moments in 1945 when American troops liberated the Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps.

Nevertheless, the trauma of the Holocaust and the plight of refugees unable to enter Palestine under the 1939 infamous White Paper decree was clearly on the minds of enough Reform rabbis when they gathered at their Central Conference of American Rabbis convention to support the Biltmore Conference declaration of May 1942. At that Manhattan hotel, 600 delegates from every American and world Zionist organization, with Wise in the chair and Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, and David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency, in attendance, demanded that “the gates of Palestine be opened.” Three years had passed since the infamous British White Paper of 1939 limited Jewish immigration to Palestine. The gathering proclaimed “that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.” The majority of Reform rabbinical delegates also assented to Biltmore’s “Jewish Army Resolution” that called upon the allies to allow the “Jewish population of Palestine . . . to establish a military force which will fight under its own flag.” The Reform Zionist activists who pushed for their movement to align with Zionism won by a 64–38 vote, at a moment when fewer than half of those eligible to vote were in their seats. Bergson, who was not really connected to the Reform rabbinate, was only partially satisfied with this victory. The CCAR advocates had in mind a Jewish army based in Palestine but under British command even if it flew a blue and white flag. By 1942, such a scenario was endorsed by Wise, Weizmann, and the others whom Bergson regularly battled and belittled. The Revisionists desired a 200,000-man fighting force from Palestine and Europe, independent of British control. Still, Bergson might have been gratified that his early promotions, which back in 1940 raised the hackles of American Jewish leadership and evoked fears of dual allegiance charges, had become more legitimate publicly, including among those Zionist-leaning Reform rabbis. In the end, no Jewish army proposal gained the approval of the allies.

But the CCAR effort earned its promoters the unending antipathy of those colleagues who were outvoted. Many of those anti-Zionists abandoned the CCAR and established their own group, the American Council for Judaism. Despite the victory of those identified as “Neo-Reform” rabbis, it would take time for Zionism to be part-and-parcel of Reform teachings on the congregational level.

Robert Taft, who had failed in 1940 to gain the GOP nomination for president, remained a major power in the Senate and a continuing strident voice against interventionism. Yet, when it came to Zionism, he was an early and consistent supporter of a Jewish state and was one of the key architects of the 1944 Republican platform that called for "a free and democratic Commonwealth" in Palestine. New York governor Thomas Dewey ran comfortably on the plank in 1944 and 1948. FDR supported a comparable Democratic Party statement in 1944, as did his successor Harry S. Truman in 1948. Taft's advocacy for Zionism had much to do with the intercession of Rabbi Silver, who tapped into the senator's anti-immigration sentiment as well as Taft's own revulsion over the murder of Jews in Europe. Silver also was sure to remind the senator of how helpful he and the Ohio Jewish community had been in Taft's own reelection campaign in 1944. Within the Jewish community, Silver was a voice against those who advocated only for the Democratic Party, a position he believed limited Jewish political clout and options. Taft would continue to support Zionism and Israel well into the 1950s while opposing many other international-looking initiatives of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

The Eastern European Threat and an End to U.S. Isolationism, 1944–1945

Before they went to war in 1938, the German propaganda machine filled the newspapers and radio airways with depictions of the Fuehrer as “the master of all problems facing the nation.” Under Goebbels’s sway, the controlled media projected Hitler as the “symbol of the nation” who had reestablished German honor and properly reordered their society, economy, and culture. Looking ahead, it was said that if war came Germany’s way, Hitler’s “toughness, severity, and unshakable determination in pursuit of far-sighted goals” would lead the Reich to victory. As the embodiment of the people, this once “ordinary foot soldier” possessed an unparalleled if not God-given gift for understanding the dynamics of war. So convinced were some Nazi Party members that they would be guided toward glorious triumph if called upon to fight that in the early 1930s one new recruit proudly allowed that “there is only one thing for me, either to win with Adolf Hitler or to die for him.” Hitler’s generals, on the other hand, were never convinced of the purported military genius of a man whom they derisively called “the Austrian corporal.”¹

Such dismissiveness of Hitler stemmed back to the views of their own Great War icon, General Paul Von Hindenburg, who viscerally disliked and distrusted the young chancellor. In the early years, Hitler’s successes in reviving Germany and his bloodless victories on foreign fronts earned him some grudging respect from the military. But then came the 1938 adventure in Czechoslovakia and the widely held view among high-ranking officers that this “act of aggression . . . would inevitably precipitate a war which in the long

run would be disastrous to Germany." Even Hermann Goering, head of the Luftwaffe and publicly so devoted to Hitler, joined the quiet chorus of questioners when, in 1940, he spoke of the possibility of short-circuiting the military campaign through a treaty with Belgium. Nonetheless, in the few years that followed, even as the war that German men and women on the street were quietly calling "*Sein Kampf*"—his endless, worthless struggle—dragged on, the army's leadership stayed tacitly in line with the diminished Fuehrer. However, there was increased skeptical chatter and profound apprehension that disaster awaited the German people.²

By 1944, Nazi dreams of glory were being dashed as the French–Low Country and German lines of ground warfare shifted east and then west with no discernible progress achieved, but with the loss of thousands of soldiers on either side. In the air, the Luftwaffe was venturing to hit its enemies but the Allies were responding in kind. Meanwhile, those around Hitler were noticing how his frustration over the fighting was plunging the leader to increasingly erratic behavior. Violent verbal outbursts at those closest to him punctuated his loss of control. It was not the loss of civilian life that brought him to a boiling point as much as it was German cities in rubble. What made the situation even less tolerable was the incompetence of his allies. Italian "adventurism," as Hitler characterized it, into Greece late in 1940 without alerting Berlin had once again forced the Germans to bail out Mussolini. The debacle in North Africa was repeating itself. It would not be long, Hitler predicted unhappily in 1942, before the valiant Wehrmacht would have to occupy Italy to prevent a British-French invasion of the Reich from the southwest. Feeling very alone and isolated, Hitler reacted with a frightening mien that startled even a battlefield-hardened veteran like General Karl Heinz Guderian. This Wehrmacht high command leader told his colleagues that as Hitler complained at the top of his lungs that "he must stand alone against the world," the Fuehrer's "cheeks flushed with rage, his whole body trembled . . . beside himself with fury . . . hurling accusations in my face . . . the man [had] lost all self-control." Guderian's courageous aide-de-camp had to place himself between the out-of-control Hitler and his general, fearing that the great tank commander would be assaulted physically.³

In another quarter, Albert Speer, minister of armaments and war production, reported to his circle that the Reichschancellor "has had fixed notions for years about his 'race to victory' . . . but that race [has] turned

to running amok." Speer quietly intimated that a major part of the problem, beyond objective battlefield realities, was that Hitler's mental and physical health had deteriorated. To make matters worse, said Speer, Hitler was kept going at a feverish pace by a "quack doctor in whom he had placed much confidence." Dr. Theodor Morell had unlimited access to Hitler's private rooms and administered ever increasing doses of intravenous injections of amphetamines to get him started for the day. As the war dragged on and victory appeared more and more out of immediate reach, the physician gave his troubled patient shots during the day to "maintain his fragile equilibrium to counter bad news." The day would end with a prescription for barbiturates. The combined result of this ongoing drug abuse, said Speer in 1943, had left Hitler "occasionally" unable to make "decisions, alertly and spontaneously." Over time, these moments of clarity had become increasingly "unusual." What Speer did not know was that Morell experimented on his compliant patient with no fewer than "twenty-eight mixtures of drugs, including various fake medicines." Hitler's orderlies whispered to one another that they often heard the Fuehrer calling out in the middle of the night: "Get me Morell at once."⁴

Even Josef Goebbels, whose job was to keep the German public convinced that Hitler was strong, robust, and resolute, confided to his diary that "the Fuehrer's appearance . . . his superficial appearance . . . of being healthy is somewhat misleading." In 1943, in a conversation with Goering, they both lamented how Hitler "had aged so much" under the stress of war. Subsequently, Goebbels wrote in his private journal that Hitler himself was fearful that he would not "come through the war completely intact." Goebbels, as always, had a ready palliative for Hitler. A move against the Jews always brightened both of their spirits as it consistently kept alive the myth of Jews denying Germany its destiny. The object of their combined hatred, however, were the relatively few European Jews under their heel, fewer than 100,000. Pogroms were initiated in several German cities. The Italians were told again and again that, as good racial comrades, they had to ghettoize their Jews as well. If he had his way, Goebbels told Hitler, "all Jews under Reich control and occupied territories would be carted off to the east and either liquidated immediately or put to death through arduous work." For Goebbels, such would be a "judgment carried out on the Jews which is barbaric but fully deserved." However, to

his and Hitler's never-ending chagrin, with no conquest to speak of to their east, the Jews would have to be murdered largely within the Fatherland, within the sight of their own people, which they were not sure would inspire the Volk in the military battles ahead.⁵

Despite their own Jew hatred, outbursts of antisemitism did not move Germany's military leaders, whose concerns about Hitler's leadership capabilities deepened daily. At issue now was less the stalemate in the west and waste of troops elsewhere than the looming threat facing Germany from the east.

Since 1938, Stalin had been given a free pass as he watched from the Kremlin how the Germans, French, Dutch, Belgians, and British slugged it out while the Allies had their hands full in Asia with the imperialistic Japanese. As a good communist, it was an article of faith that these European warfronts were the last death throes of two reprehensible systems, capitalism and fascism, each of whom was bringing the other down, ready for the triumph of the international workers' revolution. As a Russian hegemonist, he also visualized a future peace that he would foment between Japan and nationalist China, leaving parts of Manchuria, which he prized, there for the taking. Mao, with whom the Soviet leader always had issues since the communist Chinese chief never quite showed proper deference to him, would be left to deal with Chiang Kai-shek, at his own time and choosing. Meanwhile, the Japanese could continue to have their way with the resource-rich Dutch East Indies possessions while Tokyo undermined the British Empire and the substantial French presence in Asia.⁶

When Stalin refocused on Europe, he plotted that, in some cases, control might be achieved by visibly extending the hands of fellowship. The Kremlin was very pleased—and Nazi generals became very worried—when late in 1943, Edvard Benes, head of the Czechoslovakian government in exile, traveled to Moscow and then returned to the safety of London with a treaty of alliance with the Soviets. Benes agreed to check all important international questions with the Soviets once his republic would be free of Nazi tyranny. One dispirited Nazi general mused to his comrades that Stalin had achieved in Moscow—without firing a shot—what Hitler had not be able to do at the calamitous Munich talks.⁷

The Germans did not know if and when Stalin would make his move out of his Polish base, forcing them to meet the Russians on the

battlefront. But they were hardly reassured about the future of the Fatherland when on a visit to Warsaw, early in 1944, Stalin told party leaders that it might well be time to “kick down the door” to the west and let the international movement breathe “freedom” into Central and ultimately even to Western Europe. Readying millions of men for combat, Stalin privately strategized with his generals as to when precisely he would mass Soviet troops on the German border preparatory to conquest through the force of their fresh, powerful arms. Meanwhile, Kremlinologists, not only in the Reich but everywhere in the world, were taken aback even further when the Russian leader, speaking at a hastily organized Eighth Meeting of the Communist International in the spring of 1944, called upon all comrades to return to the teachings of Lenin to foment revolutions in “weakened militaristic” countries.⁸ Beyond threatened conquests, strict party discipline would be the byword for all constituent parties as Stalin considered plans to build beyond his empire and the Polish *cordon sanitaire* through suzerainty in the Balkan states. Perhaps he might even fulfill a fantasy about which the tsars had only dreamed: the USSR might extend its reach into a communist Middle East as far as Turkey and even on to Iran.⁹

Reading daily intelligence dispatches about Russian maneuvers on the Polish borders, German army leaders came to the unhappy conclusion that there was but one military force on earth that could stop what appeared to be an inevitable Russian invasion. That unspeakable truth—which never could be uttered in front of Hitler—was that the Americans had to be brought into the forthcoming new front. Otherwise, not only would the Reich fall, but Stalin would then soon covet Western Europe. Strategic analysts predicted that within a year of a Russian crossing of the Oder River into the heart of Germany, the Soviets would be but seventy kilometers from Berlin. Eventually, they would be nearing Paris on their way to the Atlantic. Wehrmacht leaders laughed ruefully about Churchill’s having called the Luftwaffe’s bombing of London the Battle of Britain. If and when the Russians reached the Channel at the Pas de Calais, Downing Street would truly be threatened with an existential threat, a Red invasion of Britain. But how were they to communicate these fears to a somnambulant, isolationist United States? Could Taft be convinced that the fate of Western civilization lay in the hands of his government?

Admiral Wilhelm Canaris was critically important for such back-channel diplomacy to Washington. This shadowy figure was known and distrusted by intelligence services continent-wide. But he also had the crucial diplomatic connections necessary to place a case before the American government. Although this career naval officer was an early supporter of Hitler and was appointed in 1935 to lead the Reich's Abwehr military intelligence office, he was among the first to question the direction the regime was taking Germany. On the eve of Munich, Canaris already grumbled to his friends that "the use of armed force against the Czechs to obtain territorial concessions would lead to the intervention of the French," precipitating "the outbreak of a major European military conflict." He wondered aloud whether his country was sufficiently rearmed to risk a "test of continent-wide strength." He feared "a new defeat, a new revolution," and the renewed imposition of the harshness of the Great War's armistice. The stalemate years that followed 1938 only confirmed his fears. Convinced by 1940 that he was working for "a madman," he had done his best, through his spy network, to surreptitiously undermine the war effort. He used his diplomatic contacts to make overtures to the Allies about short-circuiting the conflict, working to convince the Reich's enemies that there was a compliant Germany beyond the Hitler gang. Most important, he had opened channels of communication with the Americans, whispering to them too that there were ways and means of bringing the bloodletting to an end. He frequently earned his bona fides with the British, and even with the nascent American intelligence service placed in listening posts throughout Europe, by providing bits of secret information. But cagily, he withheld critical pieces of documentation to whet their appetites for even more data. Every move was designed to convince his counterparts in the espionage game that he was a man of unique talents and abundant liaisons. Now, in 1944, the time had come to prove that the self-image that he had long cultivated was in fact true. He was charged to get through the thickets of wartime intrigues to convince London and ultimately Washington of the international necessity that not only should peace be worked out in the west but that the democracies and his version of Germany had to join arms against the Soviet threat.¹⁰

In March 1944, the peripatetic Canaris met in Istanbul with George E. Earle, a former governor of Pennsylvania, an erstwhile friend of President

Roosevelt, and, more important, a man with influence among the higher-ups in the State Department. A year earlier, the two had met to explore the possibilities of European peace, but now the Soviet menace was in play. As the spokesman for comrades within the German High Command, Canaris stated that they were prepared to subscribe to a cease-fire and immediately withdraw German troops to 1938 borders, not only in the west but soon thereafter in Czechoslovakia as well. In return, the Allies had to agree that no reprisals would befall Germany for setting off the conflict: a hard sell, to be sure, after thousands upon thousands of French, Dutch, Belgian, and English troops had died over the past six years of that endless, meaningless struggle. Canaris appreciated how difficult that deal would play on the streets of London, Amsterdam, Brussels, and Paris. His riposte was that the population had to be “scared stiff” of the looming threat of a communist takeover. He advised that a staunch Red Scare campaign be initiated in these capitals to heighten anticommunist emotions and to highlight the exigencies that were leading former enemies to the conference table and ultimately to fighting together. Where America would come in, Canaris outlined, would be through committing its own army to the protection of Europe. He proposed, under U.S. leadership, the creation of a North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, for mutual protection against the Russians. Left unsaid at that point was the obvious “Hitler question”: How would Canaris and his fellows—whose code name was the Fortieth Brigade because thirty-nine previous attempts on Hitler’s life had failed—affect a 180-degree shift in German policy with the Fuehrer in place?¹¹

In subsequent conversations with OSS chief William “Wild Bill” Donovan, just three weeks later, the specifics of possible American involvement were discussed. For Canaris, it was imperative for him to convince Donovan—a man highly placed in the incipient American intelligence community—of the importance and viability of the German High Command overture. He hoped Donovan could find a way of getting the plan a hearing in the Oval Office. Personally, Canaris liked and admired Donovan. He paid his interlocutor his highest compliment when he told associates that “the American is much more than he seems on paper; he reminds me of myself.” Canaris also knew that Donovan was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican who conceivably had more clout with a sitting president from his own party. However, ever the pragmatist, Donovan questioned

the timetable for U.S. participation in the great anti-Soviet campaign. His country had expanded its military under Taft; it was deemed a realistic move even among isolationists who understood that the homefront had to be protected against any future crisis. But his country remained a nation at peace and one not ready to expeditiously raise a force of arms to deter Stalin. Donovan did not bother with the Hitler question. For him, it was moot; Canaris and his associates would have to remove that aggressor from power themselves.¹²

Canaris also skirted the Hitler issue and addressed Donovan's logistical concerns with critically important secret information. There was, he revealed, a significant military force in Germany that could be used to temporarily "hold back the Cossacks." A so-called "Replacement Army" had begun to be built in 1942 and was growing every day, loyal more to specific generals than to Hitler. Essentially, this was a force of some 600,000 men; half were once injured fighters who were not returned to their original regiments. The others had been held back from action. They too would be committed to defending the new eastern front. Canaris spoke of 371 infantry battalions, 84 artillery replacement battalions, and a list of potential combatants that went on and on, proudly proclaiming that these forces had been marshaled under Hitler's nose. The Fuehrer typically shouted that he wanted everyone to go to the western front or to fight and die in North Africa. But through subterfuge and disinformation that were his trademark, Canaris bragged that he, more than anyone else, had kept the Nazis at bay. Once fully energized, these forces would first seize control of the Reich and calm their own civilian population. Then the new army would set up its fortifications and array itself for battle, awaiting support from the eventual arrival of the Americans.¹³

President Taft would not meet personally with Canaris. The dire domestic political and international consequences of the media getting wind of his meeting with a "Nazi agent" were imponderable. Canaris, for all his vaunted skill at legerdemain, likewise knew that with the Gestapo monitoring his movements and statements, he would have a devil of a time explaining his presence in the American capital. Indeed, several SS operatives previously had been called on the carpet for their inability to explain precisely what the admiral was doing with those Americans in Turkey. He had navigated away from the rocks of self-revelation by

asserting that he was using spy ruses to extract information about British and French troop movements. But turning up in Washington was another matter entirely. Nonetheless, through the aegis of Donovan, complemented by Earle, the Canaris proposal reached the president's desk early in April 1944. It shook Taft to his core.

In his diary, Taft confessed that at no prior time in his public life had his most basic philosophical principles been challenged so profoundly. On the one hand, he was a tried-and-true isolationist and was prepared to run for reelection on that record, proud that he had kept America out of war. Now, however, his country was being courted, through a bizarre route, not only to engage with European woes, but also to be the leader of a world-saving crusade. How could he immerse his country, Taft worried, into the "world of international jealousies" that were forever part of the maelstrom of European politics? Had he not become despondent after the Great War of 1914–1918 when he had observed President Wilson naively engaged in spreading democracy? Wilson, he had lamented, traipsed through "the various capitals of Europe, making felicitous speeches which mean nothing and do not fool the leaders certainly." Could he, Taft worried, keep both the democracies and a formerly violent fascist state, recently at each other's throats, allied together over a long and difficult road?¹⁴

But at the same time, Taft also was a staunch anticommunist. In his view, the Soviet Union was "as much of an aggressor as Germany" and Stalin, even more than Hitler, was "the most ruthless dictator in the world," making the victory of communism in the world "far more dangerous to the United States than the victory of fascism." As he understood both totalitarian ideologies, he was troubled much more about the appeal of communism because it had the potential to develop "a fanatical support and missionary ardor" that could be spread throughout the world and appeal "everywhere to those who are dissatisfied with their present condition." What the USSR would not achieve through brutal force of arms, it would potentially triumph through "propaganda and infiltration." Nazism, on the other hand, though extremely bellicose and presently so aggressive, was in the end "only an ideology in embryo without transcendent appeal." He once startled a listener by suggesting that "I feel strongly that Hitler's defeat is not vital to us." But the ideological "power of the armed doctrine of Communism, so represented by the Soviet Union," was "a matter of

grave concern to the United States.” The president had mused in the past that potentially he could see America joining “a league of nations on the theory that by joint action taken early to prevent aggression larger conflagrations could be mitigated.” But to jump in and lead the pack in a new alliance of former enemies whose scars of war were still fresh was another matter entirely.¹⁵

Then there were the readily apparent political considerations for the widely acknowledged champion of the party of isolationism. Taft worried that he might have to face a floor fight at the Republican convention late in June 1944. He might have to endure shouts of betrayal from delegates out of whose very ideological midst he had risen and who would listen to the jeremiads of his erstwhile old-line friends such as former President Hoover and Senators Arthur Vandenberg and Gerald Nye, not to mention Gerald L.K. Smith, who saw a Jewish-dominated Taft leading America toward ruin.

Finally, there was the issue of American preparedness. The world knew, and certainly his shadowy interlocutors recognized, how powerful American industrial capability was as a potential war machine. But neither that factory colossus nor the military itself were up to speed, ready to take on the Russians—with the assistance of exhausted allies—in conventional warfare. It remained for George F. Kennan to convince Taft, unsure how to respond to the Canaris intercession, of the need for American activism. Though Kennan was fifteen years his junior, Taft believed his viewpoint was essential since he was already widely recognized as one of the nation’s senior Kremlin watchers. He had served in diplomatic posts in Moscow throughout FDR’s terms. What Kennan saw—starting with Stalin’s purges of his own military and political subordinates—had convinced him of the congenital malevolence of the ruler. Kennan also had firsthand knowledge of some of the worst of Nazism, having been posted in Prague and then in Berlin in the days that followed the Munich turn-about and the Czechoslovakian invasion. So when the president put to Kennan the overriding question of which despotic system America should fear more, the diplomat was in a position, through training, experience, and disposition, to give an unequivocal answer.

Mincing no words, Kennan opined that far more than Nazism, “world Communism is like [a] malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased

tissue.” The war-weary West, “sick of struggle across borders and back again,” was ready to be devoured. America had to step in. For the diplomat, any form of projected Soviet aggression emanated “from basic inner-Russian necessities which existed before [the] recent war.” In fact, “at the bottom of [the] Kremlin’s neurotic view of world affairs” lay the “traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity.” They were “impervious to the logic of reason” but “highly sensitive to the logic of force.”¹⁶

Convinced now of what America had to do, Taft back-channeled a response to Canaris that the United States would be perhaps “in the position to put its powers into the field of virtuous assistance to aid all democratic governments in resisting tyrannies of all sorts.” But before his government would even begin to sketch out a game plan for involvement, “Germany must prove its ability to be part of a democratic coalition.” Taft did not need to explicitly spell out to Canaris and his team of conspirators what was expected. Hitler and his closest associates had to be removed from power first, ending the regime of the Third Reich. While the president awaited the next move from Germany, he directed his State and War Departments to redouble surveillance of all Soviet movements in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, thinking ahead politically, Taft invited an unlikely guest to the White House. New York governor Thomas E. Dewey, though a Republican, had never been an ally. When the press corps saw his name on the president’s appointment calendar they were confounded. They had no inkling of what Taft was planning to discuss with a man who everyone knew did not share the chief executive’s core values.

They were fundamentally different types of Republicans. It was widely understood that their disagreements “pitted city against countryside, pragmatic liberalism vs. principled conservatism,” and, most critical, internationalism against isolation.¹⁷ Though Dewey had been born in the Midwest, he epitomized what was seen as the “Republican eastern wing.” Ironically, Taft, the quintessential Midwesterner, was educated in eastern elite schools. But no matter, for now it was precisely Dewey’s political pedigree and his reputation for aggressiveness that Taft coveted. Swearing his guest to secrecy as a patriot, the president laid out the Canaris proposal to the governor. The president also unburdened himself with his own fears of communism and talked of imminent threats. Taft knew of Dewey’s own visceral hatred of Russia and his suspicions of Soviet

supporters and agents in the United States. What the president wanted was a promise that if the plan became operational with America drawn toward war, Dewey would stand by him against any floor fights at the party's national convention in 1944.

Strategizing every detail of what Taft would say in a radio address to the nation, the men agreed that the administration had to ratchet up American fear of communism. The president would speak of the existential danger that unbridled Stalinism would mean to what was now called "the Free World." In return for his advice and backing at "this crucial moment in the course of world events," as Taft put it, the incumbent would, well before 1948, express his support for a Dewey presidential candidacy. Taft reasoned that with the governor and his supporters in his corner and the Democratic Party still carrying the banner of interventionism from FDR's days, he would have the support of all responsible leaders in both political parties. Dewey left the Oval Office stunned by these possible developments, energized by the role he might play in the shaping of history and contemplating whether an alliance with Taft would eventually carry the day for him in another four years. Ten days later, while Taft awaited signals from operatives in Berlin, Dewey assented to the White House overture.

After Dewey left the Oval Office, a disheveled gray-haired man who had been waiting impatiently in the president's private study beyond the west door was ushered in. Albert Einstein's name did not appear on any White House calendar. What he had to tell the president he considered to be "top secret." The renowned physicist had been, since 1939, the designated spokesman for a group of refugee scientists—many but not all of them Jewish—who had fled Hitlerism in the mid-1930s. Their émigré group included the German-born Hans Bethe, Edward Teller, who had emigrated from his native Hungary, Lise Meitner, who fled Austria after the Anschluss, and the Italian Enrico Fermi, who would not concede to living under Mussolini. Their determined mission was to combine their unparalleled scientific expertise to harness atomic energy and produce a bomb that would, as they put it, "change the world forever." They had to do so, they feared, before Hitler's operatives at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin succeeded in their own "nefarious efforts." This weapon, Einstein first explained in a letter hand-delivered to FDR in 1939, had the

potential of killing hundreds of thousands—if not millions—with one precise strike. Theoretically, it could obliterate a city or destroy the largest military deployment in one fell swoop. Though Roosevelt did not comprehend the intricacies of nuclear fission, he understood geopolitics and feared what Nazi possession of an awesome weapon would mean for human civilization. He thus authorized, during the last months of his administration, an executive branch committee to find secret funds for what was publicly explained as “American universities merely engaged in uranium research.”¹⁸

Less “alarmist” than his predecessor, as Taft had often described FDR, the Republican isolationist initially placed a lower priority on the complex work to produce “electromagnetic, centrifuge, and gaseous-diffusion methods.” He also needed frequent tutorials to be kept up to date with what the scientists were attempting. Sagaciously, whenever Einstein and Fermi lectured the president and his closest staff, the physicists were always sure to segue into political science. They constantly reminded their “students” that the Germans and the Russians had the same technological objectives as the free world. These totalitarian regimes, they warned, were watching—through spies and informers—what the Americans were doing. If these advocates knew of the limits Nazi officialdom had actually put on their scientists and of Hitler’s own reservations about the bomb, they did not undermine their case when addressing Taft and his associates. Rather, in the middle of April 1944, Einstein informed the White House that their efforts had advanced far enough that in just a couple of months—certainly by the end of the summer of 1944—a plutonium device would be ready for testing in New Mexico. The spot selected was in the area known to locals as *Jornada del Muerto*—“Journey of Death.” To Einstein’s surprise, the once-cautious president responded not only with enthusiasm and talked of “an open checkbook for your patriotic efforts,” but asked just one question. “Was there any way the timetable could be speeded up?”

Taft was uncertain whether the bomb would become a reality. But he knew that the threat of a nuclear weapon could be used as a major device for holding back the Russians until American conventional fighting forces could be ready for staring down the Russians or for combat in Eastern Europe. The word had to find its way to the Kremlin through carefully planned leaks that the Americans had the consummate weapon. That fear,

he reasoned, could hold back Stalin. Still, the complex plan that Taft was hatching required first that Canaris and his colleagues “change the regime”—the White House’s euphemism for eliminating Hitler.

Back in Germany, Canaris did not know of the Americans’ nuclear timetable. But the Fortieth Brigade recognized that they had to move soon, before May or June, since Georgy Zhukov, one of Stalin’s favorite generals, was scheduled to pay what *Pravda* described as a “friendly visit” to communist friends in Warsaw and then to examine Russian-Polish “defensive positions” on the western front. The conspirators were also clearly aware that the Fuehrer was no easy mark, as loyal SS guards always surrounded him. Perhaps the only chink in Hitler’s armor was his unshaken belief that God had spared him so many times to permit him to fulfill his destiny. Such hubris had led him to let down his guard occasionally among those who got beyond his first phalanx of defense, leaders of the military elite.

But it would take more than an individual willing to surrender his own life to save Germany by eliminating Hitler. Even if Hitler were assassinated, those most loyal to the regime—men like Goebbels, Himmler, Reinhard, and Goering—also had to be silenced. And what of the army of the SS patrolling everywhere? These officers had pledged personal, undying fealty to the leader. To be successful, the Replacement Army would have to be brought into action immediately after the assassination. Long to be remembered for his uncommon valor, Major Axel von dem Busshe-Streithorst rose at a meeting of the Fortieth Brigade and offered to sacrifice himself for the “real Germany.” “Busshy,” as he was called by his friends (the “Busshy Memorial” would be erected next to Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate in 1946), declared that the honor of an officer could be preserved only if he were willing “to die in battle, desert, or rebel” against tyranny. His martyr’s plan was to attend Hitler’s birthday party on April 20, 1944. There, among the elite guests, he would detonate a bomb hidden in the legs of his trousers. SS bodyguards would not, he hoped, frisk his private parts. He would take Hitler with him to Hell or to Valhalla—Busshy cried as he detailed his plan—and maybe kill a few others of the top echelon with them. Busshy’s heroism moved Brigadier General Baron Rudolf-Christoph von Gersdorff, chief of staff of the Seventh Army, beyond words. In March 1943, just a year earlier, he had plotted to blow up Hitler and himself when the Fuehrer visited an exhibition at the Berlin Museum. His prey changed

his itinerary, however, and Gersdorff's plan came to naught. Now he was determined that Busshy would not die in vain. He hastily alerted his subordinates in the Replacement Army to be prepared to take control of the streets of Berlin and other major cities.

Hans Gunther von Kluge, a field marshal in Army Group B on the western border, planned to go over to the enemy, white flag in hand, once the coup was in motion to begin the actual negotiation process with the Western Europeans. It remained for the chief of staff of the Reserve Army, Count Claus von Stauffenberg, to volunteer personally to go after Goebbels and silence forever the spewings of the propaganda minister. Although each member of the Fortieth Brigade had planned on assuming a position in the provisional government, much thought was given to who would be the face of the renewed Germany. They determined that once control was assured, Franz Von Papen would be approached to assume the post of provisional prime minister."¹⁹

Von Papen possessed a useful mixture of pedigrees which could reassure Germans that the new regime would respect old national values while telling the Allies that the country would commit itself to cooperation, if not immediate change. A German nobleman and former German staff officer, von Papen had been a close confidant of the still revered President von Hindenburg in the early 1930s. He was part of the inner circle of the "cabinet of barons" who in the last years of the Weimar government believed that they could control Hitler's obsessions. In 1932, he was the chancellor of Weimar Germany before von Hindenburg reluctantly appointed Hitler to that post. At that time, von Papen had been sufficiently confident to boast that he and his respectable old-line comrades would "back Hitler so far into a corner" that the inexperienced Austrian upstart would "squeak." In Hitler's original cabinet, the Nazis held but three portfolios; von Papen's comrades commanded eight. Casting himself as a central advocate of governmental restraint in his post as vice chancellor, von Papen attended every meeting the elderly president held with Hitler. However, as the Nazi leader expanded his dictatorial hold over the country, in 1934 a disenchanted von Papen resigned and warned his country against the "unnatural, totalitarian demands of the state," the suppression of free speech, and the violence that attended the attacks against political opponents and the unbridled excesses against Jews. For the next

decade, von Papen stood largely apart from Nazi activity. Though not willing to be put on the line to remove Hitler, the wily and still ambitious politician did not dismiss the Fortieth Brigade's overtures out of hand. He would wait and see what the future had in store for himself, his nation, and Hitler, whom he personally despised.²⁰

The Fortieth Brigade's bold and courageous operation went off as planned. Pandemonium broke out in the Berlin Chancellery when the bomb exploded. It not only assassinated Hitler and martyred "Busshy" but killed the Fuehrer's long-time mistress, Eva Braun. Among the other fatalities was Hitler's physician, Theodor Morell, who had pushed his way to the front of the crowd as his patient prepared to cut the multilayered birthday cake. Twenty-five other people were killed and two hundred were injured, including Goebbels's six children. They had just begun singing "Happy Birthday" to their beloved Uncle Adolf when shrapnel began flying around the chaotic room. Those who were bloodied, or who suffered broken bodies, were rushed off to the hospital. But some of the private cars that served as ambulances were caught in the midst of what was beginning to be a pitched battle in the streets of the Nazi capital.

For thirty-six hours, the struggle raged. Replacement Army forces fought for their lives as much as for victory since the SS made clear that the enemies were not military combatants but "fifth columnists." If captured, they would be hanged from streetlights as traitors. Goebbels's propaganda machine screamed out warnings that the "enemy within" was a communist group led by Russian "advisers," the first phalanx of a Soviet invasion that, he warned, would bring rape and rapine to those loyal to Hitler. The citizenry of Berlin, including old men, women, and children, was called upon to take up arms in support of the SS as a "People's Army" to protect themselves and their property against the feared Russians. But most civilians remained in their homes in mortal fear awaiting the outcome of the war in the streets. Others went outside, ostensibly to help forces still loyal to Hitler, but actually out of mortal concern that if the SS won, they would be punished for not taking part in what the Propaganda Ministry called a "heroic defense of the Fatherland."

As the house-to-house fight to the finish turned in favor of the Replacement Army, Goebbels decided that he could not live without his Fuehrer. Certain that he would be summarily executed once the smoke

cleared, on April 22, 1944, he committed suicide, as did his wife, Magda. Von Stauffenberg would find the body of the hated propagandist two days later. Goebbels had planned to poison his own children before ending his own life. He would not dare imagine his Aryan offspring enslaved by the “Jewish Bolsheviks.” However, amid the battles in the streets, Goebbels could not reach the hospital where his children were convalescing.

With Hitler gone and the SS in retreat, local anti-Nazi partisans made quick work of key Nazi operatives under whom they had suffered. Reinhard Heydrich—the “man with the iron heart,” as Hitler characterized him admiringly—had pitilessly controlled the life and death of Czechs and Slovaks for five years. This young, handsome, and completely ruthless officer, who looked and acted every bit the part of the ideal Aryan and was rumored to be Hitler’s choice to be his successor, met the same fate as his leader. On April 30, 1944, he was shot dead by assassins from the towns of Lidice and Lezaky. They moved against Heydrich for his indiscriminate imprisonment and random execution of local, innocent civilians accused of plotting against the regime.

Hearing of the shooting of his closest associate, a frightened Heinrich Himmler knew that his time in Germany had ended. Still, he was determined to survive. Without a moment to waste, he directed Adolf Eichmann to somehow find a way to commandeer a plane so that they as well as Hitler’s deputy, Martin Bormann, could escape their enemies now descending on them. For years, Himmler and Bormann were rivals, if not antagonists, as they curried favor with Hitler. But now, the head of the SS explained to Eichmann that “the exigencies of the day have brought us together. Besides which it was the humane thing to do to allow Bormann to leave the scene with us.”

Himmler’s ever resourceful subordinate knew exactly what was necessary. Eichmann had already thought through his own exit strategies. In the middle of the night of May 1–2, 1944, a pilot and three passengers dressed in civilian attire departed from a darkened Viennese airstrip on an Aero A.304 bomber. Eichmann was struck by the fact that the conveyance’s original purpose was as a Czech passenger plane. Now it was being reconverted once again to carry these distinguished dignitaries to safety. Their destination was not filed in any flight plan. The three Nazi chieftains flew over the Alps and Pyrenees into Spain. After tendering Spanish dictator

Francisco Franco a large bag of gold bullion, previously stolen from German Jews and held in reserve by Eichmann, they were escorted to a waiting boat anchored off the Spanish coast. Six weeks later, with their new identity cards and passports in hand, Bormann, Eichmann, and Himmler arrived in Argentina. Vice President Juan Peron welcomed his guests ashore and helped settle them without fanfare. Two years later, Peron used Himmler's and Eichmann's monies to help finance his run for president of Argentina. Bormann did not help out. By then, he had parted ways with his comrades and disappeared into anonymity among the denizens of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Also leaving the scene in the dead of night at the end of April 1944 was Wilhelm Canaris, though he was not endangered in the new Germany. William Donovan, under War and State Department orders, had recruited the admiral as an adviser to a new, permanent, internationally based American-run spy network. After massive debriefing in a secret location outside Alexandria, Virginia, Canaris was unobtrusively posted in a District of Columbia office steps away from his new American operator.

When he heard that Hitler had been assassinated, Deputy Fuehrer Rudolf Hess was reduced to uncontrollable tears. He had been perhaps the truest believer in Nazism and had been at his master's side from their days in Landsberg prison in the early 1920s, where Hitler had essentially dictated *Mein Kampf* to Hess. Now lying catatonic in the wake of the shocking news, Hess needed several injections of amphetamines to bring him back to partial reality, at which time he babbled about a "courageous" plan to save the Reich that he had "long contemplated," at least since 1941. He fervently believed that "there was a future for the Nazi regime" if an alliance, even at this late date, could be struck with "our racial Anglo-Saxon cousins." He believed that he could convince the British of their shared destiny to rule the world. All Whitehall had to do was to double-cross their French associates, whom Hess believed the British secretly despised. In the midst of the commotion in Berlin, Hess commandeered a Messerschmidt ME-110 and five hours later parachuted into Scotland, assuming a warm reception would be his and hopeful of striking a deal. Instead, local security officials arrested him, and Churchill subsequently told an amused House of Commons that "a big bird had fallen to the ground and was held carefully in the tender hands of Scottish prison officials."

In the days that followed Hitler's assassination, the Fortieth Brigade, with von Stauffenberg in charge of national radio, announced to the world that the von Papen government wanted to end the war in the west that had "for now six years brought only destruction and misery" to all "virtuous combatants." No mention was made about the looming Soviet threat. Across the border, however, many began to argue quietly that "an alliance of civilized nations" had to be created immediately. In speaking of "virtue" among all sides that were "civilized," the new government implied that they did not expect Germany to be saddled with reparation payments. Such a requirement would undermine their government before it truly established itself among their own war-weary people. As a goodwill gesture to potential allies, and as a way of graphically differentiating the reemerging "good" Germany from the atrocious Hitler regime, the conspirators, who now controlled the country, handed over several of the most notorious remaining Nazi ideologues and operatives to British and French authorities. Von Papen made clear that he and his government had no objection to the Allies trying the propagandists Alfred Rosenberg and Julius Streicher and SS chieftain Ernst Kaltenbrunner as war criminals. Military leaders like Hermann Goering—who was so close to Hitler—as well as Wehrmacht loyalist Alfred Jodl were also on the short list of those to be extradited in the "service of peace." In the initial round-up, Albert Speer and Hjalmar Schacht were also arrested. But Schacht's imprisonment was only temporary. Fittingly, when World Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann saw Schacht's name listed in the *London Times* as among "notable Nazi detainees," he rushed to 10 Downing Street and appealed for Schacht's release. Weizmann asserted to the prime minister that although Schacht might be an antisemite, he had done yeoman work on behalf of the Jews in Central Europe during the late 1930s. As Weizmann began to quip in his characteristic black humor, "If we were to arrest every anti-Semite as a war criminal," but Churchill did not need him to finish the sentence. Schacht was immediately freed.

Also in Berlin on the day of Hitler's assassination was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, stalking the halls of the Chancellery and ready to speak to anyone who might listen about his willingness to rouse Arab troops to fight in the now dismal North African campaign. In return, he expected future aid from the regime in ridding Palestine of its Jews. Although Haj

Amin al-Husseini received a respectful hearing, he was disappointed yet again that nothing of a concrete nature had yet developed from his meetings with top Nazi officials. The Grand Mufti was also put off mightily that he had not received an invitation to Hitler's big birthday bash. Apparently, notwithstanding his agreeable views on the Jewish question, he was simply too socially *déclassé* to mix among Germany's elite. When he heard that Hitler had been assassinated, the Mufti sank to his knees and thanked Allah, certain that his survival had been heavenly ordained because of German prejudice against "Semites."

He also thanked his maker for what he believed was his gift of uncommon prescience. Allah had shown him what the future held for his cause and for the world. In his view, the von Papen government would not ally itself with the Arabs. Instead, he saw an alliance ahead for the Germans with those hated British and the less-than-trustworthy French, Dutch, and Belgians. Surely Jewish Zionist influence also would be brought to bear on that side. As far as the United States was concerned, the Mufti divined that they would either persist as isolationists or, if they became involved in the emerging postwar world, Zionist money and pressure would direct their every movement. For al-Husseini, the Soviets were not a threat but an opportunity. He believed that the future lay with communism, Stalin, and Soviet forces.

Betting on the Soviet Union, he made his way out of tumultuous Berlin and found a driver on the outskirts of the city, who, for an exorbitant fee, took him to Vienna. With the fog of civil war descending on the roadways, al-Husseini witnessed thousands of German civilians on both sides of the thoroughfare, uncertain whether to push on to a new free Berlin or to run away. Rumors had it that Himmler and Bormann would call into action secret SS cadres who would counterattack. Few people knew that these now former government officials were on the run in Spain. The Grand Mufti had no time to await the results of any future political-military developments in Germany. He had appointments to make with Russian operatives in the Austrian capital, that great spy city. There he found Soviet agents who were willing to pass the word to Stalin that he could help Russia seize control over the Middle East. Several mornings later, he was rudely awakened by a knock on the door of his suite in the Hotel Imperial. Seeing himself as a world leader, it was only

appropriate to stay at the same hotel Hitler frequented in Vienna. Three dark-suited and black-hatted men were at the door, who brusquely requested that they join him in a private car that would take them to the Austrian-Polish border. There, he hopped on a train to Moscow.

After cooling his heels for several days in a run-down Moscow hotel, befitting proletarian sensibilities, al-Husseini was granted an interview with Stalin. An unapologetic Soviet leader curtly explained that the delay in their meeting was due to his close monitoring of developments in North Africa. After Hitler's death, chaos reigned among German troops. Some mutinies took place among soldiers and officers still loyal to Nazism and those who had had enough of the benighted African campaign. The Grand Mufti risked interrupting Stalin's long-winded soliloquy and suggested that in the near term, the English would benefit greatly from such disarray. He also predicted that the von Papen government would soon sue for peace with Germany's former enemies, leaving the British in control of North Africa and the Middle East. He also hinted that these new Allies might be looking closely at Russian intentions in Europe immediately beyond the Motherland. A "powerful counter-balance" was needed, al-Husseini intimated, "to such blatant capitalist imperialism." Only Russia had the strength of number and "ideological will-power" to stave off such a disaster both for communism worldwide and, not incidentally, the Arab cause.

Stalin was duly impressed with the Grand Mufti's offer of friendship and alliance. He allowed to a group of his aides that "it is remarkable that a man of God would make common cause with us atheists." But he reminded himself of his visitor's résumé and prior alliance, observing that "the Hitler regime had not been exactly a paragon of religious rectitude." For his part, the Soviet leader had his ideological and practical conflicts as well. As a good Bolshevik—the heir of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—he had renounced the history of "Tsarist imperialism" in the region. He had for-gone that long-held Russian dream of extending the empire's influence to the Black Sea, to Turkey and well beyond. However, the Georgian-born dictator simultaneously fancied himself as the greatest Russian leader of all time. He possessed an insatiable appetite for territorial expansion. In that guise, Stalin recognized that he could not push his nation into the Middle East without inside help. The proletarian base and the indigenous

Communist Party presence in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and other countries were quite weak. There also was an alternate scenario that occasionally crossed Stalin's mind of working with party loyalists in a communist-sympathetic "Jewish Palestine." With several good options to weigh and possibly to play out, Stalin took the Mufti's plan under advisement.²¹

For al-Husseini, the consummate nightmare would find both the Western powers and the Soviets in bed with the Zionists. The presence of several prominent Jews within Stalin's closest circles heightened his anxiety somewhat, even if men like Lazar Kaganovich, who had stood beside Stalin since the 1920s, were hardly "bourgeois Jewish nationalists."²² In his racial view of the world, this Semite opined that "all Jews were the same." He had learned some Nazi lessons well during his presence in Berlin. However, al-Husseini roused himself from that unhappy reverie through reassuring himself that ultimately his host's own deeply ingrained anti-semitism would carry the day. The Arab guest returned to Lebanon—he had been persona non grata in Palestine since 1937—awaiting the next step, leading, he prayed, "to the driving of the Zionists and their British co-conspirators out of the Holy Land."

Hitler's death deprived Benito Mussolini of his patron and protector. Since 1942, the Wehrmacht and the SS had propped up his regime against British and French troops moving at Rome from the south while counter-ing Italian insurrectionist groups. Fascist propagandists alleged, with some credibility, that the "fifth column within the homeland" was made up of communists taking their marching orders from the Kremlin. But the civilian population did not care. They focused upon the abusive SS that had brought terror into Italian cities and threatened the survival of Italian Jewry. Some 8,000 Jews were deported to concentration camps within the Reich. Himmler had told his subordinates sadly that he would have liked to "eliminate more" but that the stalled war had not produced the necessary "*lebensraum*" (living space) to "properly deal with the consummate enemy." He had confided to Eichmann in 1943: "If we only had parts of Poland under our sway, we could deal ruthlessly and massively with the Jewish question." The SS was also stymied by the willingness of Italian civilians to help Jews hide from their oppressors. Given this atmosphere of visceral hatred for Mussolini's regime, once the German oppressors were in unceremonious retreat an aroused population sought vengeance

against Il Duce. Desperate, Mussolini sought asylum in neighboring Spain, hopeful of eventually making it to South America. But his fate was to be captured by partisans, murdered on the spot, and hung upside down in the streets of Milan.

After his promising exploratory meeting with the Grand Mufti, a joyous Stalin sat back and reflected on what had transpired in just the past few days. Could it really be that communist predictions were indeed coming true? Was he, in fact, witnessing the self-destruction under “the weight of its cynicism” of both capitalism and fascism before his very eyes and in front of his massed troops on the borders of Central Europe? For President Taft, the death of Hitler—and then of Mussolini—the chaos that was happening on several continents meant something totally different. With the Soviets unchallenged and their tanks and troops ready to roll and march, the fate of western civilization was in his hands.

But how would he, the former isolationist, convince both his party and the American people of the need for intervention? Could he move the English and the French to respond to the von Papen administration’s early overture for alliance without repeating what he called “the debacle of Versailles”? Most important, could the rousing of America and the binding up of wounds of long-time enemies in Europe, redirecting their forces 180 degrees, be accomplished before the Russians came over the Polish border? With a perplexed, anxious nation clamoring for clear leadership, the president had to lay out a plan for the America people. Once again, Dewey was ushered into the Oval Office for a crucial follow-up strategy session.

A multipart approach, both public and surreptitious, emerged from their day-long deliberations. First, that staunch anticommunist and reincarnated Republican Joseph P. Kennedy would be called in and offered the post of special envoy to the British government. He would be asked to sell the plan to Churchill and all others who would listen to his raspy voice. Dewey’s aside was that it would “be just marvelous having that pain in the neck out of the country” and predicted that the former ambassador would jump at the opportunity to be “a patriot so long as his work eventually would be widely acknowledged.” His presence in London would likewise do “wonders for party calm at the 1944 convention” in Chicago. Former president Herbert Hoover would be designated the White House’s senior

emissary to the French and to the Low Countries. On the continent after the Great War, he had earned his humanitarian bona fides as head of the American Relief Administration. He had supervised shipments of food packages to millions of starving French, Dutch, German, and even Russians. At the same time, Hoover passionately hated Stalin and communism. Having the former president ostensibly “on your side,” Dewey calculated, “and also out of the country on a critical diplomatic mission” during the convention, was an inestimable political bonus. Hoover’s efforts and “absence from the Windy City,” quipped the governor, “would blow much of the wind out of isolationists’ sails.” Always anxious to add luster to his historical record, Hoover quickly made plans to fly to Paris.²³

After a working lunch, Taft and Dewey invited in the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation through a side corridor. J. Edgar Hoover loved the assignment that was laid out for him. Long obsessed with the “communist threat to America,” Hoover was primed to have his men redouble their efforts to infiltrate radical cells. However, the mission now was not to identify “enemies in our midst,” preparatory to their arrest and imprisonment. Rather, the president wanted FBI agents, already embedded among communists and socialists, to confirm rumored information about the U.S. progress in inventing a world-changing super-weapon. The logical outcome of this planned leak was that word would soon be passed from cells to spies who would excitedly forward the news to their Moscow handlers. Back in his office, poring over the massive card file of “criminals and the unwanted” that he had compiled since the 1920s, Hoover identified a communist group in New York. The director looked there first because he long believed that Gotham was thoroughly infiltrated by traitors and focused attention on its leader, Julius Rosenberg.²⁴

Rosenberg’s “perverse pedigree”—as Hoover characterized this enemy’s background—took form while he was a student at City College of New York in the 1930s. Though he earned a degree in electrical engineering at this campus renowned for its radicalism, he was known on the streets of St. Nicholas Heights mostly for his work as a leader of the Young Communist League. An arch Stalinist, he made his views known to whomever would listen within Alcove #2, one of the legendary outposts of undergraduate verbal confrontations. There he debated endlessly against Trotskyites and socialists in support of the Soviet system. Listening in also

were FBI informants, students who were “loyal patriotic Americans,” as recorded in Hoover’s dossier on CCNY. Several of these “bright upstanding young men,” as Hoover characterized the college’s Reserve Officers Training Corps, accepted the assignment. The operatives cagily “allowed” themselves to be “drawn in slowly” to the midst of that alcove’s circles, where they gained the confidence of Stalinists and ultimately garnered information about subversive activity. Though initially suspicious of those new to the cause, in time these moles cemented friendships with Rosenberg and his comrades. The culture of the alcoves was such that the intrigued as well as the devoted drifted from one forum to another, anxious to hear a point well argued. Rosenberg was proud of his forensic ability and his capacity to influence the masses. He was thus far from surprised that he had successfully recruited proselytes. The FBI informants willingly handed out party literature and even permitted themselves to be arrested at campus antiwar protests, like good party loyalists.

Upon graduation, as a civil service employee, Rosenberg waited out the war that he predicted would “destroy capitalism and fascism.” In his spare time, he propagandized for the party and the USSR. Reading of his employment history and “extra-curricular activities,” Hoover was chagrined that “no loyalty oath was required of such a subversive.” However, the FBI director was, at the same time, pleased that Rosenberg had not lost an iota of his commitment to unqualified radicalism. Hoover’s reconnaissance told him that this “traitor” was known to Russian agents in the United States and would, if he had the chance, prove his pro-communist bona fides by passing whatever information he might obtain to the Soviets’ “proper authorities.” Thus, when a CCNY alumnus armed with FBI-manufactured documents made Rosenberg aware that the “Einstein group” was producing an awesome weapon, he let an official in the USSR consulate in New York know of such progress. Anatoli Yakovlev thanked Rosenberg deeply for his report, and a coded telegraph was relayed immediately to Moscow. Stalin was grateful and thoughtful about this information. J. Edgar Hoover was pleased, too; he had fulfilled his presidential mission. What the FBI chieftain did not know was that a very pleased Moscow spy master went back to Rosenberg with the task of detailing precisely what and how the Americans were doing with atomic energy. Though sure to keep an eye on Rosenberg, Hoover would come to regret

enlisting the communist. Rosenberg accepted that subsequent mission enthusiastically. It was a move that would change not only his life but eventually alter the balances of power worldwide.²⁵

It remained for President Taft not only to explicate to Americans how these unexpected turns in world events would affect them but to rally the nation for future engagements that might cost the United States both soldiers and much treasure. On May 1, 1944, Americans gathered around the radios to listen to Taft deliver what the media would soon characterize as an “epoch-changing address.” He chose that date precisely because it was May Day. On that day communist groups all around the world celebrated the “international unity of workers.” The president would get to the Soviet threat in the course of his speech but his strategy was first to comment joyfully over the “end of fascism and Nazism in Europe.” He was deeply moved, he said, that “regular people” in Germany and Italy—he purposefully did not mention the Fortieth Brigade’s role in regime change—“had risked their lives and taken history into their hands in order to redirect their nations toward the democracy that we Americans have long cherished and for which we have fought and died to preserve.” Taft then took an optimistic tack in reflecting with pleasure over “the initial favorable reactions of the Allies to reports of the willingness of the new German government to work toward an honorable and workable peace.” Taft made a veiled reference to the Europeans “not repeating the diplomatic errors of the past.” Millions of listeners nodded knowingly that he was talking about Versailles. But they were truly surprised to hear the isolationist president speak next of “our obligation to help all virtuous combatants bind up their wounds for the common good of all civilized nations.” In Berlin, von Stauffenberg took positive note that Taft had borrowed the same terms—“virtuous” and “civilized”—the general had used in reaching out to the Western Europeans, suing for peace. For the German, it was a subtle indication of where the Americans stood.

As the speech continued, Taft’s depiction of the United States’ “new world role” surprised Americans, concerned Western Europeans, encouraged von Papen’s provisional government, and, most important, troubled Josef Stalin. While avoiding any details about Russian troop build-ups, Taft declared “that the cause of freedom has never been easy to preserve and presently there were forces neighboring German, France, and

ultimately Britain that may kill still-born the rebirth of freedom.” Returning to a familiar Taft trope, he expressed his concerns “that the ultimate objective of communism is world supremacy through the undermining of democracy. Care has to be taken, both abroad and even within our American homeland, that this menace not be allowed to thrive.” Strategically, in surveying the world scene, Taft made no mention of the war that was still going on in the Pacific between the imperialistic Japanese and the embattled European colonial powers. To do so might suggest that his country was ready to be “fully interventionist,” just like FDR, whose policies the Republican had so roundly opposed. Taft closed his provocative speech to his fellow citizens by declaring that “May 1st should be now and forever more designated as ‘Loyalty Day’ where Americans would gather in their homes and places of worship to recommit to the principles that have preserved and protected our nation.”

In the days that immediately followed, some of the practical consequences of what arch-isolationists dubbed “FDR-style interventionism” became clear. Most notably, the president sent to Congress a “rewards incentive volunteer” bill designed to induce millions of young men to join the armed forces during this time of European instability. As a presidential candidate, he had strongly opposed Roosevelt’s lame-duck effort, in September 1940, to have Congress pass a Selective Service and Training Act that would force all adult male citizens to register for the military draft. Such a requirement went counter to Taft’s fundamental belief in “individual liberty and in equality of opportunity.” A draft, he argued, both on the stump and in the Senate, “crucially cuts into a man’s career, deprives him of his freedom of choice,” and “turns society into a garrison state.” He proposed instead, in order to produce a larger, more effective, fighting force, an upgrade in pay and other benefits to volunteers, including expansion of the college-military training option.²⁶ Now as president, figuring that he might need more soldiers in the very short term to be garrisoned on far-away European borders, he conceived a redoubled reward system for volunteers. Those who served would be paid far more than previously. More important, since these young men might be left “behind in the competitive struggle with his fellows,” they would receive, as veterans, tuition assistance if they chose to attend colleges or technical training schools. He also suggested that some thought should be given to

helping those who served the nation purchase a home once they were ready to settle down within civilian life. Taft's expectation was that more than a million men—many of whom were still feeling the long-term economic effects of the Depression—would opt for this “engagement with American patriotism.” Left unsaid also was that this anticipated build-up of soldiers would require an increase in materiel as well, an aid to the American economy.

A coalition of congressional Democrats and “Taft Republicans,” some of whom were given partial word on the nature of the Soviet threat to increase their ardor for the legislation, passed the rewards bill into law in record time. Some of those within the GOP who stood with the White House endured catcalls of “betrayers” on the floor of Congress and at the party's convention in Chicago, late in June 1944. But Taft, with Dewey behind the scenes, was ready for harsh criticism from delegates who were once his closest allies. Taft's emphasis on “virtuous, civilized nations, and the Soviet threat” from May 1, 1944, was reiterated when the president accepted renomination, and it became the mantra of his fall campaign. J. Edgar Hoover helped Taft in a backhanded way. Although the candidate adroitly distanced himself from the FBI's intentions and actions, during the election campaign the Bureau initiated a roundup of real and suspected communists and their sympathizers. Hoover was hardly perturbed that his agents frequently ignored civil liberties. He had learned how to run roughshod over enemies under A. Mitchell Palmer, the attorney general of the United States during the “Red Scare” that followed the Great War of 1914–1918. Many Americans felt at ease after these enemies were put behind bars even if they had not been precisely informed what the “Soviet threat” actually was.

Democratic Party strategists attempted to make much of Taft's silence about these frontal attacks on American rights of free speech and assembly. But they gained little traction among the voters, even those who disliked the FBI, since the incumbent had captured their larger issue. Taft's newfound belief in preparedness to protect American sovereignty and survival sounded very much like Roosevelt's principles of the late 1930s. To make matters even worse for the Democrats as they searched for an issue to bolster their candidate, the party was rife with dissent over the dilemmas of race. The predicate for the struggle that splintered its ranks was the president's volunteer bill.

Soon after Taft initiated his effort to increase, upgrade, and reward the men in uniform, a delegation of well-known and respected black leaders met in the White House to declare their willingness to convince their community to enlist en masse and to fight for America if war came its way. But in return, argued A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Walter White of the NAACP, and T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League, the U.S. military had to be desegregated and jobs for Negroes had to be found in what was expected to be an upswing in defense-related industry. Taft's response to their demands was unsatisfactory. Much of the interview witnessed the president regaling his visitors with proofs of how sensitive he had always been to "the cause of the Negro." He reminded them, for example, that as a senator he had backed both anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation and had spoken out about the inferior schooling their youngsters were receiving in public education. Moreover, he was proud that in concert with his personal philosophy he had praised their race for the progress they had made through "their own initiative and their own efforts, assisted, but not controlled by the government." Hearing these remarks, the black leaders left the Oval Office certain that their needs would not be given high priority in this White House.²⁷

Accordingly, they turned back to their own party, which from FDR's time had courted their allegiances and demanded that its platform include support for fair employment opportunities both inside and outside an integrated armed forces. Southern Democrats—later to be called "Dixiecrats"—threatened to bolt the party. FDR was no help in selecting a nominee. Weakened by polio and a myriad of accompanying diseases, the former president had even ceased writing his influential column. He would live less than another year and passed away on April 12, 1945, in Warm Springs, Georgia. Thus it was a divided and dispirited party that convened in Chicago in July 1944. After much bickering and several inconclusive ballots, as several former members of FDR's administration sought to energize delegates with thoughts that "happy days *could* be here again," the ever-available but deeply flawed Paul McNutt garnered enough support to try once again for the White House. Always the internationalist, however, McNutt suffered grievously from what reporters called "me-tooism." His positions on foreign policy sounded too much like the

Taft who had seized the high ground on preparedness. The Democrats' only consolation was that his stance on integration was indecisive enough that southerners did not leave the Democrats to form their own third party. Negroes, North and South, were disappointed with his, his party's, as well as the incumbent's weak stances. They resolved to fight on future days and on new fronts for equality in America. In November, Taft won reelection overwhelmingly.

But even before the votes were counted, in September 1944, Taft, with J. Edgar Hoover's reassurance that the Russians "had just the right inkling of what we possess," made the Soviets know how unalterably opposed the United States was to any communist aggression in Europe. The continent simmered down after six years of useless war. In perhaps the most provocative exchange between the two nations, a State Department official departed from the circumspection of diplomatic language and blurted that he had "an atomic bomb in my hip pocket" and was not averse "to let you have it."²⁸

Stalin was not really taken in by the bluff. The nuclear device had yet to pass its final tests. He also knew that American troops were still state-side even as U.S. ambassadors worked feverishly to keep the French, British, Dutch, and Belgians talking concretely and amicably with each other and with the "new" Germany. Still, while the Soviet ruler was confident that his armies could overwhelm any conventional military, the awesome weapon he did not possess gave him much pause. At the end of 1944 and for the foreseeable future, his troops would stand near the western Polish border while his operatives in capitalist societies would turn to "propaganda and infiltration" to promote the spread of communism worldwide. The Taft administration carefully watched Soviet movements during his second term as the president concerned himself with other pressing foreign policy matters. The era of American isolationism was over.

What Really Happened

By the summer of 1944, Nazi dreams of world conquest had been shattered. Soviet forces were advancing upon Germany from the east, and the Americans and British, having fought their way off the beaches in

Normandy, were moving in from the west. The Wehrmacht was holding on tenaciously in Italy as Mussolini's fascist armies were shown incapable of holding back the Allies. In April 1945, when his Nazi protectors were finally defeated, Mussolini was executed by liberated Italians and his body hung in the streets of Milan. In the last year of the war, Hitler's mental and physical state deteriorated and he habituated amphetamines and barbiturates prescribed for him by Dr. Morell. Fearing that Hitler's unrelenting fantasies of total victory would lead to the complete destruction of their country and fearful of the consequences of Soviet conquest, a group of high-level German officers led by Klaus von Stauffenberg plotted the fortieth attempt on the Fuehrer's life. One of their greatest hopes was to broker a peace with the Western allies. Operation Valkyrie failed in July 1944 when a bomb that von Stauffenberg placed at Hitler's feet at a meeting in the so-called "Wolf's Lair" in Eastern Prussia was moved away before it could kill him. A Replacement Army was in existence under the leadership of a number of military conspirators, but it was not made operational as the coup failed. Those who plotted against Hitler, like Major Axel von dem Busshe-Streithorst and Field Marshall Gunther von Kluge, were among those quickly convicted by a Nazi court. They were brutally executed. Thousands of co-conspirators were arrested and many were put to death. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris sympathized with the von Stauffenberg group although he was not directly involved with that plot. Rather, he spent much of the war as a double agent working ostensibly for the Nazi intelligence service while providing information to the Allies. He knew many of the operatives in the Allied secret service, including Earle and Donovan. He was arrested in July 1944 and eventually executed by the Gestapo in April 1945. Franz von Papen was not contacted by the conspirators. This right-wing nationalist who had helped Hitler gain power was tried as a war criminal in the Nuremberg trials but was acquitted.

Through the long struggles from East and West and ending with the conquest of Berlin in April 1945, the unsteady alliance among the Western democracies and the USSR survived. The Allies remained pledged to total victory over the Germans. Before the final conquest of the German capital, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker so as not to suffer Mussolini's fate through falling into communist hands. As soon as victory in Europe was secured, the Cold War began as the Soviets, through force of arms and/or

infiltration and propaganda, gained and held control of most Eastern European territories. In 1946, Churchill spoke evocatively of an "Iron Curtain" falling upon these areas.

From the late 1930s, U.S. scientists, many of them Jewish and Christian refugees from Nazism and fascism, worked tirelessly toward inventing an atomic bomb. Their commitment to the Manhattan Project was intensified by their fear that the Nazis might succeed before them and with that ultimate weapon of destruction, the enemy would win the war. In 1945, two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, which brought an end to the war in the Pacific. The threat of the use of atomic power against the Russians was real and the reality that only the Americans had that weapon moderated Stalin's activities somewhat. Working in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Russians acquired their own bomb. American communist Julius Rosenberg and his wife, Ethel, were convicted and executed for passing bomb secrets to the Soviet Union that aided their nuclear program. The Russians, as allies during the war, knew of American activities.

In November 1944, President Roosevelt was elected for a fourth term, defeating Thomas Dewey. FDR died in office in April 1945 and was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman. Truman ordered the atomic strikes against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Robert Taft remained a major voice for the Republicans in the Senate. In 1948, he would fail to gain the nomination of his party for president that went again to Dewey. In an upset, Truman defeated Dewey and the Democrats held on to the Oval Office until January 1953.

With the war lost, Himmler and Goebbels committed suicide. The propaganda minister's wife, Magda, joined him in their death pact. Before killing themselves, they poisoned their six children. Other war criminals sought to flee conquered Germany. Martin Bormann disappeared and for decades there was speculation that he had survived the war. His remains were finally identified in 1998 in Germany. Many other key officials were captured, tried, and convicted in Nuremberg for instigating the war and for committing "crimes against humanity." Hermann Goering, Alfred Rosenberg, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, and Julius Streicher were among those sentenced to death. Goering committed suicide before he could be hanged. Rudolf Hess, who in 1941 was arrested in Scotland after a quixotic mission to broker a peace with the British, was given a life sentence, which

he served in Spandau Prison for forty years. Albert Speer was sentenced to twenty years in Spandau. Adolf Eichmann made it to Argentina and remained there until captured by the Israeli Mossad in 1960. He was tried in Jerusalem, convicted of perpetrating “crimes against humanity,” and hanged in 1962. Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated in 1941 in Czechoslovakia. In reprisal, the SS murdered the populations of Lidice and Lezaky for their alleged complicity in killing this very high Nazi official. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, though a sympathizer with Nazi anti-Jewish policies, was not indicted by the Nuremberg Court. He was out of Germany before the final collapse of the regime, returning to the Middle East where he continued his struggle against Jewish statehood.

Divided Allegiances

American Jews and Israel, 1944–1950

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver shut off his radio and picked up his phone. Within seconds, he was in touch with the long-distance operator. The president had just called upon all Americans to assemble in their houses of worship to rejoice over the end of Nazism and to rededicate themselves to the loftiest of American principles. Jews, Silver determined, could not wait to celebrate the fall of the “modern-day Haman” and to show in no uncertain terms their patriotism. An immediate demonstration of where “our people stands” was called for, a rally of epic proportions in the country’s largest city. In New York, leaders from every segment of the community had to be arrayed on a shared dais to “demonstrate our unfailing allegiance to our nation.” Its less publicized subtext would be that the American Zionist cause in no way conflicted with this country’s future grand goals and aspirations. In thinking about venues, Manhattan’s Reform Temple Emanu-el seemed an obvious choice. Its sanctuary could accommodate 2,500 people and Silver believed that its rabbi, Samuel Goldenson, would readily offer his synagogue for this historic gathering. A nationwide radio hook-up was also possible from that Midtown location that would bring millions of Jews—and, it was hoped, masses of Christians also—to this consecration of American values. But Emanu-el did not get the first call. Silver intuited that some of the city’s very large Orthodox Jewish rank and file would feel queasy about—if not outright opposed to—offering prayers of thanksgiving at this “Jewish cathedral on Fifth Avenue.” The American Zionist leader also understood that those within his own nationalist movement might

balk at giving the honor of the event to a flagship of Reform Judaism that had failed to fully support the Yishuv's political aspirations. Instead, Silver thought of Yorkville's Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun and pitched his plan to Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein.

This Modern Orthodox rabbi had the perfect pedigree to collaborate with Silver. Not only was he a most articulate spokesman for his movement and could deliver a homily like few preachers, he was uncommonly tolerant of other Jewish religious denominations. He participated in all community-wide organizations and counted as colleagues Reform rabbis like Silver and Stephen S. Wise and the Conservatives Israel Goldstein and Milton Steinberg, important Upper West and East Side Manhattan spiritual leaders, with national reputations and followings. He likewise respected Dr. Louis Finkelstein, head of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Though Lookstein had theological problems with what Reform and Conservative spokesmen espoused, he was quick to argue that "anti-Semites make no distinctions among Jews." As a rabbi in Yorkville in the 1930s, a neighborhood with a long-time German flavor, he had witnessed first-hand the ugly street demonstrations and the catcalls of the pro-Nazi Bund.

American Zionists and the Zionist leadership in Palestine also approved of Lookstein. He was a leader of the Mizrachi—the religious Zionists in the United States—a contingent that frequently pledged cooperation with all Jewish nationalists toward a Jewish state. Though as an Orthodox rabbi, Lookstein was concerned about the tenor of Jewish culture in the homeland once sovereignty was achieved, now it was time to play down religious dilemmas and move forward toward a commonwealth. This new country, Lookstein was quick to assert, would stand proudly among the family of nations and become a tried-and-true ally of the United States. Lookstein readily agreed to open his commodious synagogue, which seated well over a thousand, for a mass rally, and he made clear that he had no problems with offering the rostrum to "any and all Jewish religious leaders and elected officials" so long as he, too, was on the list of "distinguished speakers." Silver concurred and the two leaders stayed on the line, long into the night, putting together their list of spokesmen to bring out a crowd for this monumental "interdenominational meditation."

Two days later, Lookstein called Silver with some distressing news. His efforts had been rebuffed on several fronts. His phone calls to the heads of

the old-line Orthodox yeshivas in Brooklyn had not been returned. When they did not respond to his subsequent telegrams, Lookstein understood their message. They would not countenance attendance in his Orthodox sanctuary that in their parochial view would be “polluted” by the presence of Reform and Conservative “heretics.” There was no neutral territory for them when it came to non-association with “deviants,” another favorite description. Subsequently, the Yorkville rabbi was reminded that some Hasidic groups also were none too pleased with Lookstein himself, an ardent American Zionist. They also did not respond to his missive. In their worldview, no one was permitted to interfere with the Almighty’s own plan to return Jews to their ancient holy land. These Hasidic Jews of Williamsburg and Brownsville, Brooklyn, would stay in their borough, thank God for the death of Hitler, and pray for the welfare of the government under whom they lived loyally, much as Jews had done during their 2,000-year exile.

Lookstein, however, was most perturbed—as he unburdened himself to Silver—that lay leaders of two Modern Orthodox synagogues in Manhattan, the historic Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, the first Jewish congregation in America, and the Institutional Synagogue—both situated on Manhattan’s West Side—had called his synagogue board chairman to complain about their rabbi’s “thoughtless invitation to the wrong sorts of Jewish voices.” Though Lookstein knew that he could fill his sanctuary with his own followers, it would not be the diverse crowd that he had hoped for. Deeply saddened about these demurrals, Lookstein could only lament that “disunity reigns at this historic and propitious moment in the long saga of our people.”¹

Silver had his own problems. Within his own Zionist circles, there were those who strongly felt that the “uncontrollable, rag-tag” remnant of Bergson’s Revisionist Zionists group could not be trusted to “pledge unwavering support for America.” There were fears in many Jewish quarters over what they might say if handed the microphone. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, in particular, still resented deeply what he called the “Palestinian’s attempt at a communal coup d’état” in 1941 and could not get beyond “personal affronts to my legitimate leadership of American Jewry.” Though Bergson was now back in Palestine, “conspiring,” as Wise frequently put it, to “undermine the British while grandstanding as usual,” he had

lieutenants in the United States who would “jump at the opportunity to claim credibility.” At most, Wise argued that Revisionists might be given front-row seats in the synagogue, but only “responsible spokesmen” could “stand unified at the rostrum.”

Silver shared many of Wise’s feelings about the Bergson group’s worldview and tactics. At the same time, he disliked the American Jewish Congress’s delegitimization campaign, feeling that characterizations of Revisionists as “a public calamity” and “a criminal joke” did little to bring all Jewish elements together. But then again, Silver had his own issues with Wise’s claimed leadership over all communal causes. For years, these two men had differed over policies. And their egos led them habitually to wrestle over who should occupy “the first chair” at all communal gatherings. By 1944, Silver felt that Wise, battling the cancer that would take his life in 1949, had to step aside. It was an “insensitive denigration,” said Wise, who took that “affront” very personally. In response, Wise’s followers whispered quite audibly that Silver was “two-faced.” They claimed that when it came to the Revisionists he “played both sides of the street.” To those who were sympathetic to Bergsonites, he gave one impression, while to those charged with aggressively sabotaging their operation, he gave other signals.²

Anxious to avoid turmoil in Kehilath Jeshurun’s sanctuary and determined to ensure that at least the outside world would be convinced that “Jews were one,” Silver decided to stay clear of the Zionist radicals. He agreed only to give their leaders “good seats in the auditorium.” Their tickets, however, would not be used because Bergson directed them—via telegram—to boycott this “false statement of unity.”

The historic gathering went off as scheduled on May 11, 1944. Though rabbis and Jewish lay leaders all had their say, the high point of the gathering was Governor Dewey’s reading of a message from the president. This adroitly crafted statement was written jointly by Taft’s and Dewey’s staffs, with an assist from Silver. Dewey was very happy to affirm Taft’s statement to their Jewish constituents that “since this Republic’s inception, Jews have been among the most patriotic contributors to American democracy and this country’s way of life. They had more than lived up to our first president George Washington’s confidence in them when he promised the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, that they will

continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants and there shall be none to make them afraid." Most critically for those who listened carefully to the White House's message, Taft said: "Your understandable concern for your brethren overseas who are reclaiming an ancient homeland is in keeping with the best traditions of American humanitarian diplomacy." He prayed that "someday soon, we will witness and rejoice when the Jewish state becomes a reality." Years later, American Jews would look back ruefully on the presidential proclamation as a joyous moment that had quickly passed. Soon thereafter their stock would drop dramatically in the estimation of the American public and its leaders. Jewish patriotism would be questioned, bringing out the worst in Jewish communal splintering while driving a wedge between U.S. and Palestinian Jewries. This troubling test of American Jewish loyalty would begin early in 1946 when the United States became tied up with the faltering British in a quixotic joint effort to tamp down violence in Mandatory Palestine.

Though the European war ended in 1944 and the immediacy of the Soviet threat to the democracies had diminished, the British were hardly at peace. They were still battling against the unbowed Japanese. For years, the strategic prioritization of "winning in Europe first" had hamstrung efforts in the Asian theater of operations. As the struggle dragged on into 1946 in what some called "the forgotten war," gloomy naysayers in London worried not only how but whether some of the empire's prize Asian holdings should ever be recaptured from Tokyo's forces.

The dark days of 1940 to early 1943 had brightened somewhat. The holding actions against a complete Japanese conquest of Indo-China, particularly in India, had forestalled a consummate humiliation. In 1944 a pushback began against the Nipponese invaders that motivated Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, to write repeatedly in his diary that "we have stopped losing this war." His perception, shared in New Delhi and in London, was that over the long haul the enemy, for all of its notorious fanaticism, simply did not have the resources to fight both against British-controlled India and the Chinese communists and Nationalists who wanted the invaders out of their country. That hope was very much alive in the spring and summer of 1944 after the Japanese were unsuccessful in a renewed and massive attack that they had hoped would knock the British out of India. The invaders' best-case scenario was that

their incursions would foment a popular uprising against the Europeans, ultimately delivering the region into their hands. But for the most part, notwithstanding their grievances and national aspirations, the Indians stood with the English. Local troops increasingly showed their mettle. Subsequently, British planners conjectured wishfully that in time some moderate voices might be heard in Tokyo with whom the British might negotiate a compromise peace. But for every success, there were setbacks caused, said military analysts over and over again, “by the three ‘Ms’—malaria, monsoons, and morale.” Looking at the conditions on the Asian battlefronts, Churchill told Brooke that slogging against the foe was like “eating a porcupine, one quill at a time.”³

With the sudden end to fighting in Europe, London refocused on Asia, hastily sending tens of thousands of troops into that theater. In 1944, additional progress was made on the seas and within jungle battlefields as more and more soldiers trekked from the British Isles, Australia, and New Zealand into the fight. Lord Louis Mountbatten soon had more than a two-to-one advantage in troops and boasted of air supremacy as well. The high point of his campaign was the liberation of Burma, aided by nationalists who rose up against their conquerors.⁴ But at year’s end, although fears of calamitous defeat had subsided, victory was not in their grasp. British newspapers still spoke about the “savage bravery of the Nipponese” inured “to fight to the last man to hold positions against our valiant troops.” Even if ravaged by disease, malnutrition, and monsoon rains, they refused to surrender. Their favored recourse was suicide. Quarter was never asked, and as far as their Caucasian enemy was concerned, none was given.

As the struggle continued into 1945, dispirited talk at home of “an endless stalemate in Asia” doomed the Churchill government. A peace movement arose in Britain that asserted that the Asian areas that had been maintained or recaptured were a sufficient Union Jack presence in the region. Australia and New Zealand and now India and its environs were out of danger. They would remain “jewels of the Empire.” That assumed, of course, that the indigenous populations on the Asian continent, having rid themselves of the Japanese threat, did not now push for independence from Great Britain. How much more of their erstwhile Asian possessions had to be saved at the tortured expense of treasure and lives?

As Labour Party leader Clement Atlee argued, "We have to get beyond the idea of the necessity of achieving the unconditional surrender of the Japanese." Echoing the ideas and slogans of the peace advocates, his compelling message was that "it is high time for Britain, stymied by an endless war, to move on with building a stronger postwar economy competitive with all of Europe and even the United States." He also spoke in broad strokes about full employment and the creation of a national health service, part of a modern welfare state. In the end, Atlee won a mandate to transform postwar society, as his Labour Party won close to 400 seats in the House of Commons against fewer than 200 Conservative members in the 1946 elections. "To face the future" was his campaign slogan, even as he was sure to remind the public that "it will still take time to achieve a workable peace with the obstinate Japanese." Privately, he told friends that it could take "several more years and a creative end-game solution before we can put the Asian imbroglio behind us."

Through all of their travails, the British were disappointed with American policy toward the Asian war theater. Though grateful that lend-lease was extended when they were most endangered, it was said in London circles that "the Yanks are sitting on the sidelines, while we fight a war for them." The untrammelled U.S. presence in the Philippines was especially galling. Tokyo's crucial decision not to take on the Americans left this key strategic holding untouched while the Japanese conquered and threatened possessions all around it. Some Washington military experts, who kept tabs on the region, worried that the Japanese controlled a string of islands or atolls that surrounded the American preserve and linked its forces with Tokyo. Few Americans knew where Guadalcanal, Palau, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, and other places were located. But government officials understood that the Japanese could hop from one base to another and eventually endanger the Philippines. However, as the War Department debated military scenarios, the dominant view was that, at present, time and circumstances were on their side. The British were now "keeping the occupying Japanese at bay in mainland Asia battles." An attack against the Philippines was not in the foreseeable future. The best course was thus to maintain a "wait and see" attitude, what the British kept referring to as "sideline sitting." In the White House, Taft was satisfied that the policy of preparedness for war but non-intervention therein had served the nation well.

This disposition led to a testy meeting between Taft and Atlee in late November 1946. What was described to the press as “a frank exchange of ideas between two devoted allies” was nothing less than a substantive debate over what the prime minister called “American naiveté about the complexities of the world’s fundamental problems” and its “unwillingness to assume its ‘fair share’ of responsibility for peace and freedom.” Atlee chided that while his country deeply desired to have access to that American wonder weapon to pressure the Japanese to the negotiating table, the “bomb,” for all of its reputed power, would not forever solve the world’s problems. While its threat, two years earlier, had caused Stalin to stand down on the German-Polish border, the prime minister contended that the “frightening device that we pray will never be used, would not provide you or us with any permanent atomic shield.” What was needed in the real and present world was “substantial and continuing American commitment to conventional warfare to root out evildoers in Asia.” For Atlee, Filipino bases of operation would go a long way toward finishing the Japanese problem.

Anxious to set Atlee straight, Taft elucidated his sense of American political realities. “There are few citizens who are overly concerned over developments in the remote Pacific, even among those who are favorably disposed toward the British,” he noted. Indeed, “I, like most of my countrymen, have moved toward engagement with the entangled alliances that we have avoided in the past, but only so far as they clearly benefit our most pressing national interests.” “Bomb or no ‘wonder weapon,’” Taft contended, “we in the United States have our eyes fixed primarily upon Europe and on the continued threat of Soviet expansionism.” Taft told his guest that “as fellow anti-Communists, we have to be willing and able to block Russian aggression. And while Central and Western Europe are the key hot spots requiring our constant attention, the Middle East is now ripe for Russian exploitation.”

The president reminded Atlee that in the prior two years, both Jews and Arabs in Palestine had taken great advantage of “your empire in disarray.” Though Zionists remained grateful for England’s humane immigration policies during German Jewry’s darkest days, with Hitler removed from the scene, there was, in their view, presently no need to be “unqualified supporters of London.” With the population of the Yishuv growing

and a maturing social and political infrastructure in place, it was time, said David Ben-Gurion, executive head of the World Zionist Organization, for us "to stand proudly among the nations of the world. We will do whatever is necessary inside and outside the governmental halls of the world's democracies to achieve our ultimate goal." Establishing a free and independent commonwealth was likewise the unqualified goal of Revisionist Zionist leader Menachem Begin. But he disdained what he critiqued as Ben-Gurion's "circumspect diplomatic niceties," and made clear that "the League of Nations is no more. Its mandate to the British is null and void. It is high time for the occupiers to get out. We will be proud to show them the way." Beginning late in 1944, through a series of attacks against military installations, Begin's shock troops steered the British toward Haifa's harbor with weapons pointing in that direction. Along the way, they sometimes unabashedly took off after local Arabs known to have militated against the cause. Such offensive efforts, in turn, precipitated British counter-measures.

At the same time, Palestinian Arabs, with help from supporters in surrounding Moslem countries, set out to reverse the "*nakba*," the catastrophic stance that the Chamberlain and Churchill governments had taken, starting in 1938, toward Jewish immigration and the Zionist endeavor. The Grand Mufti brought together competing factions into an Arab Higher Committee that financed and coordinated their attacks against the British and the Jews. By late 1946, riots, attacks against their military from two antagonistic sides, and violence against villages and settlements became all too common. The British had lost control of their mandate.

Anxious to extend their influence and territorial reach, the Soviets followed these developments with keen interest. Moscow reasoned that if the British were forced to leave Palestine, their status and prestige in the entire region would be undermined. Stalin told his associates that "a Jewish entity in the area would be forever a source of conflict between the Western states and the Arabs," just the sort of scenario that could offer interesting opportunities for the Soviets. Besides which, the Zionist had their own "socialist" tradition that might be exploited toward an alignment with Moscow.⁵

To head off any Russian infiltration into the region, Taft proposed an "informal, five-to-ten-year Anglo-American trusteeship over Palestine

designed to calm the feuding sides while keeping Jews and Arabs aligned with us.” With the League of Nations no longer in existence, this pact did not need international juridical consent. But the president stopped short of offering a defined treaty arrangement. Such a move would require formal congressional approval, which he could not guarantee. What he could do as commander-in-chief was to send “military advisers.” The exact number would be determined over time. Atlee surely wanted American help with the Middle East against the looming threat of the Soviets. But he had come to Washington for help in ending his Asian predicament. The prime minister reiterated again and again that he needed greater American involvement in the fight against the Japanese to sell a cooperative Middle Eastern venture to his House of Commons. To clinch the deal, Taft agreed to open the Philippines to British troops.

In the days that followed, Atlee confided to his diary that “the president is truly a Zionist” and that “American troops would eventually help the Jews gain control.” When the pact became public, the English tabloids alleged that “America entered the Middle East because Taft had some ‘Jewish blood and Semitic connections.’” Neither the prime minister’s suppositions nor the screaming newspaper headlines possessed a scintilla of truth. Staunch anticommunism drove Taft to commit to the challenge of governing Arabs and Zionists. A Jewish state would be born “someday soon,” but he had no specific timetable in mind. The government of the United States would not be rushed. The first American advisers arrived in the port of Haifa on January 15, 1947, several months after the British gained a staging area in the Philippines.

Back in 1940, a presidential decision to open up the Philippines to the British would have tipped the scales in the Tokyo war councils toward moving against the United States. But many years of war had weakened the Japanese. The longest standing problem, the absence of sufficient raw materials, had reached critically low ebb. Petroleum to feed the machine was depleted, as was food to sustain the military and civilian populations. One Japanese general sighed that “there was no shortage of valiant men but they were unable to work or fight efficiently.”

On the battlefield in China, by the end of 1946, due to the efforts of the Nationalists and communists—sometimes together and often independently—the Japanese withdrew to the coastal ports of Canton, Shanghai,

and Tientsin. From Filipino bases, the battle was moving toward their home island. At this point, notwithstanding the fanatical voices in the war council that pledged to fight "to this last man," a "peace with honor" movement with Prince Fumimora Konoe as its prime advocate began to gain currency. "Mussolini and Hitler are long dead," he reminded his colleagues. "We stand alone in 'our world' against the British and their continental European friends. And now the Americans are no longer quiescent. Perhaps history will judge us harshly for our failure to act against them in 1941. I was one of those who argued against attacking the Philippines and Hawaii. But now, the war has been lost. We have become aware that the Americans possess a 'wonder weapon,' that could bring unparalleled agony to our people." In diplomatic and espionage circles, after the Soviets backed down from moving against Western Europe, the "bomb project" was becoming the world's worst kept secret. U.S. envoys were especially loquacious about their country's new source of power. "Fortunately," Konoe continued, "up until now, the 'bomb project' is solely in Washington's hands. But long before it proliferates amongst the allies of the United States, we must find ways of peace without surrender." Emperor Hirohito sided with Konoe, as did a handful of highly placed politicians and diplomats, each of whom had experience negotiating with the West. Early in 1947, an adjutant to Admiral Kantaro Suzuki made contact with American agents in Berne, Switzerland, about a negotiated settlement.⁶

As noncombatants, the emissary argued, the Americans were uniquely positioned "to broker reasonable concession that would end this 'endless war.'" Playing to America's interests, Lieutenant Kido Okada continued, "The battles in Asia not only have cost countless lives and treasure from all combatants and terrorized millions of civilians, they have weakened the region to its core, rendering it vulnerable to communist incursions." The American diplomat did not have to be reminded of Mao Zedong's Red Chinese, who had fought the Japanese for close to a decade, as well as Stalin's forces that loomed on the Siberian-Manchurian frontier. It would not take much for the Russians to step into Korea to take over that long-disputed Japanese possession.

This critical argument and other deputations brought the exhausted Japanese and their fatigued European enemies to the negotiating table in

late 1947. Ultimately, Tokyo withdrew its forces to their island base, but maintained control over Korea. There they watched fearfully as the Soviets rattled sabers and armed, as Stalin put it, “indigenous patriotic forces,” which in due course would be ready to “liberate their country from foreign oppression.” China remained in turmoil as the Nationalists and communists quickly resumed their battles for control of the mainland. The British were very relieved that the war had finally ended. They still had to deal with the raised aspirations of their imperial possessions, however. Freed of Japanese influence, Indians, among others, wanted an end to British hegemony in the region. However, as Downing Street officials reviewed their foreign policy options, they felt secure that, at least in the Middle East, the assistance of the United States would tamp down volatility.

But time, the desired five-to-ten-year trusteeship period, proved not to be on the side of the British and the Americans. The Zionists did not retreat from their call for a Jewish state, while the Arabs vocally demanded immediate Arab independence. Violence intensified in city streets and villages as both sides’ paramilitary groups pressed their positions, taking special aim at American advisers. Privately, Menachem Begin believed that the American public was the soft spot in the colonialists’ armor. He mused to his inner circle that “in the end, Americans did not make good imperialists. They always had second thoughts as occupiers. The advisers are not certain about their role. As important, they have not been hardened—as the British were—by the experience of a generation at war. If Americans are killed in a fight that they believe is not their own, Americans will quickly push their government to rethink policy.”

Indeed, just three months after the first American advisers set foot in Palestine, an attack against them and against British officers as well incited a full-blown reexamination in many U.S. quarters about what the country was doing in the area. And even before the smoke had completely cleared, “the friendship of the Zionists toward America” was harshly interrogated and sometimes denounced. In April 1947 a crack team of Irgun operatives bombed the joint Anglo-American headquarters at Jerusalem’s King David Hotel. The attack killed some ninety British officers, twelve Ben-Gurion emissaries who cooperated with the trustee, and four U.S. advisers, leading provocative media—like the *New York Daily Mirror*—to shout “Palestine’s Jews at War against America.”

Shaken by tabloid headlines, Judge Joseph Proskauer called for his own "unity conference." In May 1947, the head of the American Jewish Committee sent telegrams to every "responsible" Jewish leader calling on them to gather at the Biltmore Hotel in Manhattan to reaffirm publicly "American Jewish patriotism." In innumerable private conversations, Proskauer explicitly opined that "distance must be put between us and those Palestinian trouble-makers who are providing anti-Semites in this country with the lamentable opportunity to accuse American Jews of dual loyalty." For more than a quarter-century, Proskauer had expended every effort to deter his fellow Jews from pledging their allegiance to the Zionist cause. In his own oft-repeated words, he had "given almost my life's blood to stop this catastrophe for world Jewry." Most recently, in 1942, he had poured his own personal fortune, and some of the resources of the American Jewish Committee, toward building roadblocks at the Central Conference of American Rabbis meeting to keep Zionism out of Reform Jewish circles. To friends and confidants he averred that "the Committee had to be the unerring mouthpiece for the unalterable position that in the United States as in all other countries, Jews, like others, are devoted nationals of their countries and no others."⁷

Thus it was a moment of great personal despair for Proskauer when, a few hours before the opening of the Biltmore Conference, an Associated Press reporter buttonholed him and asked for a response to very distressing news. The FBI had just broken up and arrested a group of young American Jews who were smuggling weapons to the Jewish Palestinians. J. Edgar Hoover proudly announced that this "cabal"—a choice of terms that both infuriated and worried American Jews—"had shown themselves disloyal to their adopted country," and he hinted that more arrests of "sympathizers" were imminent. Upon regaining his equanimity, Proskauer angrily condemned these "criminals" and promised that all "true American Jews would do their utmost to help our government root out these traitors." Convinced that now was no time for subtleties, he drove his delegates to adopt an uncompromising position highly critical of Palestinian Jewish efforts.⁸

The Biltmore Platform pledged American Jewry's "unequivocal devotion to the cause of democratic freedom and international justice to which the government of the United States has long been dedicated." For these

signatories, there was no greater example of these American principles than its “heroic efforts in Palestine to broker peace between Arabs and Jews and to stabilize the region against totalitarian regimes.” “Selflessly,” the document declared, “American diplomats and soldiers have labored toward fulfillment of the promises of the Balfour Declaration.” Proskauer and his colleagues asserted with great certainty that “in time, the promised national home for the Jewish people would become a reality. We have abiding faith in the good will of our government. But this long-anticipated event will occur only when the world community unites behind a plan that would not undermine the rights and privileges of existing non-Jewish groups.” Making clear that the time was not ripe for a Jewish commonwealth, the resolution asserted that “while we await and pray for that moment, we call upon all responsible groups to desist from attempts to question American and British authority.” The platform’s clear recommendation to the Yishuv was to “patiently” continue its “pioneering achievement in agriculture and in industry, embodying new patterns of cooperative endeavor.” Finally, it called upon American Jews to desist completely from “aiding those within our own religious group who would undermine a fair and just peace.”⁹

The leaders of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, who in 1942 had fought off the “Zionist threat” from within their own Reform ranks, wildly applauded Proskauer’s carefully crafted conference declaration. Rabbi Elmer Berger, a member of the CCAR’s presidium, proposed at its 1947 conference in Washington, D.C., that “as graphic proof of where we stand to all Americans, those synagogues that have placed Zionist flags in their sanctuaries near Old Glory remove these offending symbols from our holy precincts.” When his fellow Reform rabbis from around the country responded affirmatively to Berger’s idea, delegates favorable to the American Reform Council for Zionism, who had, for half a decade, struggled to promote Jewish nationalism in the movement, stormed out in protest. Their mentor, Abba Hillel Silver, gave voice to their anger when he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that “Berger is a coward. His reprehensible supporters are so fearful of a charge of ‘dual loyalty’ that these weak-kneed rabbis have let the regrettable actions of a few terrorists scare them into betraying their brethren in Palestine.” A weakened Stephen S. Wise, struggling with cancer treatments, did not speak publicly about how

he—like Silver—now felt so much alone and abandoned. But they shared these sad sentiments and together shed many tears when they met in Wise's home a few days after the disastrous conference. Silver came to New York to make amends with his colleague and long-time rival, whose vision of Zionism and the future of American Judaism now had been waylaid.

Joseph Lookstein decried the CCAR position and Berger's suggestion as "perfidy." It was "an unmitigated example of Jewish self-hatred." He called for a day of communal mourning and introspection to be held, fittingly, on Wednesday, September 17, 1947, the date on the Jewish calendar of the Fast of Gedalia. In the sixth century B.C.E., after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem, Jews were granted limited sovereignty under Gedalia, the governor whom the Babylonians installed as their ruler in ancient Judah. His assassination by Jewish zealots and the subsequent deportation of Jews from their homeland ended the history of the First Commonwealth. This act of "hatred of one Jew for another," Lookstein told the *New York Times*, "is being replicated today by those who by words and not by sword would kill stillborn the third Jewish commonwealth." Lookstein's disciples at Yeshiva University—where he taught sociology and sermonics—and rabbinical students at the Jewish Theological Seminary were deeply taken with his jeremiad. On the communal fast day, these young people joined hands and marched with American Zionist activists of all ages and held a sit-in at the New York offices of the CCAR. As the police removed the protesters at the behest of an enraged Elmer Berger, they recited in unison: "By the rivers of new Babylon, here we sit down and weep when we remember Zion." Like those who had lived in the Diaspora of "old" Babylon a generation after Gedalia and who would "never forget Jerusalem," these American Jews also believed that the destiny of Jewish Palestine had to be their greatest concern.

While Lookstein was moved by the students' demonstration, he was stung that most members of his own congregation—and most other New York Jews—failed to be galvanized to speak out against the Biltmore Platform and showed little interest in pressing their government for the quick creation of a Jewish state. Lookstein would write to Silver that "the greatest tragedy is not so much that Proskauer had played on the status fears of American Jews but that so many of our people in America do not

care to be part of an unparalleled moment that, please God, could change the destiny of the Jewish people.” The embittered rabbi also told his Reform associate that he had “lost total faith in the prospect of working with most of your colleagues in building an attractive American Judaism for future generations.” Waxing homiletic, Lookstein continued: “What sort of Judaism can work in this country that is devoid of a Zionist spirit? I predict that their temples will soon be empty for they have nothing to offer our future generations. I will always cooperate with you and we both pray for Rabbi Wise’s health. But not until now did I realize how isolated you and the American Reform Council for Zionism are from a mainstream that is flowing into a stagnant pond.”

Over in Brooklyn, old-line Orthodox Jews groups viewed the Biltmore Platform as a positive step in preserving the faith. To them, however, a declaration that spoke about a Jewish commonwealth even sometime in a remote future did not go far enough to undermine Zionist intentions. Heads of yeshivas in Williamsburg considered for a moment sending some of their younger followers to Manhattan to protest against Lookstein’s “apostates.” But they ultimately decided against a demonstration, feeling that it might be perceived as constituting approbation for the Reform movement. With American Jewry in total disarray, they would remain in Brooklyn and keep building their enclaves, staying in touch with rabbis whom they revered and communities they still felt part of in Eastern Europe. They patiently awaited the coming of the Messiah.

Early in October 1947, a troubling State Department memorandum was passed on to President Taft. Military analysts had studied the teeming turmoil in Palestine and now estimated that to “lock down Arab violence against the outnumbered Jews would require 400,000 U.S. combat troops.” Such a move “would inevitably throw the majority of the Arabs into the arms of Soviet Russia.” Preempting any argument that “Palestinian Jews are the bulwark of democracy in the region and a potential effective industrial, military ally to the West,” the report asserted that at present the “Arabs are more anticommunist than the Jews.” And the Arabs sat on billions of gallons of oil. American massive-scale intervention, it was predicted, would “virtually concede the loss of American access to Middle East oil.” Political experts did admit that a full-fledged embrace of the Arabs would infuriate American Jews in some key electoral geographical

areas, and that their "power, money, and influence should not be totally gainsaid." But the Taft administration was reaching its end and would not have to endure ballot box scrutiny. The Biltmore Conference declaration suggested strongly that many of the most respected American Jews really did not care all that much about Palestine.

The State Department's consummate advice was for the administration to disengage from Palestine and to convince the British to do likewise. It was strongly advocated that in anticipation of an expected Arab triumph, the Taft administration should send feelers to the Arab side indicating America's "positive intentions toward the rightful residents of that land" while admonishing that "their victorious armies were unconditionally obliged to deal mercifully with Jewish inhabitants." One of the collateral documents attached to this report included excerpts from an address by a little-known Missouri senator, Harry S. Truman. His opinion made sense to State Department officials: "If there would be a humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, I would argue strongly that the lives of all non-combatants had to be protected. To be clear, if hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives were indeed in existential danger, I would be a supporter of Zionism. But the situation has not yet reached such a critical moment."

One month later, in November 1947, Taft carried this State Department mandate to London for what was heralded as "crucial bilateral talks on the future of the Middle East." Once again, the press was told of "a frank exchange of ideas between friends," but the meeting room rankled with recriminations. Atlee had hoped that the president had come to their meeting armed with a commitment to send several divisions of front-line troops to back up the advisers and to complement British troops. When told, however, of the U.S. "departure date in May 1948," the prime minister spoke angrily of a "flaccid, feckless ally that retreated at the first signs of difficulty to neo-isolationist repose." "What of the fear of the Soviets that brought America just a year ago to embark on a Middle Eastern adventure?" Atlee demanded of Taft. "Are we British to again be called upon to shoulder alone the burden of opposing tyranny?" The president responded that "America remained committed above all else to anticommunism. But we are being tarred throughout the Arab world as 'colonialists' who are using the trusteeship ruse to eventually impose Zionism upon the region. Such a stance will eventuate with the oil-rich countries turning to the

Russians. We can better secure our vital interests by taking steps back and by projecting ourselves as even-handed.” When asked about a “new cycle of violence that inevitably will ensue once we show our new intentions,” Taft argued that “our joint position has to be that the warring parties must resolve their differences by themselves without interference. Had a League of Nations still existed, we would have gratefully surrendered this problem to the world community. But the reality is that we must now do what is best for our two nations.” Atlee held his tongue when Taft evoked the memory of the late international body. But he did think that while Taft had supported the League concept, it was American isolationism that sorely contributed to its failure. When Taft was pressed about the “inevitability of an Arab conquest and of the potential for mass murder of the vanquished Zionists,” he commented strongly that “the Jews in Palestine have shown that they wish to have their fate in their own hands. So be it!” As the meeting broke up, Taft asserted similarly that the “British had the right to go it alone and persist in the region, but if such be their wont, again so be it.”

When news of the American withdrawal plan was made public, members of the House of Commons were initially indignant and called for an end to the Atlee government, charging it with the dual errors of “profound misreading and miscalculations.” But Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin turned the tide of debate with his adroit strategy for the Middle East possession. “The empire,” he maintained, “must in some places remain physically intact. But here in the Middle East, we must be content with our political and moral influence to reign supreme so long as our efforts will keep the communist threat at bay.” With a nod toward the Arabs, Bevin proposed that Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, “must be given one last chance to work with us toward implementing a two-commonwealth plan under our continued leadership. If rejected, we should leave the field with our honor intact.” May 1948 was established as the tentative date for the removal of British forces.¹⁰

Years later, Taft would explain in his memoirs what had compelled him to adopt what Rabbi Silver—his erstwhile friend—characterized as “an immoral retreat.” The former president wrote that “it was no surprise that the State Department reprised its longstanding position. But I was hard pressed to rebut their position given the tenor of feeling among Americans

after the terrorist bombing in Jerusalem. Widespread antipathy to Zionist methods, if not their goals, was evident in the land. I took particular note of the sentiments of congressional leaders. After American Jews rejected terrorism, a group of moderate American Zionists, with my friend Abba Hillel Silver in the lead, formed a lobbying group, the American Zionist Emergency Council, to enlist representatives and senators for a 'democratic Jewish Palestine that shares [our] values and will always stand with us.' But from every report that I received, it was clear that their efforts gained little traction on Capitol Hill. I sympathized with Rabbi Silver, whose cause had become so marginalized both among American Jews and his fellow Americans."

As was ominously predicted, the announcement of a withdrawal date for Anglo-American forces touched off an escalation of violence in Palestine. But the prognostications of Arab victory proved false. When Palestinian forces began attacking Yishuv settlements in December 1947, the Arabs outnumbered the Jews two to one. The Zionists had fewer weapons than their enemies and chafed under the announced "even-handed" U.S. arms embargo. For armaments, the Haganah (the Palestinian Jewish defense force) continued to rely on smuggled weapons that American Zionists, risking imprisonment, ferried to Haifa. More important, the Soviet Union, which was ever ready to embarrass the British and Americans and to stake additional claims in the region, sent guns to the Jews. David Ben-Gurion cared little that the Russians also backed the Arabs.

Decades later, historians of the conflict would conclude that the Zionists held sway in the winter and spring of 1947-48 largely because of a "civilizational disparity." A westernized society effectively "deployed superior organizational and technological skills to overcome a disorganized Arab aggregation." The Zionists were "prepared and steeled for war." Every soldier was highly motivated, as they were "literally defending hearth and home." While many of their opponents fought valiantly, they were badly "dispersed, under local control, and not standardized." Legends would be spun, and war ballads would be sung, in Zionist circles of how well-entrenched defenders of kibbutzim in the Upper Galilee region, possessing only light weapons and nary a machine gun, held off attackers until the reinforcements that the Haganah efficiently coordinated reached their outposts. However, while the Jews of Palestine, during this first phase of the

conflict, succeeded on the battlefield, six thousand miles away in the United States, “Zionist military activities” endured harsh public criticism.¹¹

As Jews and Arabs battled in Palestine, lives of American advisers—“heroic peace keepers,” shouted the tabloids—were lost in the crossfire. To make matters worse, there were reports that Russian-made armaments were used in some of these “killings of innocents.” When an FBI raid of an upstate New York bullet factory making illegal arms for the Haganah—against the American embargo—led to the arrest of rabbinical students from Yeshiva University and the Jewish Theological Seminary, groups of American “patriotic” organizations picketed these Jewish institutions demanding that they, too, “show [their] true colors.” The popularity of Zionism reached a new low among the masses of American Jews, who did little to help the embattled national cause. They remained mightily concerned about their reputations in the United States.

On May 14, 1948, with Palestinian forces temporarily at bay and British soldiers and American advisers packing up, the Jewish Agency for Palestine met in a theater in Tel Aviv and heard David Ben-Gurion declare the creation of the State of Israel. Almost immediately, Andrei Gromyko, the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, proclaimed the “right of Jews to enjoy self-determination” and recognized the new political entity. Ben-Gurion did not publicly thank the Russians for their approbation. He understood the political ramifications of a perceived friendship with Stalin’s regime. But he did chafe that the United States and Great Britain did not immediately extend a comparable welcome to Israel. In his speech, he had thanked those two powers—especially the British—for their “general humanity and civility in seeking peace in the holy land.” American assent to the creation of the Jewish state came several weeks later, after Taft had tested the political waters and determined that animosity toward “Jewish terrorists” had subsided. The soon-to-be Israeli prime minister was also deeply put off by the tepid response of American Jewry to what Ben-Gurion saw as “the culmination of 2,000 years of Jewish exile and anguish.” Most American Jews checked what the gentiles around them were thinking as they awaited Washington’s recognition of Israel. Advocates for Zionism in America several times planned and then tabled a massive “Salute to Israel” rally in late May at Madison Square Garden. They were apprehensive both about not filling the 20,000-seat hall and about possible protests

against Zionism in the streets near Fiftieth Street and Eighth Avenue. Prayers for the new state were offered, however, in many Conservative and Modern Orthodox synagogues across the nation. While they emphasized to their local papers that theirs was a “religious and not a political act,” rabbis tried to connect those in the pews with the Jewish state through reading a prayer of thanksgiving written by the Chief Rabbi of Israel.

In Arab countries, spontaneous street demonstrations, attacks against Jewish populations, and hysterical calls from within the souks for war against the Zionists immediately followed Ben-Gurion’s declaration of Israeli independence. In the months that followed—from May to July 1948—the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan invaded the new Jewish state “in support of their brothers.” In the early weeks of the war, the Arabs’ superior firepower gave them the upper hand. The Old City of Jerusalem fell to the crack Jordanian Legion. The Egyptians boasted about their incursions across Suez into the southern parts of Israel, destination Tel Aviv. Syrian and Lebanese troops endangered Israeli farm settlements in the north. But just like the December 1947 struggle, in time an absence of unity within Arab circles and a lack of staying power undid their efforts. Experienced journalist Pierre van Paassen, who had covered the Middle East since the 1920s, wrote that “after their initial successes, Arab leaders spent too much time plotting against each other, sizing up the lands they would occupy once they conquered the Jews and too little time keeping their own troops motivated for battle.” Propagandists and officers had told their troops that “it was Allah’s will that a quick and complete victory would be theirs.” But once the Israeli forces, blessed with superior “internal communications, higher motivation, and familiarity with the terrain of the harsh hills of Palestine,” held off their initial thrusts, “a malaise of defeatism” infected their enemies. It also helped the Yishuv that the Russians, pursuing their own cynical version of even-handedness, sold arms to both sides. Except for the well-trained Jordanians who held on to the Holy City, the other fighters did not make the best use of the Soviet tanks, mortars, and armored cars that came their way. The Jewish defenders did. By the summer of 1948, Israel had secured its northern boundaries, and its most aggressive commanders, in control of the Negev, were looking toward driving the Egyptians out of the Sinai Peninsula and even overrunning the Suez Canal.¹²

Though no one in the Taft administration, or even the staunchest Arabists in the State Department, had wanted a massacre of Jews in Palestine, the magnitude of the Israeli battlefield turnabout was unsettling to foreign policy strategists. The Americans and the British had put their faith in an international arms embargo. It was a stricture that the Soviets blithely ignored and arms dealers from other nations capitalized upon. These Great Powers hoped that, absent the weapons to do more than defend their home turf, the Israelis would be satisfied with a truce that would permit them to start their requisite nation building. But now, unexpectedly, the Israeli Defense Force—the successor to the Haganah—was on the offensive. Israel was becoming the new power in the region and had done so without the help of the United States. There was resentment in Jerusalem over the “American’s own so-called ‘even-handedness.’” State Department prognosticators did not fear an Israeli alliance with the Soviets. Kremlinologists felt that Stalin’s personal antisemitism and the tradition of Jew hatred among his subjects would never permit such a compact. However, there was much worry in Washington that there would be a substantial decline in American influence in that critical region, given “an ungrateful, unaligned” Israel.

In the months that followed, the question of “Who Lost Palestine” became a major issue during the presidential campaign. The Democratic Party pilloried the Taft administration for its “incoherent policies that had undermined American power.” Its nominee for the White House, General George C. Marshall, spoke incessantly about the administration’s “misadventures, first involving the country in that tinderbox, ostensibly on the side of the Jews, then cutting and running at the expense of our British allies, leaving the Jews and Arabs to battle without Christian restraints, rendering the territory open for Soviet chicanery and now witnessing the Jewish state demonstrate a lack of respect for a nation that had long welcomed oppressed Jews to its midst.” The Republican nominee, Thomas E. Dewey, was hard-pressed to defend Taft, with whom he was widely identified.

A career army officer of the highest echelon, best known and highly respected for his theories on how to prepare American forces for military engagements of all kinds, Marshall was the designated point man in the 1944 rapid and massive build-up of the U.S. military when the Taft

administration faced down the Soviet threat to Central and Eastern Europe. For Marshall, it was the assignment of which he would say, "I waited my entire career to assume." When *Life* profiled Marshall in the fall of 1944, it asserted that he was the senior exemplar of a group of "highly trained but frustrated generals who had for a generation waited on the sidelines of military history waiting for their nation's call to action." The magazine piece spoke of how the careers of aspiring graduates of West Point, men like Dwight D. Eisenhower, George S. Patton Jr., and Omar Bradley, had been effectively put on hold during their nation's isolationist years in the 1920s and 1930s. When America was spared involvement in the 1940s European War, they had often wondered to each other—and to anyone else who would listen—whether they would ever "fight for freedom instead of just watching events from afar." Appointed chief of staff by Taft, Marshall also now had his chance to act upon his deeply felt hatred of communism. In just a matter of months, he prepared masses of American troops for battle. Though the confrontation with the Soviets ultimately did not take place due to the United States' intimidating wonder weapon, Marshall was honored widely for his "strength and preparedness." These sterling characteristics would be bywords during his presidential run in 1948.

Marshall had a definitive vision of America's role in the world, a clear set of priorities underscoring the need to stop communism in Europe and Asia. He proffered a "comprehensive plan" that, he said, both the current Republican administration and Thomas Dewey lacked. On the stump, Marshall constantly reiterated that "four years have passed since I stared down the Russians. But they still loom in the eastern and western European territories that had not recovered sufficiently from Hitler's war. Our first priority is to bolster our allies economically and militarily to preclude a 'soft invasion,' the infiltration of communist ideas that would be aided and abetted by economic disarray and political instability." Looking at the Far East, Marshall further asserted that "while the Japanese threat has subsided, a greater enemy, the Communist Chinese, are rising and we must help the Nationalists hold off these insurgents." Taking direct aim at Republican policies, Marshall argued that "with the world in flux, there has been a lack of clarity in American objectives; an opaqueness seen most sadly in the Middle East. We have been neither strong nor prepared to project our power and leadership."

America had gone wrong in the region, Marshall argued, through “the present administration’s failure to understand our most basic needs. We have alienated our oil-rich Arab friends. What would we do if war came again to Europe and the Moslem states would starve us of oil?” Marshall took heed of advice that Wall Street banker James Forrestal gave him about the crisis in that region. It was a viewpoint that the candidate readily incorporated into his campaign. “There are 400,000 Jews in the region and 40 million Arabs. While the Jews, remarkably, have stopped the Arabs, at least for now, from pushing them into the sea, oil is the side we ought to be on.” When confronted by reporters about this “pro-Arab” stance, Marshall bristled and contended that “it is a specious argument that the Jewish state, this so-called bulwark of democracy, is an effective military ally of the West. The Arabs are as much anticommunist as the Jews and the Jews took arms from our enemies.” The general’s eyes narrowed as he argued passionately that the “history of American support for the Jews’ nationalism is nothing more than a poorly disguised ploy to garner ‘New York votes.’ In the past few months, Israelis have not shown loyalty to us. America must do what is best for Americans.”¹³

The tone and tenor of Marshall’s stances deeply perturbed American Jews of all political persuasions. From Proskauer to Silver, from Wise to Lookstein—and even among many Jewish men and women in the street—there was recognition that for the first time in U.S. history, a serious candidate for the presidency had made the Jews a central issue in a run for the White House. Though Marshall and his surrogates denied repeatedly that they were antisemites, Jews noted that the Democrat had clearly conflated Jews with Zionism and that “New York votes” really meant New York Jewish votes. A sharp letter from Proskauer to Silver and Wise did little to promote a united Jewish front. “Your years of advocacy for a foreign cause, Zionism,” Proskauer wrote, “has poisoned our reputation in our American homeland. We are reaping the whirlwind of Jew hatred.” Marshall’s statements did, however, encourage and motivate former ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy to shift his political allegiances again. Finding the “general to be a voice that all Americans must hear,” Kennedy rejoined the Democrats. While the *New York Times* scoffed at “Kennedy’s self-serving machinations,” the Marshall campaign happily accepted his large contribution to its electoral war chest.

While Marshall had foreign policy issues that rallied supporters, on the domestic front he had to deal with the potential splintering of Democratic ranks on the issue of race. He understood that the affirmative approach toward fair employment practices that Negro leaders had demanded—they called their petitioning “A Fair Deal from the Party of the New Deal”—might drive southerners to form a third party. Like McNutt, Marshall was patently noncommittal to A. Philip Randolph and his civil rights associates. But Marshall was proactive in mollifying his southern friends. Ever the strategist, in private conversations with South Carolina governor Strom Thurmond, he made clear that America had to maintain its “separate but equal” doctrine toward race. As he reminded Thurmond, such had been his policy toward Negroes—or, as he often called them, “darky soldiers”—in the military back in the late 1930s when questions first arose about someday integrating the armed forces. The segregationist spokesman was pleased with Marshall’s recounting that these proposals were the work of “hated communists whom all good Americans despise.” As their discussion reached its conclusion, the general explained that he “did not hate the colored race” but that their “lack of inherent capacities” precluded them from serving side by side with white soldiers.¹⁴

Thurmond agreed wholeheartedly with the racial sentiments of this son of the old South. Though Marshall had been raised in Pennsylvania, he was the scion of a colonial Virginia family and had been graduated from the Virginia Military Institute before moving on to West Point. Still, the South Carolina governor was not totally sold on the Democratic standard-bearer. His concerns had much to do with the candidate’s anti-Zionism stance. One of Thurmonds’ rock-ribbed principles was that a “Jewish state would be the strategic backbone of democracy in the Middle East.”¹⁵ On the other hand, Thurmond perceived Marshall as unusually equipped to forestall civil rights aspirations inside and outside his party. Thurmond reassured the candidate that there would be no revolt within party ranks among delegates and elected officials from Dixie. Marshall was abundantly pleased. But to clinch southern support, he had his surrogates in Dixie make much of Dewey’s own pro-Negro record as the governor of New York. In Albany, Dewey had appointed blacks to meaningful government jobs and had supported fights against discrimination, especially at the growing state university where minorities were previously excluded. These

initiatives did not satisfy America's blacks, who were chagrined that Dewey soft-pedaled this aspect of his career, but they troubled southern whites. In time, the fight against integration at southern colleges and universities would be both a point of pride and a fundamental issue of states' rights below the Mason-Dixon Line. Marshall would gain traction with voters as his surrogates called for Dewey to explain where he "really stood on the race question."¹⁶

Marshall had fewer worries about challenges to his aspirations from the left wing of his party. In 1940, Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace was on FDR's short list to succeed him as the party's nominee for president. The word on the political street also had it that if Roosevelt had been allowed to run for a third term, he would have dumped disloyal Vice President John Nance Garner and replaced him with Wallace. Wallace's presidential candidacy faltered primarily over what both party leaders and regulars perceived as his strangeness. Still, he had his devoted followers whose ardor only increased as he articulated an alternative view—different from Taft and Dewey as well as from Marshall—on American foreign policy. While still the internationalist, the Democratic hopeful was a lone voice for what would later be termed "rapprochement" between the West and Russia. He did not fear Soviet hegemony and preached a systematic stand-down from incipient Cold War footings.¹⁷

Dewey consistently ignored Wallace. But Marshall felt obliged to pillory his fellow Democrat's "quasi-communist" positions and took great umbrage at Wallace's criticism of him for opposing Zionism and the new State of Israel. From his days in FDR's cabinet, Wallace had been on the record in support of Jewish national aspirations. In 1947, he visited the Yishuv and came away from a sojourn among "the conquerors of the Negev impressed with the commitment, resourcefulness and abilities of Palestinian Jewish pioneers." On the campaign trail as the candidate of a hastily formed Progressive Party, Wallace harshly characterized opponents of the Zionists as nothing more than "appeasers of feudal lords" and as surreptitious agents of "oil trusts." If elected, he promised to deliver an "ultimatum" to the Arabs to cease their offensives against the new Israel.¹⁸

Anxious to rebut any accusation that he was less than totally focused on American interests, Marshall strongly countered. Referring directly to Wallace, he alleged that, minimally, "this mystic and zealot was a pawn of

the communists intent in gaining American acquiescence to Soviet aggression." At worst, he was part of a "communist front intent on infiltrating America and spreading disunity and confusion nationwide."¹⁹ Most importantly, American support for Zionism and now Israel, Marshall repeatedly contended, diverted U.S. attention from its most critical foreign policy objectives.

Each in their own ways, Dewey and Wallace responded by denigrating Marshall as a racist and antisemite. They found former soldiers who recounted the general's off-the-cuff remarks about "Nigra boys," and adjutants detailed how discriminatory policies were part of the "routine" of life in the army. The Republican and Progressive Party spokesmen made even more of Marshall's longstanding friendship with former general George Van Horn Moseley, an avowed immigration restrictionist and virulent antisemite. Back in the dark days before the Munich turnabout, when Americans were debating daily the fate of refugees from the Reich, Moseley made clear that to "protect our future," only those immigrants who would be willing to undergo "sterilization would be permitted to disembark on American shores." Marshall, they alleged, remained a friend and confidant of Moseley for years after 1940 when antisemitic fringe groups entreated Moseley to run as their choice for the White House. While Dewey piled on these criticisms from his perch as Republican nominee, Wallace spoke out apart from Democratic ranks. He galvanized his supporters within his quixotic third-party movement.

However, anti-Marshall revelations did little more than outrage Dewey's substantial base and Wallace's small but devoted band of supporters. Political observers, in fact, opined that this tactic backfired against Marshall's opponents. Reporters mused that many Americans quietly shared many of Marshall's and even Moseley's attitudes toward minorities.²⁰

The results of the November election turned out very poorly for Dewey and in some respects boded even worse for Jews, the majority of whom voted Republican. Marshall was swept into office through an electoral combination that included a Solid South that was worried about Dewey on civil rights and by a larger segment of the population nationwide that did not like the direction of the country's foreign policy. Marshall's staunch anticommunism also galvanized his backers.

Columnists spoke of a new Democratic coalition that was quite different from FDR's, which had comprised an array of urban ethnics—most notably Jews, workers, and blacks (the latter in those places where they could vote). Dewey held his own in his home state of New York, his “Jewish stronghold,” or so his critics carped. But elsewhere his moderate messages rebounded against him. Jews were appalled that a “Jewish question” had been debated in the campaign arenas and that the wrong man who intimidated dual loyalty charges had been chosen chief executive. It also did not help Jewish cachet within the new administration that Wallace had done quite well among left-leaning Jews.

Hurried and anxious meetings were held in many Jewish quarters in the nine weeks before Marshall's inauguration. Ways and means had to be found, argued Joseph Proskauer, to “restore American Jewish credibility.” At a gathering that he chaired of officials from the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith (ADL), the two longest-standing defense organizations, Proskauer canvassed the room for “men of wealth with sterling American reputations, no connections with offensive Zionist organizations and no history of even a hint of leftist feeling to stand up for our religious group in America.” The proceedings opened with Professor Jacob Rader Marcus delivering a lecture on the “heroic history of the *Shtadlan*”—the court Jew. In the early modern period, Marcus explained, these men of wealth and influence had used their personal relationships with kings and nobles to protect Jewish communities from antisemitic attacks. “It is now your time,” Marcus exhorted his audience, “to use whatever powers of persuasion at your disposal to counter allegations rife in the land and seemingly present in the White House and on Capitol Hill that Jews are not 100% American.” In the executive sessions that followed, the sense around the table was that “talk was not enough.” Frank Goldman, president of the B'nai B'rith, argued that “every organization must clean their houses of any employee or professional with past or present ties with communist or socialist groups.” He also directed the ADL's research group voluntarily to turn over its files on Jewish leftist activities to congressional leaders who were looking at the communist threat to America. “They,” Goldman asserted emotionally, “are not part of us.” He proposed a resolution, unanimously approved, that his organization and the B'nai B'rith reach out to the Jewish War

Veterans—"Jews who during the Great War of 1917 showed how patriotic we are"—and together seek membership in the All-American Conference to Combat Communism. He also pledged—off the record but within Proskauer's happy earshot—to do his utmost to dissociate his fraternal organization from any board member who contributed independently to "the Israeli army." During one of the recesses of the three-day conference, Proskauer and Goldman were amused by a report that the American Jewish Congress—a Zionist group whom they had not invited to their conclave—had moved to expel the Jewish People's Fraternal Order—the Yiddish branch of the Communist International Workers Order—from its midst. Proskauer chuckled: "At least here the Zionists got one thing right!"²¹

Ultimately, these leaders decided on a two-pronged approach. The most important men would form what they would call the American Jewish Public Affairs Committee (AJPAC) to work the halls of Congress and try to convince the administration of their good will. And a "Jewish Loyalty Day" rally would be organized again to "show where we stand." Proskauer approved of both stratagems, but he had some reservations about the public gathering even though he was to be a featured speaker. He worried whether rank-and-file Jews were concerned enough to turn out en masse for the gathering. He remarked that so "many other Jewish public events, those sponsored by our friends and foes have failed to fill large public faces. Even as we face tremendous potential dangers, Jewish men and women in their neighborhoods stay at home and tend to their mundane businesses." He was also afraid that this "most warranted and meritorious" event would galvanize those "noisy Zionist and radical troublemakers who might undo all the good we have set out to accomplish."

Toward the end of the meeting an honored guest, Senator Herbert Lehman of New York, rose to suggest that, "in keeping both with the President-Elect's staunch anticommunism and the largest needs of the Jewish people," plans be developed to assist Jews under Soviet control or threatened with Russian domination. "While we do have concerns about our brethren in Israel," Lehman said, "there are millions of 'forgotten Jews' who have silently endured cultural oppression." "To be sure," he continued, "now is not the time to ask that America admit them as refugees. Still, thought should be given to how we can assist our brethren financially and

diplomatically. I will do my best to speak privately about this humanitarian concern that is within the best American traditions to my colleagues on the Hill." Lehman's idea was met with nodding approval, but action was deferred.

The news of this conference received a tepid reaction from Marshall as he assumed office. He told his Defense Department designee, James Forrestal, that he would adopt "a wait-and-see attitude toward America's Jews." He kept in the back of his mind an off-the-cuff remark that Joseph P. Kennedy had made some months back. "There are some Jews," he asserted, "that can be trusted as patriots like us. The trick is to ferret them out from amid so many with their 'Jewish agendas.'" Marshall mused to himself that "Kennedy is a real Jew-hater. Look at his rhetoric even when he praised Jews as 'some of his best friends.'" But the president-elect did heed Kennedy's suggestion that the back door to the Oval Office might be opened to "the right type of Jew," visitors whose credentials had been carefully vetted. Forrestal also found that Marshall was attuned to a vision of the potential undermining power of unbridled "Jewish influence." "No group in this country," he allowed, "should be allowed to influence our policy to the point it could endanger our national security." Reflecting on the road that led them to the White House, Forrestal agreed with his boss that "it was in the end better to have lost states in our national election than run risks . . . in our handling of Palestine." Marshall and his friends knew clearly that the states in play were in the Northeast where so many Jews resided.²²

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, David Ben-Gurion was apoplectic when he heard about the Proskauer initiatives and that Zionists were barred from participating by "those self-appointed leaders who serve only themselves and to presume to speak for American Jewry." A battle then ensued that would last a generation between Israeli officials and those whom they would derogatorily call the "American Jewish oligarchy" over issues of political allegiance, religious loyalty, and group identity. With sensitivities rubbed raw, an angry confrontation took place in January 1949 between Ben-Gurion, Proskauer, and David Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee. In a meeting with Israeli journalists, a still-seething prime minister declared that "without Zionism as a cultural bulwark, there is no future for American Jewry. As the leaders, advocates and

spokesmen for world Jewry, we will work with those who want to survive as a people in propagating Jewish nationalism in the United States. Our target will be American Jewish young people who must be saved by migration en masse from their empty U.S. shells to live in Israel. Even if their parents object, they must come to where they can really be 'Jewish' in complete freedom." In response, Proskauer demanded an unequivocal statement "disclaiming any intention on the part of the State of Israel to interfere with the life of American Jewry." To his colleague Blaustein, who had just succeeded him as president of the AJC, Proskauer angrily asserted that "the Israeli, by claiming to be the voice of world Jewry," is confirming the "'dual loyalty' canard against which we have fought so unceasingly." No less livid, Blaustein made clear that if the "Israeli government does not apologize and withdraw its unconscionable assertions, the Committee will withdraw support from all aspects of Israeli life." Ben-Gurion, unwilling to back down, answered that "these cowardly self-appointed leaders have committed themselves to 'isolationism,' to envisioning that the fate of American Jews lies elsewhere than with the world Jewish community centered in Palestine. . . . In their desperation to garner complete acceptance, they have adopted the worst American tradition in foreign policy, believing that they will live well if they only abandon their organic ties to their brethren. Perhaps, these fearful Jews will mitigate anti-Semites. But I predict that they will not survive culturally as Jews in America."²³

When the 1950s began, American Jewry was at a worrisome crossroads. Their gentile neighbors' suspicions and antagonisms encumbered them while so many Jews still suffered from a spiritual depression. With their loyalties increasingly under scrutiny, it was considered downright unpatriotic to be a Jew on the left. Resonating to the noises heard across the land, the Jewish defense organizations redoubled their efforts to exorcise the demon of radicalism from its midst. Only those who were inexorably devoted to the movement stayed in the fold. Of course, those who kept their eyes fixed on Moscow also constantly had to look over their shoulders because the FBI had its eyes fixed on them. The few committed Zionists did not have to fear government harassment. Still, they had to cope with being looked at askance by their fellow Jews and by American Christians alike who questioned their and Israel's allegiance to the United States. Religious forms of Judaism maintained their marginal places within

American Jewish society. But a new generation of native-born Jews continued their own tradition of honoring observance in the breach. Jewishness meant, as before, sharing the streets—living, working, and socializing—with other Jews in their enclaves. But the locus of this ever-increasing dissociation from positive religious identification would soon shift from inner cities toward suburbia.

What Really Happened

In May 1942, as the Holocaust raged, the Biltmore Conference demanded that “the gates of Palestine be opened” and “that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world” (as noted above at the end of chapter 4). A year later, in August 1943, hundreds of delegates from virtually every Jewish organization in the United States descended on New York’s Waldorf Astoria Hotel to attend the American Jewish Conference. There, by an overwhelming vote of 478–4, an almost completely unified American Jewish community agreed to prod its governmental officials and members of the international community to support a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.

Small segments of the ultra-Orthodox community, residing primarily in Brooklyn, dissented on strictly theological grounds. For them, only in a messianic age should Jews be returned to their land. The American Jewish Conference deepened the fissure within the American Reform movement. The executive director of the American Council for Judaism would assert that the conference declaration only meant that 478 individual American Jews had supported Biltmore. Proskauer was one of the four American Jewish leaders who dissented at the conference. The B’nai B’rith supported the resolution. Initially, the American Jewish Committee did not support the resolution, but eventually, in the difficult days before the birth of Israel, it fell into line. In 1947, it officially endorsed partition of Palestine and thus the creation of a Jewish state, a position that had the backing of the American government. Proskauer and Blaustein supported that stance. Proskauer, in particular, continued to speak out against charges of dual loyalty.

But the dual loyalty issue was mostly an internal Jewish phobia. Most Americans were supportive of Zionism in significant part due to the

displaced persons issue, a grave humanitarian concern that persisted in Europe after the Holocaust. Moreover, in 1944 and again in 1948 both the Democratic and Republican platforms supported the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. It was not a campaign issue when FDR defeated Dewey in 1944, nor when Truman, who became president upon Roosevelt's death in 1945, defeated Dewey in 1948. Third-party candidates Henry Wallace (Progressive) and Strom Thurmond (Dixiecrat) also supported the Jewish cause.

After World War II, Great Britain attempted to hold on to its crumbling empire, including its mandatory control over Palestine. When Jews and Arabs were not fighting with each other for control of the land, each did its utmost to drive the British out of the country. Frustrated by its inability to stifle competing nationalist groups, the Atlee government first turned to the Americans and then to the newly created United Nations for assistance in developing partition plans to resolve the conflict. Ultimately, after several fact-finding investigations and alternative plans, in November 1947, the UN voted for a partition plan that would create a free, independent State of Israel. This decision set off an intensified round of violence between Jews and Arabs, what has been called a civil war in Palestine. With the establishment of Israel on May 14, 1948, Arabs nations attacked the Jewish state from all sides. After initial setbacks, the Israelis won their war for independence. Arguably, civilizational disparity and superior organizational and technological skills helped Israel defeat its enemies. But the new state was also assisted greatly by arms paid for and smuggled in from the United States by American Jews. Although the U.S. government imposed an arms embargo, officials often turned a blind eye to these illegal activities. The FBI did not hunt down Jews who were assisting their Palestinian brethren. The Soviet Union, anxious to increase its influence in the area and believing, at least for the moment, that the socialist Jewish tradition in Israel might lead the new nation to align with them, assisted the Jews there as well. Stalin also permitted, if he did not encourage, Czechoslovakia, a communist satellite, to sell arms to Zionist armament buyers.

President Harry S. Truman supported Israel as an ally—"the one democracy in the Middle East"—both out of humanitarian concern over the displaced persons and as a bulwark against communist incursions.

However, Secretary of State George Marshall and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and their staffs opposed his position. Through the tumultuous years that led to the armistice in 1949, they contended that the Arabs were as strongly anticommunist as the Zionists. Moreover, they were concerned that American affinity for Israel might lead to Arab states denying the United States access to oil, perceived as so vital to American interests in the early postwar period. Marshall also struck a humanitarian chord with the president as he prognosticated before Israel's victories that the Jews would be overwhelmed. Nonetheless, Truman supported first the UN partition plan and then the State of Israel. Moments after Ben-Gurion declared independence, the U.S. government announced its recognition of the Jewish commonwealth. Soon thereafter the USSR did likewise.

The vast majority of American Jews rejoiced at this turning point in Jewish history. Tens of thousands of Jews and their friends packed New York's Madison Square Garden, and Eighth Avenue outside the arena was teeming as well. There was no sense among Jews that they might be censured for dual loyalty; after all, most Americans supported Israel's creation. Though social antisemitism was a residual problem that was yet to be overcome, there was a wellspring of sympathy in the land for a people that the Nazis had decimated. The future, however, was not so bright for Jews with leftist leanings. Americans feared the Soviet Union and were suspicious of anyone—Jew or gentile—who was in any way connected to the communist regime. In the decade that followed, many native-born Jews would relocate to the suburbs while refugees and survivors of the Holocaust would slowly resettle in American cities.

Suburban Jewish Cul de Sacs, 1950–1960

In January 1950, the *Wall Street Journal* took President Marshall to task for his “myopic vision of his presidential role.” While crediting the “White House for wisely navigating the important position America has assumed in foreign affairs against communist threats in Europe and Asia,” editorialists railed against his “troubling neglect of expanding exigencies at home.” They wondered why Marshall had not acted on a critically important plank of the 1948 Democratic Party platform, the so-called “suburban mandate.” At the urging of big-city mayors, convention delegates, who hailed from overcrowded eastern and Midwestern urban centers, had supported a position paper drafted by Louis Mumford entitled, “The Natural Growth of Cities: A Cautionary Study.” The architecture critic for *The New Yorker* magazine argued passionately that if “unrelieved,” the “pressures of urban population expansion” would “lead to major outbreaks of social unrest.” Succinctly reviewing American urban history of the prior several decades, Mumford explained that at the close of the Great War of 1914–1918, the country had been on the brink. War industries had attracted hundreds of thousands of workers, many of them blacks from the South, and governmental restrictions during the European hostilities on all but essential construction had brought new housing starts almost to a standstill. Tensions between newcomers and the indigenous boiled over during the so-called “Red Summer” of 1919 as antagonists lived cheek to jowl with one another on heated streets and on crowded beaches. It took city planners and municipal officials—with little help from the federal government—much of the decade of the 1920s to

redress housing difficulties. Now, he argued, to avoid a repetition of a “nationwide urban crisis, leadership had to be both anticipatory and responsive to change in demography.”

New norms, the social critic explained, challenged the tranquility of city life. Although America had been at peace for thirty years, in Taft’s second term there had been a significant increase in defense spending. Tens of thousands of poor Americans—again, most of those moving were blacks—had migrated from the South in the hope of filling jobs in some of these government industries. Though congressional failures to pass Fair Employment Practices legislation had chilled their dreams of economic advancement, there they were nonetheless, newcomers in northern and upper Midwestern cities. Housing starts, in the doldrums since the Great Depression, had not kept up with the population needs, not only for them but for young white families as well. With the economic catastrophes of the 1930s behind them and believing that the United States would remain safe and secure—even if Europe and Asia were ablaze—in the early 1940s, couples began having more and more children. Mumford was quick to point out that as the economic crisis receded, American women, who had been called upon to help support their families during the toughest times, increasingly were staying home. It was an esteemed sign for a successful family if only the man had to work. “While in Britain, the iconic woman of their war era was Ruby Loftus, the factory ordnance maker,” Mumford quipped, “the conventional female in America was none other than ‘Mary the home-maker.’” He did wonder in one of his notes “how long American women would be content with that traditional role.” But it seemed that, at present, male-female relationships were “stable and traditional as families grew.”¹ In fact, Mumford noted that a significant growth in family size was well underway, and he was very concerned that there was not enough room in most urban areas for such parents with their kids in tow. He predicted ominously that when “the infants of 1941 start to have their own offspring, some ten years from now, we will have no place to house them.” The answer, said Mumford, was a staunch commitment to housing in new areas on the outskirts of the cities. The Democratic Party agreed.

The party plank proudly pointed out that in 1934, FDR had created a Federal Housing Administration with the dual purpose of stimulating housing initiatives and alleviating the unemployment that was

particularly high in the construction industry. It augured to fulfill one of the most creative New Deal missions to transform American society. Rexford Tugwell, a close aide to the president, explained that when the plan was first proposed in the White House, "my idea was to go just outside the centers of population, pick up cheap land and build a whole community and entice people into them. Then go back into the cities and tear down whole slums and make parks of them."² Initially, close to a million army veterans who in 1944 had signed up for service under the "rewards incentive volunteer" bill were to be the explicit beneficiaries of the redoubled effort called for in the 1948 platform. But millions of other Americans would take advantage of the low-interest mortgages that the plank promised to provide. The *Wall Street Journal* wondered why Marshall "had thought so little about those to whom he was supposedly most devoted: men who wore our nation's uniforms and has not acted with alacrity to aid them and all others who wished middle-class comforts."

In a follow-up piece entitled "A True Cautionary Tale," Bernard Kilgore reflected on this "critical oversight" and warned of its implications for the presidential election just two years hence. The *Journal* editor speculated that the former general's "antipathy toward East Coast cities, especially New York, had gotten the best of him." Their mayors and the majority of their constituents had backed Dewey. Jews, for the record, were in the Republican camp even though Marshall believed that they "all stood with Wallace." Looking ahead to 1952, Kilgore warned that the president could not write off these rich electoral vote areas "through implying that the fate of old urban areas was in their hands alone." According to private chatter in select Washington circles, Marshall had once told confidants, "As far as I am concerned, if New York cannot manage its population flows, it can drop dead." When that off-the-cuff remark found its way into an editorial in the *New York Daily Mirror*, Marshall called the publisher on the carpet.

Though he was more tempered in his response to the *Journal*, which usually backed him, Marshall did not like the tone of Kilgore's advice. He carped to his associates that "the published evaluation of my presidency did not sufficiently applaud my efforts in defending this nation against communism both in Europe and Asia. That was, above all, the job the American people entrusted to me." But he eventually recognized that the newspaper and its spokesmen had his best political interests at heart.

In April 1950—giving him enough time to deny that “outside pressures” had influenced administration activity—the president brought back to Washington General Lucius D. Clay and handed him a critical new domestic portfolio: the “suburban mandate.” Marshall was especially comfortable with military officers and particularly enamored of Clay, who had been instrumental in the administration’s greatest overseas achievement to date.

When Marshall took office, four years had passed since the end of the war in Europe. But none of the former combatants had recovered from six years of struggle. Looming over each of these nations was the threat of communism. In order to contain Soviet expansionism, said the president, the United States had “to do whatever it is able to assist in the return of normal economic health in the region without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace.” Efforts were called for to “repair the entire fabric of European economy.” General Clay was put in charge of a massive, multi-billion-dollar undertaking to reconstruct “cities, factories, mines, and railroads.” Even more important, he had to relieve “poverty and the social pathologies that war had wrought.” With meticulous planning and concentrated implementation, the president’s man followed his mandate and in two years had done much to create the “European bulwark against communism.” Now Clay was directed to turn his attention to the domestic front. When he received the quick approval of the Senate to assume the post of secretary of commerce, a position that had often been described as “the department of ‘everything else,’” Clay sprang into action, leaving Marshall and his secretaries of state and defense to concentrate on pressing foreign affairs. There was much to do and to be concerned about, most notably in East Asia.³

Though the *Wall Street Journal* had lauded Marshall’s defense efforts, America’s position in the Far East was far from secure. Just months after taking office, the protracted struggle between Nationalist and Red Chinese forces ended with Mao Zedong gaining control of the mainland. The defeated army of Chiang Kai-shek was exiled to Taiwan, where the Kuomintang constantly faced the threat of invasion that would have completed a communist revolution. A major thrust of the president’s campaign had been his assertion that, under Taft, there had been a “lack of clarity in our foreign policy.” On the stump, in asserting that “we are losing China,” Marshall declared that “America had failed to bolster its allies, most

notably in the Far East where the administration has failed to recognize the power of communism's threat to a Free China." Marshall was sure to spread the blame around liberally. Chiang's associates were "inefficient, greedy, dishonest, and selfish." The Nationalists lost a propaganda battle with the Red Chinese. Mao successfully projected his troops as those who had defended the masses against the Japanese, even if, in reality, Chiang's troops lost far more men and materiel in the Sino-Japanese conflicts. Weakened by a decade or more of war, Chiang badly needed U.S. combat troops to save the day. Taft's government, Marshall had railed, "did not appreciate the depth of the communist threat." Marshall did not, however, go down the path of accusing the so-called "China hands" who misperceived Asian realities as being "traitors," the sort of canard that was the province of a cadre of arch-conservatives emerging both inside and outside Washington. In any event, under Marshall's watch, the Red Chinese had triumphed. The future for America in Asia had been left for him to mold.⁴

The administration's initial show of resolve in response to the Maoist victory was to order the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet to station itself in the straits of Taiwan, ostensibly "to monitor developments" but "if called upon" to protect two small islands, Quemoy and Matsu, from the communists. Chiang fantasized that these outposts could someday be staging areas for a military return to the mainland; Mao plotted that the areas would be springboards for an eventual takeover of Taiwan. However, soon thereafter, the American commitment to "watchful waiting" changed dramatically to active involvement in what Marshall called "the championing of freedom in the region."

Late in 1949, the Pentagon received confirmed reports that thousands of Soviet-armed communist rebels were starting to move upon the major strongholds of the Japanese government in Korea. Russian comrades had trained these insurgents for several years in the northern reaches of the peninsula. What military analysts in Washington and Seoul had worried about for half a decade—a Red Korean takeover—was now strongly in play. America had no illusions that Korea, under Tokyo's domination, constituted a bastion of democracy. What the United States did see was a bulwark against the spread of communism in danger. The critical assessment was that "beyond the potential over-run of Korea, Taiwan, our American base in Okinawa, and ultimately Japan itself were threatened by the Soviets

acting alone and maybe in concert with the Maoists.” Most chilling, the Defense Department reminded the White House—as if Marshall really needed an update—that “the atomic bomb intimidation that had succeeded so well in 1944 when you stopped the Russians on the Polish borders can no longer carry the day.” In September 1949, the communist enemy had detonated in secret its first atomic bomb test. A year later, with their newly sponsored Asian incursion, the Russians provocatively let the West know how powerful they had become. Aware of all these realities, Marshall, turning his attention to Korea, initially sent hundreds of military advisers to Seoul and alerted his National Security Council that “while our people have not been at war for a generation or more, now might be our time of testing.” In the two years that followed, the commitment of U.S. troops rose from the ten thousands to a hundred thousand to eventually a quarter of a million soldiers in what rapidly became a major theater of military operations.⁵

While confident that, in the end, he would pass the test on the international scene, Marshall also knew that his administration and his place in history would be judged through achievements in the domestic area. The president, who occupied his time in the struggle to head off the communists, hoped that through Clay’s efforts, the *Wall Street Journal* and the U.S. electorate, with “both guns and butter in hand,” would commend him for success on both the foreign and domestic fronts two years hence.

The “New Housing Initiative” bill—better known as the “New Housing Deal”—was sent to Congress late in 1950. Pitched as legislation both to “rehabilitate the cities of America and grow its suburbs for our soldiers, their families, and friends” through the allocation of billions of dollars in lost-cost mortgages, the plan was deeply prejudiced in favor of locales outside urban areas. Its purview also reflected in readily apparent ways the prejudices of the white, Christian majority. The bill dusted off, with only slight modifications, a discriminatory methodology for funding that had informed housing measures in the 1930s. Back then, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), in assessing whether or to what degree it would use federal funds to back housing developments, broke areas inside and outside cities into four categories of “quality.” Prime “A” or green locales, deemed worthy of the strongest support, had been described as “new, homogenous, and in demand as residential locations.” “Homogeneous”

was soon recognized as a code word for “resistant to infiltration of Jews.” Second level—“B”—locales, designated on maps in blue, were “still desirable” but had “peaked.” Third grade—“C”—neighborhoods, yellow in coloration, were “those definitely declining.” Given the racist tenor of the times, “D” or red enclaves, homes primarily of the Negro underclass, were defined as places where “things taking place in ‘yellow areas’ have already happened,” and were usually off-limits for badly needed loans and other funding. Attuned to the depth of segregation implicit in this strategy, A. Philip Randolph remarked that “if the HOLC was honest, they would have colored ‘D’ places as black.”

Clay’s plan followed suit. This far-reaching bill gained support from both sides of the congressional aisle because—as one observer of the American scene noted—“it is an ideal policy because it meets the needs of both citizens and business interests.” Left unwritten, but clearly understood, was that the major beneficiaries would be white and Christian. A political cartoon published in the *Daily Worker*, the organ of the Communist Party of the USA, showed it all. It depicted a joyous rotund builder, with Caucasian features and a crucifix hanging from his neck, rubbing his hands in happy anticipation of great profits. Supporters of the bill passed out that illustration to legislators, which only increased ardor for Clay’s effort.

Under this New Housing Deal, starting in 1951, 1.5 million new single-family houses were built in the country; three-quarters of them were in suburban areas. For white Americans, another piece of the American Dream had fallen into place. Federal funding also favored new western and blatantly segregationist southern regions, which carried the additional cachet of housing new military facilities that the Marshall foreign efforts stimulated. But to a dismayed William White, the plan meant that “while black folks volunteered in 1944 to serve our nation, the segregation in the armed forces has followed us back home. Nothing has changed. If anything, the distance between societies had increased by miles and many minutes.” A. Philip Randolph spoke bitterly and ironically of a “new Reconstruction” that “brought the North and South together, from the executive to the Congress at the expense of the Negro.”⁶

Jews did not feel the sting of prejudice in Clay’s efforts as much as African Americans. But many of them did not like its underlying assumptions. An endemic negativity toward Jews had been carried over from the

interwar days, and the arms of government would not be extended to stop discriminatory policies. The Jewish War Veterans Association was especially vocal in championing the case of their member Corporal Isidor “Izzy” Schwartz, “who had come marching home after standing down the Russians, married Sylvia, who scrimped and saved with him for a down payment on Cape-Cod-style two-bedroom house in suburbia, and thought they could take full advantage of a veteran’s mortgage to handle the carrying charges, only to be turned away from communities that would not admit them.”

In 1954, three years after Marshall signed “this most warranted lease on American life,” a troubling report by the Anti-Defamation League identified the multiple ways Christians were still saying they did not want to live next to Jews. An “unconscionable number of suburban communities behaved like Bronxville, a Westchester, NY, hamlet just ten miles from New York, America’s largest Jewish city.” There, local residents banded together to perpetuate a social covenant that dated back generations to keep their preserve free of those who may have “different views on religion.” Jews were told in no uncertain terms that they were “unwelcome, except as visitors or customers in the little shops that dotted its main street.” The welcome wagon also was stopped short in other communities where the prejudice was subtler, but no less effective. A few miles over from Bronxville, in Pelham, it was “not socially correct to be openly exclusionary, at least as regards houses.” Those who sought their vaunted homogeneity did not aspire to keep all Jews out. Realtors anxious to make a sale might say to Jewish buyers that there “is a nice merchant a few blocks away and, of course, there is the dentist. You, too, can be pioneers.” But old-line townspeople showed their full colors when Jews sought to create an institutional presence. In Pelham, 1,061 residents signed a petition opposing a certificate of occupancy for a projected synagogue. When the town’s council ruled in favor of the majority, those Jews who had been accepted started to second-guess their decision. They had gotten in, but their religion had been kept out.⁷

As a builder and as a Jew, William Levitt understood the mixed messages of the New Housing Deal. He intuited that there was a fortune to be made and thus followed, as he put it, “the rules of the American racial game.” When he and his two sons began work in 1952 on their first

Levittown in Hempstead, Long Island, just twenty-five miles east of Manhattan, he made it known that “we can solve a housing problem or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two.” Those who read the bold print of his social-residential contract recognized that no Negroes might apply. A decade and a half into Levittown, there were no blacks among its 60,000 residents. Similar policies applied to his second development in Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania, that sprouted up on what were previously farmlands.⁸

But what could Levitt do on behalf of his people without undermining profit margins among Christians who might object to “a heterogeneous, white community”? Ingenuously—although some critics said “cynically”—he advertised that his developments would be “open to all” and that accepted applicants had a choice of homes within multiple subdivisions. But after assessing the views of potential gentile residents, Levitt’s associates steered those who intimated that they had “problems with Jews” to specific areas of the development. To his *landsmen*, as he called his fellow Jews, he offered comparable random or specific housing options. But in private interviews, his real estate agents were sure to mention the “unhappy Jews in Pelham” who had made the “wrong choice.” In the intimacy of sales offices, they spoke openly of the “evident reality” that while within “Christian America, we are largely tolerated; the majority has yet to subscribe universally to a ‘get along with Jews’ attitude. Your neighbors will be bringing their negative feelings about associating with you to suburbia. While no one should fear anti-Jewish violence—such open prejudice toward us would not be ‘the American way’—you might have to endure snide remarks. Discomfit will inevitably radiate from the streets. All things considered, would it not be better to live among your own kind?”

For those who were not totally convinced of Levitt’s analysis that “times had not really changed,” studies of antisemitism that the ADL and the American Jewish Committee conducted over a generation were marshaled to cinch the argument. Four-page mimeographed handouts, with the most important findings printed in bold, became a standard teaching device. One of the most chilling results was the quantified answer to the question, “Suppose a Jewish family were going to move in next door to you. Would you say that you would not like that at all, or that you wouldn’t like it but it wouldn’t matter too much, or that it wouldn’t make any

difference?" In 1952, just as the building boom was beginning, close to a third of Americans surveyed articulated negative feelings about potential Jewish neighbors. When asked why, respondents came up primarily with the old saws: Jews are arrogant, aggressive, noisy, dirty, clannish, greedy, or loud. The point made, most Jewish applicants chose to live in their own subdivisions even if such a choice might be deemed as "clannish," a very cruel irony. Accordingly, as the two Levittowns grew, they harbored sharply demarcated Jewish and Christian areas. This suburban expanse became a model for many such developments that entered the American landscape in the 1950s.⁹

Jews who resettled in suburbia thus brought with them only measured hopes for living without anxiety in proximity to Christians. They also carried residual antipathies and apprehensions about *goyim* to new housing frontiers. Jews put on their friendliest of faces when they worked in their subdivision for community improvements. As eager joiners, they were happy when they were included in planning boards for a new library or firehouse or the local United Fund. They did, however, wonder when they received a coveted invitation if those across the table wanted their opinions and collegiality or if it was because it was believed that Jews had money. But, no matter, generally cooperative spirits prevailed even if Jews in a Detroit suburb were stung when an auto dealer said that "the way to identify a 'Jewish car' was simply by looking for the Kiwanis Club bumper sticker. They join everywhere to 'keep up with the Joneses.'" ¹⁰

Other, darker, Jewish feelings beyond the persistence of stereotypes were expressed in private and transmitted to children across kitchen tables. One psychologist who worked among these third-generation American Jews suggested that "many are uncomfortable here, though they cannot fully determine the causes of their discomfit. Their problem is one of adjustment, of discovering who they are, and working out their lives in terms of the realities of the world they live in." Conflicted parents regaled their youngsters about the protective power of the old Jewish neighborhood, memories that they still cherished even as they spoke bitterly of "name calling and fights in the slums and of bands of *anderers*," gentile "outsiders" who had strutted down city streets. The psychologist observed that suburban Jewish elders did not tell their boys and girls that Christians were their enemies. Still, "a palpable edge of unfriendliness persisted as

kids were given mixed messages that suggested strongly that while “association inside and outside of schools with all children was acceptable, Christians still had to prove that they were good and reliable for sustained relationships to grow and endure.”¹¹

In studying the formation of a Jewish community in Park Forest, a suburb of Chicago, Herbert J. Gans, a graduate student in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, observed that “Jews have switched venues but there is constancy to their lives as a religious minority which informs their views of the America around them. They are transmitting these proclivities to their next generation.” He explained that this “dormitory for Chicago white collar workers had attracted those pressed for shelter— young couples with one or two school-aged children. Settlement patterns were far from random. Tenants lived in so-called ‘courts’—*cul de sacs*— encircled by twenty to forty garden apartments. Court life was differentiated by religion. Although some Jews spoke of their hope to someday live ‘as one happy family,’ in fact, a tense collection of unwilling neighbors was noticeable.” Gans noted that “for many of the non-Jewish Park Foresters, the court was almost an independent social unit in which they found most, if not all, their friends, and from which they ventured only rarely.”

Meanwhile among Jews, there existed discernible “Jewish places” where a sense of belonging to their own group was apparent. Gans commented that the fundamental difference between these subdivisions and the blocks in downtown Chicago was “not social but ecological” because in Park Forest “there are not always sidewalks.” Nonetheless, staking out the turf, Jewish youngsters could be found congregating with their fellows on street corners, or they met in one or another family’s home.

Finally, Gans pick up a marked ambivalence among Jews toward the Park Forest Community House, the first “umbrella institution designed to bring everyone under the same roof.” On the one hand, Jews were proud of their involvement in raising funds for a cultural, recreational, and athletic center, complete with pool, gymnasium, art and music rooms, and dance facilities. But some parents told the researcher that “we were taken aback somewhat when our sons came home and told us that informal choose-up games on the basketball court—where a captain picks his teammates from the crowd of boys hanging out under the hoops—often ended

up as Jew versus Christian competitions. Where was the integration that we anticipated when we worked so hard to build the center?"

Gans was so intrigued by Park Forest Jews and gentiles on opposing teams that he proceeded to look at "athletic friendship patterns" in a dozen suburban communities across the country. His conclusion was that "sports are more than just fun and games. They are community-defining situations. Jews and gentiles are formally integrated when they sign up for established Little Leagues. But when given their choices of whom to play with in an unstructured setting, Christians, far more than Jews, aggregate with their own fellows." All told, he concluded, in the new suburban communities of the 1950s, Jews live *near* but not *among* their neighbors. "The minority group," he reiterated, "felt most at home on its own streets."¹²

There was, however, one guiding principle in American life, preached from on high both on Capitol Hill and in the White House, which augured to bring Jews and Christians closer together. In this era of staunch anti-communism—particularly with American boys in harm's way in Korea—it was argued from rostrums and pulpits that the people of the United States had to be "one nation under God." In 1954, a congressional resolution added the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance. All across the nation, it was said that a nation "united through religious faith" was America's "secret weapon, more powerful than the atomic bomb, in our fight against atheistic communism." Although a few Jehovah's Witnesses objected to this insertion, Jews did not. They were pleased that their minority religion was implied as part of the troika of religious groups capable of assuring the victory of democracy in the "years of Cold War that appears to confront mankind." At the same time, they felt pressure to again prove their patriotic bona fides.¹³

Previously, through the American Jewish Public Affairs Committee and its "Jewish Loyalty Day" rallies, Americans had been reminded of Jewish contributions to their adopted country. In 1954, a grand commemoration—the tercentenary of the arrival of the first Jews in New Amsterdam—provided an uncommon opportunity to redouble public understanding of the "inexorable ties between Jews and America." As early as December 1951, Ralph E. Samuel, vice president of the American Jewish Committee, organized a "Committee of 300" to plan how to put their community's best foot forward. Samuel was quick to bring aboard Simon Rifkind and Samuel

Rosenman, colleagues from the highly influential AJ Committee. Professors Salo W. Baron and Jacob Rader Marcus were added to ensure that their efforts possessed scholarly authenticity. David Sarnoff and William S. Paley, heads of NBC and CBS, respectively, were brought in to handle publicity and presentation. Sarnoff came up with the celebratory theme "Man's Opportunity and Responsibility under Freedom." David Bernstein, the executive director of the Committee of 300, expressed best the leitmotif of the many exhibits, lectures, books, and articles that were organized in over four hundred cities and towns. He declared that "the Jewish Community and its leaders are on display before the world. We must express the outstanding fact of the past 300 years of our invaluable participation in America and describe how committed we remain to civic responsibility and to the strengthening of democracy." The high point in the commemoration was the National Tercentenary Dinner on October 20, 1954, where the guest of honor, President Marshall, gave the keynote address and praised the community for its "history of patriotism."

While happy to have been one of the invited guests to this "landmark dinner," Baron was unsettled by "the totally defensive tone of the celebration." He complained to Samuel Belkin, president of Yeshiva University, Louis Finkelstein, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Israel Goldstein, head of the American Jewish Congress, who were seated at his table, that he had been "sadly exploited by the rank apologists." He was chagrined that the pamphlets that summarized the American Jewish experience focused on the earliest Jews who settled in America and made much of Haym Salomon, the so-called Jewish financier of the American Revolution. Baron said it was "bad history" and the wrong communal message. "Americans chose Nathan Hale, who gave his life to the country, while Jews chose a money-lender." The professor who dreamed that American Jewish studies might someday gain the respect of Jewish academicians elsewhere in the world was even more perturbed that, in describing the history of East European migration to America, little mention was made of Jewish labor unions and none of Jewish radicalism on the Lower East Side. He grumbled to his tablemates that when he had agreed to lend his name to the project, he was promised that the "tercentenary would not be made a vehicle for propagation of any ideology in American Jewish life. . . . It should be neither Zionist nor anti-Zionist. It should not try to advance any

particular definition of Jewishness.” But Jewish identities that were rooted in “socialist values” were systematically exorcised from the “standardized sanitized narrative.”

Leaning over the table, Goldstein only intensified Baron’s discomfit when he raised his eyebrows and observed that the names of Yiddish journalist Samuel Niger and Jacob S. Potofsky, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, who had initially been part of the “committee of bigwigs, had *somehow* been left off the dinner program’s listing of members. Such seems to be the degree of their paranoia that even language and work patterns have to be ‘sanitized.’” Unbeknownst to Goldstein, weeks before the dinner, Bernstein and the AJC members had decided to “prevent embarrassment to our community through affirming in any way, shape, or form anti-Americanism.” Joseph Proskauer, their friend and long-time colleague, had pressed hard in a letter to the insider group that he wanted “the troubling history of Zionism in America to be kept out of our story. Why possibly raise the hackles of men around Marshall whom we have worked so hard to bring over to our side?” While the committee did not formally respond to Proskauer, the consensus around those in charge of the celebration was that “our feelings toward Israel are not being strongly challenged right now in America. But our radical past puts us in a bad light. Works that would show how notable Jews, like Justice Louis Brandeis, had contributed so much to America while promoting democracy in the Palestine of the 1910s–1930s could be sponsored.” The majority of the leaders of the Committee of 300 decided that Goldstein of the Zionist AJC and even C. Bezalel Sherman of the Labor Zionist Organization were to be sent tickets to the dinner. Sherman returned his response card with one word on it: “Decline.”¹⁴

Marcus also boycotted the gathering because he seethed over what he called “the tragic return to narrow insignificance of the work of the American Jewish Historical Society,” one of the key organizations that facilitated the committee’s apologetic nationwide efforts. Since its founding in 1892, the society had prided itself on recounting the achievements of notable pioneer Jews and systematically avoided publishing any work that reflected poorly on Jewish patriotism. In 1947, Marcus argued that “with renowned Central European Jewish historical centers in disarray and long-respected Polish and Russian scholarship under the thumb of the

Soviets, the study of American Jewish history must aspire to complement the legacy of good work that had been achieved elsewhere.” Accordingly, he talked with Baron and the young Harvard immigration historian Oscar Handlin about “influencing the hide-bound American Jewish Historical Society to get beyond tales and tributes.” In his five years of association with the society—whose leaders were many of the same men who ran the AJ Committee—Marcus believed that some progress had been made in “turning the field around.” In 1952, Marcus agreed to assume the presidency of the society. But he angrily resigned that post a year later when the longstanding Publications Committee turned down an article that the well-respected Anglo-Jewish historian Cecil Roth had composed about “Jewish Loyalists during the American Revolution.” If it would have found its way into the society’s “dry as dust journal,” as Marcus characterized that organ, it would have been the first published evidence that eighteenth-century colonial Jews were other than totally supportive of George Washington and the Continental Congress. What was particularly galling for Marcus was that the Publications Committee—made up of “dilettantes unworthy of being called historians”—had held on to Roth’s submission for four years before rejecting an “estimable academic effort.” The society wanted “nothing to appear that did not reflect credit upon their community.” Marcus was additionally stung and deeply embarrassed when he received an angry letter of “denunciation of your meaningless field” from the outraged Roth.¹⁵

When the Committee of 300 officials got wind of Baron’s pique and noticed Marcus’s empty seat, they were “frankly appalled by these academics’ naiveté.” Rifkind wrote to Proskauer days after “our necessary and triumphant event” of his “great disappointment” with these “Ivory Tower Jewish egg-heads who fail to understand what we have done and what has to be done to protect our people in America. Did they not fathom that just a year ago we faced down a potential disaster when those traitors, Julius and his wife Ethel Rosenberg, had been tried, convicted, and executed for passing atomic bomb secrets to the Soviets?” Back in 1944, it will be recalled, the FBI had recruited Julius Rosenberg to pass information to the Soviets about the American nuclear program. J. Edgar Hoover kept the closest tabs on this “reprehensible American Jew” who continued to work for Russia with his wife’s intermittent assistance in eventually passing

scientific secrets to Moscow. When in 1952 G-men swooped in and arrested the spies, the American Jewish Committee worthies were frightened that “all of us will be indelibly tarred.” As the Rosenberg affair moved from jail to courthouse and ultimately to the death house in Sing Sing, concerted efforts were made in word and deed to dissociate “loyal Jews from such enemies of the state.” In fact, in the days leading up to the execution on June 19, 1953, the committee prevailed upon the New York City Police Department to withdraw a meeting permit originally granted to Jewish radicals to protest on Union Square. One hundred friends and sympathizers of the Rosenbergs were arrested hours before Julius and Ethel were strapped into the electric chair in the Ossining prison. The committee also quietly funneled monies into local Jewish communities that agreed to hold loyalty rallies the night of the execution. Encouraging reports came back to the AJC’s midtown offices that in some locales, “Jews and Christian Americans joined to together to watch news reports from Sing Sing and celebrated an end to this blot upon American patriotism.” Still, Rifkind, Proskauer, and so many others remained convinced that every effort had to be expended to protect American Jews.¹⁶

American Jewish religious leaders took little public notice of the Rosenberg case—except for Rabbi Irving Koslowe, Jewish chaplain at Sing Sing, who walked with the prisoners to their execution. Nor did they have much to say about the programmed exorcising of the radical Jewish elements from the community. While some may have been somewhat uncomfortable with the constant Jewish bows to American patriotism, they also recognized that the principle of “one nation under God” extended a lifeline to long-faltering religious identification. Urban-based rabbis who had struggled to attract congregants sadly recognized that disinterest in affiliation had followed their “reluctant flocks” to suburbia. As before, formal Jewish association lagged badly behind street life.

Reflecting on his first few years as spiritual leader of a Conservative synagogue in northern New Jersey, a rabbi complained to his colleagues that “most Jews in my town do not feel that to be Jewish required membership in a synagogue. Their friendship and neighborhood circles were all the Jewishness that they desired.” He mused sadly that “the growth of the Jewish population in town has had a deleterious effect on synagogue membership. When we first arrived here, there were only two hundred

Jewish families, 80 percent of them were with us. Now there are neighborhood divisions and loyalties are to a street rather than to a community." The rabbi suggested only partially tongue-in-cheek that if "the Christians around us were more accepting of us and our youngsters started dating those of a different faith in troubling numbers, there would be more movement to find a Jewish alternative." His multipurpose synagogue would then be positioned to be an all-important "home away from home." But "generally speaking we keep to ourselves and so do they, except when a town crisis arises." The only good news out of suburbia was that President Marshall's and Congress's affirmation of religion in American life as a proof of national loyalty had brought some Jews "to the synagogue of their choice." However, in his experience, "the Christians in Fair Lawn were more serious about their faith than were our own people."

All over the nation, rabbis of every denomination complained bitterly about the "behavior of congregants who are going through the motions just to satisfy America" or to fulfill some attenuated sense of "family tradition." Generally, "the hub of suburban synagogue life has shifted inexorably away from prayer," wrote a chagrined rabbi in Westchester—"except for the High Holidays where nostalgia ruled and when interfaith services on Thanksgiving and the weekend around the Fourth of July brought duly impressed religious Christians into the pews. Otherwise, sisterhood dances and bazaars are the center of the institution." Indifference to "prayer and study" was the order of the day across the board, in Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox synagogues—although in some of the more traditional congregations old-timers held their daily minyan in an alcove sanctuary. "The problem," one rabbi's wife told a Jewish journalist, is that the members of her husband's temple "have so few positive reasons for why they're Jewish. There is dearth of motivation in our midst." Their children had no clear idea of why they were forced to be part of what one critic called "Country Club Judaism." Youngsters "intuited that Hebrew School training is nothing more than the instrumentality for his Bar Mitzvah and that the Bar Mitzvah is little more than a catered party." At the rite of passage, where "the platters of chopped liver and numerous high balls are merely the outward show of the glowing joy of family life," the thirteen-year-old "wanders about in a daze of disorientation"—after having stumbled through his reading at services of a few words in broken

Hebrew—"knowing only that his parents are the principal actors in this drama and that his only function is to please them. Having thus fulfilled his obligation to his family, he rarely showed up in the synagogue. Our teenage youth group meetings often go unattended. Their long farewell to Judaism concludes the day they march off to college."

In 1955, after its field office had received, over the preceding years, hundreds of complaints from its rabbis about the texture of Jewish life in suburbia, the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative movement in American Judaism conducted a confidential survey of its several hundred members to ascertain more exactly the pervasiveness of the "communal malaise." The dreary results that came in about the percentages of congregants who "regularly attended services" or who "kept kosher homes" or who "wanted their children to continue their Jewish education beyond bar or bat mitzvah" did not surprise the home office in New York. Nor did these results come as a revelation to Marshall Sklare, a young student of sociology at Columbia University who compiled and analyzed the data. Against the advice of his mentors who warned him that he "would never secure an academic position if he wrote a dissertation on a specifically Jewish topic," Sklare was determined to look closely at the evolution of modern Jewish denominations. He thus viewed the polling data that he would have "first crack at"—along with the stipend that was attached to his labors—as a "godsend." What did shock Sklare and dismay Assembly leaders was the "intensity of animosity" that rabbis expressed toward their most "involved congregants."

Years later, speaking to an interviewer from his office in the social work school of Yeshiva University—it had taken him a decade and a half to secure a full-time academic post—Sklare recalled how "astonished I was over how many rabbis wrote 'long-winded theses' in the 'additional comments' section that I appended to the quantifiable questions." "It was one thing," the professor reminisced, "to read over and over again about how the men in pulpits were offended by the constant rating of their performances; as if they were actors on the stage. More significant was that respondents, coast to coast, bemoaned that the men and women who sat in their half-filled sanctuaries were unmoved by the rabbis' pleas to look beyond their own narrow local issues and concerns. They had lost a sense of belonging to the larger community of the Jewish people."

Sklare was particularly struck by the comments of a rabbi from Atlanta, who wrote about how the “president of his Men’s Association told him in no uncertain terms after he deigned to discuss in a sermon the need to raise money for Israel that ‘charity begins at home.’” Not that they are opposed to Zionism, the rabbi explained, but they do not like to see their money leave the town. “They think of the thousands of dollars collected for Israel in terms of the cost of a new rug for the temple foyer or chairs in the Hebrew School.” Other rabbis, Sklare continued, “complained that congregational critics carped whenever their spiritual leaders raised social justice issues.” The rabbis found out that worshippers were unmoved by the plight of the Negroes who were struggling to create a sustainable civil rights movement. Congregants did not even want to hear of the plight of the Jews in Poland and Russia who still resided in the lands from where their grandparents had immigrated to America. One rabbi asserted that it was “chilling and disheartening” how deaf the American Jews that he knew were to the fate of co-religionists whose cultural survival was endangered under communism. After all, “what danger was there in attacking the policies of the enemy in Moscow; such sentiments surely would play well on the streets of Christian America. And yet, my Jews are silent.” Sklare portrayed “conformist” third-generation American Jews of the mid-1950s as having hit a “social and cultural dead end.” They lived “a self-ghettoized existence in their proverbial suburban cul de sacs, not fully integrated within America and cut off by their own volition from the larger Jewish world.”¹⁷

A year later, in 1956, Sklare began to believe that it was more than “selfishness” and “self-insularity” that was making suburbanized American Jews so “tepid” in their support for Israel. “The old bugaboo,” he declared, “fear of dual loyalty canards, still haunted those who were not sure where they stood among fellow Americans.” His conclusion resulted from his exhaustive study of Highland Park, a suburb of Chicago. This community was selected because “what was happening there to Jewish identification was shared, to a greater or lesser extent, by most American Jews.” Sklare found that the “Jewish values” that were most consistently embraced were those in complete consonance with universalistic American teachings. They had “to practice good citizenship and live an upright life.” Such was the power of the national ethos of “one nation under God.” Highland Park

Jews, likewise, were mightily concerned with the approbation of gentiles. Two out of three respondents agreed that it was “essential in being a good Jew to gain the respect of Christian neighbors.”

On the other hand, “a Jewish nationalistic model” was absent as well as “a Jewish cultural model with roots in traditional Jewish practice.” Specifically, “support for Israel”—which really meant sending money to the Jewish state—was deemed “essential” by only 22 percent of Highland Park Jews. Only 7 percent defined themselves as supporters of Zionism. Moreover, Sklare found that a decade into Israel’s existence, old-style Reform anti-Zionism was still quite alive and well in the community. In surveying the “commitment of regular attendees” at the community’s five synagogues “to their denomination’s definition of Judaism,” those who affiliated with “Einhorn Temple”—a pseudonym using the name of a famous nineteenth-century, anti-Jewish nationalism, Reform theologian—were “more dedicated to their form of the faith than other synagogue-goers.” This proclivity was attributed to its rabbi’s and lay leaderships’ “preoccupation with indoctrinating parents and their Hebrew School youngsters with their point of view rather than expose them to a wider world of Jewish thought and interest.” When asked the highly provocative question, “If a war broke out between Israel and the U.S., which country would you support?” Einhorn people almost unanimously replied that they were on “America’s side.” But then again, most Jews in town—even in the Conservative Solomon Schechter Synagogue (another pseudonym using the name of the founder of twentieth-century Conservative Judaism), where the Israeli flag stood on the pulpit next to Old Glory—the overwhelming percentage of respondents “unquestionably” asserted that they were Americans first. The sense of distance and separateness from Israel so visible in the 1940s was as powerful as ever. However, in a private memo to Joseph Greenblum, who worked with him on this project, Sklare opined that “the Israel vs. America war question” results might not really reflect the depth of local Jewish opinion. There were nationalist embers within the shallow souls of American Jews. But those who strongly supported Israel kept their views to themselves out of concerns that antisemites inside and outside Highland Park might pounce on this “evidence.” Meanwhile, the sponsors of the study at the American Jewish Committee made this “definitive statement of Jewish American patriotism” widely

known in the media. Just a few months later, American Jewish loyalty would be tested during the Suez Crisis of 1956.¹⁸

Several weeks after the article appeared, Sklare sent Herbert Gans a photostat asking for his comments. They had met at several meetings of the American Sociological Association and had discussed their mutual interest in the question of Jewish identity in suburbia. Sklare liked being in Gans's company even if he told his wife, Rose, that he "was jealous of the university employment offers that seemed to regularly come Herbert's way." Left unsaid, but hoped for, when he mailed the article, was that "this rising star in our field" would make Sklare's ideas better known in wider circles of academe. Ever the voracious reader, Gans examined the *Commentary* piece carefully but did not write back to Sklare nor promote his vision. But he did append a handwritten note to the document that he retained in his files. It read: "As this minority group still struggles for full acceptance, the need to conform is too powerful to be overcome. If, and when, most of them move off their streets to attend a synagogue, it is ultimately more to show how American—and not how Jewish—they are. While there are religious activists out on the hustings who are doing their utmost to connect with young people in a positive Jewish mode, in the end they will inspire and preserve only a meager proportion of the new generation. My only criticism of the efforts is that those who the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva University are sending out are spending too much time fighting among themselves for control of a declining constituency. They have frankly focused too much on uniformity and not on unity."

Gans was unaware that some twenty-five years earlier there was some talk of the "movements coming together." But that cooperative atmosphere had dissipated even as the long-lamented "spiritual depression" continued. What Gans did recognize and comment upon was that "very few families care about whether or not men and women sit together in the sanctuaries that most of their youngsters blithely drive by. If they set aside theological disputes and perhaps pool resources and personnel, the situation there might be some amelioration for an American Jewry that is approaching a cul de sac!"

In the June 1960 issue of *Commentary*, Sklare reflected on "the State of American Jewry without Suburbia." In a provocative piece, he shined a

bright light on the “dilemmas of survivalist Jews ensconced in Brooklyn and within sister communities in other major northeastern cities, most notably in Baltimore.” Other writers had previously noted that with the imminent decline of suburban Judaism, these newcomers were the unquestioned future of the faith in America. Such “foreign Orthodox” Jews were made up primarily of Polish Hasidic or highly devout Jews of Lithuanian origins, which had been fortunate enough to escape the Soviets beginning in the early 1940s. A limited subsequent migration continued through the 1950s when the communists granted coveted “family unification” exit visas. Sklare estimated that “there were some 50,000 of these Jews presently in America.” At first blush, the sociologist opined, they appeared to think and behave totally different from other Jews. He confirmed the widely held belief that “while these newcomers might be in America, they were not of America.” They disdained integration and looked askance at all attempts to acculturate linguistically and educationally to their new surroundings. In their view, they coped just as Jews always did with the hostile world around them. Many of them viewed their presence in America as only temporary, their eyes still focused on the Old World. They hoped someday, perhaps soon, to return to their yeshiva or Hasidic worlds in Eastern Europe as they prayed daily for the quick fall of Soviet totalitarianism. Those with means actually kept in close personal contact with their revered brother communities through pilgrimages “back home.” Upon arrival in Poland or Lithuania, some of these travelers were greeted warmly. Others, however, felt the sting of criticism, sometimes behind their backs and other times even to their faces. Detractors noted that “some of the great leaders of the prior generations had placed a ban of migration to ‘unkosher America’ as a modern Nineveh [a site of ancient idolatry] which would destroy religious faith and practice.” As an aside, Sklare remarked that an entrepreneurial Americanized Orthodox Jew, who thought that he “spoke their language,” had actually tried very hard but failed to recruit those who contemplated a visit to the Old Country for what he billed as a “Super Kosher Heritage Tour.” Its highlight was supposed to have been “a week of Talmud study at the famous yeshiva in Lublin.” But the English-speaking, Bronx-accented organizer was unable to communicate effectively with these Jews even though he also was fluent in Yiddish and ran ads for his trip in the Brooklyn Yiddish newspapers.

This business failure was, for Sklare, but one indication of the “cultural and social gap between them and Americanized observant American Jews.” Needless to say, “the very presence of the ‘foreign Orthodox’ was a source of great chagrin for many other American Jews who hoped that gentiles would not notice those who reflected so poorly on our image in the country.”

However, for all the fidelity to the faith of these “foreign Orthodox,” Sklare predicted an inevitable decline in “commitment beyond the first generation.” He already saw shades of that “falling away” on the streets of Brooklyn. To outsiders, those neighborhood yeshivas founded in the 1920s were a great base to build upon in “intensifying faith like the Europe the elders remembered and pined for.” But his observations revealed that the reverse was taking place. The children of the newcomers were, rather, being influenced by a “creeping laxity within the indigenous devout community.” Sklare explained that “over the years, to the dismay of the leaders of Mesivta Torah Vodaath and Yeshiva Chaim Berlin, the young men who studied in their schools were evincing a growing desire for greater economic advancement than had their ancestors and were touched by the lures of American culture. There was even talk in those circles of the importance of college education. Modern life around them was rubbing off on the children of the more recent arrivals.” Sklare picked up on “growing inter-generational tensions among the most pious Jews America had ever seen and their youngsters who to the untrained eye behaved like their parents but who were, in fact, looking well beyond the walls of their enclaves.”¹⁹

Sklare emphasized that at present, the “frum [religiously punctilious] few lacked a critical mass of members to create enduring resistant enclaves.” Hasidim particularly, he pointed out, “lacked the charismatic guidance of their dynastic rabbis to help them through the trials of living apart from a secular society.” Their *rebbe*s were still in Eastern Europe. There was no movement afoot from the old hometown. Besides which, both Soviet policies and American immigration laws staunchly any real chance of Jews getting out of Russia and into the United States. The spirit of nativism from prior generations was not gone from the land or the halls of Congress. The leaders who sought to protect Jewish status in America were of no mind to fight to change laws on behalf of these Jews. And

almost no one was talking about challenging Russian policy. A devout Jew's heartfelt trip back home would not suffice as a "prophylactic against the sirens of the new world" to keep them and their families forever attached to a foreign way of life. At present, Sklare concluded, "Brooklyn's variegated fervent Orthodox community had not reached a dead end. However, *without* sufficient numbers and proper direction, the brightness of their future was seriously in doubt."

What Really Happened

The early post–World War II years were a golden age for American Jewry. Virulent forms of antisemitism, which questioned Jewish patriotism and peaked during World War II, declined precipitously by the mid-1950s. Jew hatred became unfashionable—for many it was a reminder of Hitlerism—so long as Jews proved themselves loyal Americans. And most Jews surely did. Millions of Jewish soldiers who had fought valiantly in World War II took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights and flocked to schools of higher education, in many cases to institutions that had been off-limits to them previously. But now such schools looked benignly at these highly motivated and federally funded scholars. The GI Bill, likewise, afforded Jewish veterans along with other American comrades-in arms low-cost mortgages to buy homes in suburbia. Countless numbers of fellow Jews followed suit in populating Forest Park, Levittown, and so many other new communities. Generally Jews were accepted in these new locales, as social exclusionary antisemitism was becoming a thing of the past, although places like Bronxville remained restricted. In their subdivisions, Jews tended to aggregate with other Jews, though not at the urging of real estate brokers. In the "get-along" suburbs, Jews established friendly relationships with the gentiles around them, particularly when they worked together for civic betterments. Parents did not impart residual bad feelings toward gentiles to their children. Most certainly, the idea that "Americans were one nation under God" was widely felt to be true.

In 1954, Jewish organizations joyously and proudly commemorated three hundred years of their presence in America. President Dwight D. Eisenhower was the guest of honor at a celebratory dinner in New York and praised Jewish contributions and patriotism. There was no hint of

defensiveness in any of the communal activities as Jews told their American story and Zionist and labor leaders were part of the narrative. For scholars such as Baron, Marcus, and Handlin and the American Jewish Historical Society, 1954 marked the continuation of their resolve, which had begun just a few years earlier, to move the study of Jewish life in the United States away from the apologetics that had long dominated the field. The discipline took important steps toward garnering the respect of America and Jewish historians, including Cecil Roth.

The Rosenberg case challenged American Jewish equanimity. Leaders and the rank and file were of several minds over this case, which some feared—during the McCarthy era—would lead to a rise of anti-Jewish feeling in America. Jewish defense groups supplied documents about radical groups to congressional investigators. McCarthyism was not antisemitic in its mission, but those within the longstanding Jewish left were marginalized from communal life. Supporters of the Rosenbergs rallied in Union Square—without inference—against this “miscarriage of justice” the night the condemned spies were executed, while elsewhere in New York City, other Jews joined with their Christian neighbors in applauding what they considered a just end to the affair.

The 1950s was a decade of sustained challenge, opportunity, and competition between Orthodox and Conservative Jewish leaders for followers among suburban Jews. Following the American ethos of the time, Jews, like Christians, repaired in great numbers to what the National Conference of Christians and Jews referred to on billboards and in printed advertisements as “the house of worship of your choice.” Moreover, with their children integrating so well and comfortably with local Christian youngsters—although the problem of intermarriage would not loom large for another generation—parents looked to synagogues as spaces where the next generation would feel a sense of continued affinity. But what sort of Jewish religious life would they lead?

Conservative and Orthodox youth operatives did their utmost—through comparable and highly competitive weekend conclaves, summer camp experiences, and so on—to lead youngsters toward greater Jewish involvement. Ultimately, a significant elite of future American Jewish leadership emerged out of these informal efforts cross-denominationally even though most suburbanized young people showed tepid enthusiasm

for Jewish youth works. Suburban rabbis were often critical of the lack of involvement of families, except for life-cycle events. Bar and increasingly bat mitzvah rites of passage did not lead to long-term engagement with the synagogue. On the other hand, there was a rising—albeit small—segment of committed Jews that was exposed to intensive all-day Jewish education. Though the earliest of these schools dated back to the interwar period and urban locales, in time many of them could be found in suburban areas. In time, they, too, would influence the persistence of modern forms of Jewish identification.

Although as late as the mid-1950s, classical Reform held on to some congregations, the days of the old-line anti-Zionist Reformers were numbered. Their movement's march toward traditional ritual and ideology proceeded slowly. Its youth and camping programs emphasized Zionist culture as part their Jewish message. Generally, American Jews were supportive of Israel even if they balanced their philanthropic aid to the Jewish state with local American and domestic communal charitable concerns. However, there were no strong fears of "dual loyalty" canards within American Jewry.

Though not all the refugees from Germany of the 1930s or the survivors of the Holocaust or those who escaped Soviet tyranny in the 1950s were Orthodox, that movement grew in intensity of commitment with the influx of newcomers to America. Particularly within enclaves in Brooklyn, the Hasidic sects and members of the so-called yeshiva world fashioned communities that held staunchly to their old traditions. These newcomers and their children absorbed the punctilious Orthodox of the prewar era that had been identified with the Mesivta Torah Vodaath and the Yeshiva Chaim Berlin. These sectarian groups looked strongly askance at the modern strain of Americanized Orthodox Jews and were fully dismissive of nontraditional Jewish movements. In succeeding decades, these newcomers' influence would be strongly felt within the United States.

The 1960s and the Trials of Acceptance for American Jews

In his book *My First Thousand Days*, which Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. published in November 1963 to kick off the following year's reelection campaign, the president proudly asserted that during his first term "he had freed America from a decade-long obsession over rooting out communists in our midst." He claimed that "I have taken great personal and political risks in calming Americans down" from "their overwrought worries over the misdeeds of a few misguided, disloyal citizens—even if they held some sensitive government positions." For Kennedy, Moscow's greatest threat came not from its military might but rather from Nikita Khrushchev's frequent boast that "the USSR will 'bury' the USA through scientific and technological supremacy." Recalling his explanation to the country of "where America had gone wrong" when he ran for president in 1960 against the incumbent Republican president, Richard M. Nixon, Kennedy explained that "Nixon had mistakenly understood the Soviet chairman's braggadocio literally as threatening nuclear weapons against our shores. His administration thus responded solely by increasing defense spending. While it is essential to keep our guard up militarily, in the end, the largest task before us is to unleash the power of our best and brightest to show that the American democratic way of life is the path toward a better future for all peoples worldwide."

To give his narrative scholarly gravitas and to answer Republican critics that this volume was "just another self-serving campaign tract," Kennedy enlisted the help of Harvard historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

to append an excursus to the volume examining the “social and political history that preceded” what the president called “a conquest by a new generation of pioneers of a new modern, wilderness.” Notwithstanding what some critics would call his “poorly concealed tendentiousness,” Schlesinger’s 150-page complement to JPK’s 250-page text would become a standard historical overview of the period from 1951 to 1963. Twenty years after the book appeared, former presidential press secretary Pierre Salinger would reveal in his memoirs that he had “hired the professor to write both the book and the commentary.” Still, what follows is the sense that generations of readers received from Schlesinger’s history of America during this “critical decade” of the Cold War.¹

In Marshall’s first term in the White House, General Clay administered the “suburban mandate” while the president focused on foreign affairs. But by mid-term elections, for all the confidence that Marshall exuded about “America’s ability to control whatever challenges may come our way,” the Korean crisis—which began with the U.S. commitment of advisers—had turned into a full-scale conflagration. While Congress did not declare war on the Russians or their Chinese allies when the Korean communists set their sights on “liberating Korea from Pyongyang in the north to Seoul in the south,” by 1951, for the first time in more than a generation, close to a quarter of a million American troops were seeing action on the battlefield. Using his credibility that he had garnered with European allies—first in having faced down the Russians in 1944, and later through his economic aid to Western Europe—Marshall enlisted the French, the British, some of its Commonwealth nations, and other Western European countries to help hold off the Korean communists from gaining complete control of the peninsula. Marshall characterized this coalition as a “peace-keeping effort by willing united nations.” He hoped that beyond this challenge “democracies would consult together on an ongoing basis and act in concert to prevent military outbreaks around the world.” But rhetoric aside, this Far East battlefield was essentially a U.S. war zone with the death toll mounting throughout 1951–1952. The insurgents, with the help of Chinese troops and Russian materiel, proved worthy opponents, making the Korean question a major issue in the 1952 election.

Predictably, the incumbent spoke proudly of his “holding the line wisely and carefully against aggression that if not for our sacrifice would endanger

our essential interests.” Arrayed against him were multiple Republicans, each offering their own highly negative evaluations of the administration’s performance. There were, to begin with, a few long-in-the-tooth isolationists who had kept their peace when Robert Taft was in office. Espousing again their deepest convictions, Hamilton Fish Jr. of New York and Gerald Nye of North Dakota questioned why the United States was fighting in Asia. Also fueling their attacks was animosity for the Japanese, “a most unreliable ally to be sure,” wrote Fish in *Foreign Affairs*. Though America had been spared the involvement in the war in Asia that lasted until 1947, these critics possessed “long memories of how Tokyo had destabilized the region and brought on a life and death struggle against our British Allies.” Nye allowed that “while the Soviets and their surrogates should be feared, we should not send Americans into every nook and cranny of the world.”

On the opposite side of the issue stood Marshall’s foremost political and personal enemy—the arch-interventionist and rabid anticommunist Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. He ranted through the halls of Congress, asking all who might listen—though without waiting for a reply—“How did it come to this that, under this discredited White House, we lost China and now are losing Korea to the Red menace?” In his inimitable, pugnacious way, McCarthy turned around Marshall’s 1948 campaign question that he posed to the old China hands over responsibility for Mao’s achievements. Now the president was told, in no uncertain terms, “You lost China and you are about to lose Korea.” In the senator’s bill of indictment, it was not just that the commander-in-chief had not mounted the proper concerted response to communism. At “no time,” McCarthy raved, “has the president taken the battle to the enemy. He has contented himself with merely holding a weakening, insecure line.” Even more critical, Marshall, in his antagonist’s view, was a failure because there were highly placed individuals within his government and the armed forces who were “not only defeatists but people whose very loyalty to America must be questioned.” One of the foci of McCarthy’s pique was Dean Acheson, Marshall’s secretary of state, who was pilloried constantly for a “treasonous policy of containment” when “the Soviets and their Asian surrogates had to be rolled back.” Neither Acheson nor “the other big-wigs were aggressive because they were busy protecting subordinates who were out-and-out communists working for Moscow.”

McCarthy had legions of followers who resonated to his outspoken declaration to the Senate in 1951 that “men high in this government were conspiring to deliver us to disaster, a conspiracy . . . so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man.” McCarthy stopped short of publicly accusing Marshall of being a “co-conspirator.” He was content with characterizing the incumbent as having permitted a “retreat from achievable victory.” But he did intimate to journalist friends that “if you check the record you will find prints of Marshall’s corroding finger on conspiratorial documents.” Those who believed firmly in McCarthy’s allegations projected the senator as the man best equipped to “protect this nation against foes both foreign and domestic.” Such was the pronouncement on the Senate floor of Richard M. Nixon of California, a rising star in the Republican Party. He would add that “we must drive out the crooks and communists and those who defend them out of Washington and into safekeeping in federal prisons.”²

As presidential timber, however, McCarthy was, in Schlesinger’s words, “far too extreme for most Republicans to buy even if many saw some justice in his efforts.” Undaunted, McCarthy carried on with his highly publicized investigations of the executive and the military through much of 1954. Most Americans were transfixed as the proceedings were shown on television nationwide. But many were also appalled by McCarthy’s tactics. Still others supported his campaign to root out subversives. McCarthyites on the state and local levels in particular were highly aggressive in “checking the loyalty” of fellow “citizens in question.” Jews, to the relief of community leaders, were not singled out. Indeed, some Jews were part of his self-declared “team of patriots.” The tenor of those times, however, convinced the organizers of the 1954 tercentenary celebration to redouble their efforts to “remove any possible question about our people’s reputation in the U.S.”

In the presidential campaign of 1952, the more temperate voice of Governor Earl Warren of California was the one to whom the GOP hoped Americans would listen. Warren had been waiting in the wings since his run as Dewey’s vice presidential running mate in 1948. Though he had no great foreign policy credentials, he positioned himself as an outsider who could deal with “the blunderers and not the traitors in Washington.” Warren contended that the issue was not “malice aforethought” in the

White House or at the Pentagon—McCarthy's *bête noire*. Rather, American weakness was due to an "ironic lack of aggressiveness from a White House occupied by a military man that ended up 'playing for a tie and not victory' against communism." For the Republican, the low point in the "mismanagement of the war" was Marshall's firing of his chief commander in the field, General Douglas MacArthur, for insubordination. The president's former friend from their days at West Point had characterized administration policy as a "limited, fruitless war" and persistently told a waiting media and his supporters in Congress that a ground offensive could succeed in pushing the enemy all the way back to the Chinese–North Korean border at the Yalu River, even if such action would precipitate a major conflict with the Soviet Union and China. While his commander-in-chief called MacArthur on the carpet several times and reminded him that the Constitution designated the president as the ultimate decision maker in the conduct of wars, the garrulous general persisted in publicly contradicting official policy—until April 1951, when he was relieved of duty. Warren argued that the "president's ego and thin skin had prevented him from accepting the wisdom of his own general's courageous plan of action."

Marshall responded that it was "incredible that a candidate for the presidency—an experienced jurist who had served with distinction as attorney general of California before entering the State House in Sacramento—would not support a most fundamental constitutional dictum. Warren had let the McCarthy and MacArthur factions of his party push him to advocate a policy that would endanger American and world security." And then, on the advice of his campaign managers who believed that he had to "engage the Korea question to amplify his foreign policy *bona fides*," in October 1952 Warren took MacArthur on a controversial "fact-finding" trip to the war zone. This move infuriated Marshall as a further abridgement of the chief executive's constitutional prerogatives. This mission would stick in the craw of Democrats long after the election. In 1958, when President Nixon tapped Warren for the Supreme Court of the United States, memories of his Korean tour led to the nomination going down to defeat in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

In the end, the 1952 Republican campaign foundered on its inability to move beyond harsh criticism of the administration and to articulate a

consistent plan. Schlesinger commented that “their policies fell between the two chairs of McCarthy’s unbridled aggression and Fish and Nye’s hoary isolationism.” Warren returned from the front and spoke “variously of victory and then of negotiation to a confused electorate.” Ironically, Marshall rode to reelection not so much on the strength of his vaunted foreign policy credentials but on the domestic success of what he now dubbed “My Marshall Plan.” He spoke of how the construction industry had thrived in providing jobs for Americans. He rhapsodized about the contentment his fellow citizens felt at home in their new suburban subdivisions. In his oft-repeated stump speech, the president regaled his audience with the assertion that “while Americans were understandably restless about the world’s situation, they were restful in their Cape Cod homes and grateful to a government that was meeting their needs.” General Clay was infuriated that the president had claimed credit for the successful “suburban mandate.” Privately, the still-loyal Clay told his boss that he was chagrined by “your constant taking plaudits for my work,” only to have Marshall brush him off with a reminder that “it was achieved under my watch.”

Six weeks after Marshall’s second inauguration, the communists in Korea lost their catalyst and drive. On March 5, 1953, Josef Stalin died, and in the months that followed, the struggles over succession occupied Soviet attention at the expense of their Far Eastern objectives. Georgi Malenkov, an early leader for the post of general secretary of the Central Committee, made it known that he would be amenable to a cease-fire and negotiations over the future of the disputed territories. “There is no disputed or unresolved question,” he allowed, “which could not be settled better through peaceful means with any country, including the United States.” Optimistic Kremlin watchers were not nearly as confident that “Russia might move toward peaceful coexistence” as Nikita Khrushchev slowly rose to dominate the Politburo. But in September 1953, it was clear that Malenkov and Khrushchev were more deeply occupied with securing power and putting political distance between themselves and Stalin than in continuing his military efforts in Korea. Lavrenti Beria, the arch-Stalinist who had headed up the feared Soviet internal security service, also made noises about “a new era of working with and not against the west.” But soon, he was under the gun for his complicity in facilitating many of Stalin’s purges and other

“excesses.” He was denounced by opponents as “an enemy of the state” and summarily executed.

The thawing of relations—after many fits and starts in drawing and redrawing lines of disengagement—led to a ceasefire early in 1954 and to an armistice that effectively divided Korea into northern communist and free, democratic zones of control. The citizens of what became known as South Korea scoffed at this new designation, for they were still under the control of the Japanese who tenaciously held on to their part of the contested peninsula. Indeed, Marshall was roundly criticized by members of his own party for not pressuring “imperialist Tokyo to finally cede control of South Korea.” Most notably, Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson questioned why “Japan’s sole credential within the free world community—its anticommunism—trumped all of its anti-democratic policies.” The activities and perspective of the “Free Korea” movement of the mid-1950s would be part of the foreign policy debates between Stevenson and Nixon when they squared off in their runs for president in 1956. South Korea would only gain its final independence from Japan in 1961 but would still have to face the challenge of its unfriendly northern neighbor.

“In the realm of foreign policy,” Schlesinger wrote, “the final two years of Marshall’s administration was rife with ambivalences if not contradictions that Republicans, looking toward the 1956 election, seized upon.” In an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled “What We Learned” that reflected his chief’s viewpoint, Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued that “to head off the necessity of acting alone in future engagements with international aggressors, the coalition of ‘willing united nations’ that assisted us in Korea had to be made permanent.” Membership within this new United Nations would be open, however, not only to democratic allies of long standing but also to former enemies such as Germany, Italy, and, most controversially, Japan. Tokyo apparently earned its spot amid the council of nations through its staunch anticommunism when it held on to its turf in Korea, notwithstanding its own atrocious aggression during the 1940s war and its continued occupation of its Seoul protectorate. But even as Acheson and Marshall seemed to be building an enduring bulwark against communist aggressors, in a remarkable turnabout the administration extended “an olive leaf toward what it hoped would be a different Russia to participate in future worldwide peacekeeping

activities.” This “unanticipated move that confounded many friends and outraged Marshall’s opponents,” Schlesinger wrote, “had a reasonable explanation.”

The feeling in the White House in 1954 was that with the Soviet government in flux, the new regime that would emerge might be willing to listen to overtures about cooperation. Highly influential in this determination was the opinion of Winston Churchill, who, until then, was Britain’s quintessential cold warrior. In 1946, he had damned Stalin’s USSR for having constructed an “iron curtain” separating Russia and occupied Poland and the Baltic States from the free world. Now the prime minister, who had been returned to office in 1951, warned the president that “we will be called to account by history if no attempt were made to turn over a new leaf.” Crucial to Churchill, and eventually to a convinced Marshall, was that the “ever-avaricious Stalin had designs to extend his infectious finger toward extending his ‘wall of oppression’ into the long-contested ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe.” Churchill argued that “Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them, had been threatened by Soviet troops for a decade or more.” He asserted that “only divine intervention through the death of the tyrant had kept us out of another continental war. One hopes we can work with whoever emerges from within the Kremlin’s circles to mitigate a future major conflict. Our policy, thus, must be directed toward forestalling Russian intentions for future conquests by inviting them to join a new family of nations while we continue to assert that the Soviets had to be contained at present borders. However, we will have to concede that where communism now rules, no attempts would be made to undermine these governments.” In other words, “Socialism in a few countries must be accepted as permanent until the force of future events and the will of indigenous peoples’ will change the course of history. In this way, a path toward coexistence can be found.”

Back-channel meetings with Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov during the Korean armistice talks at Panmunjom showed real signs of progress. But negotiations were grievously endangered when investigative reporter Drew Pearson published news of the secret talks, which the White House initially dismissed as rumor mongering, given Pearson’s reputation for printing unconfirmed reports. When the

journalist substantiated his claims, however, Marshall was obliged to “place his peace cards on the table for the American people,” attempting to explain his “vision of a reach toward peace” at a tense State of the Union address in February 1955. But far from being reconciled, a group of Republican congressmen and senators did more than sit just on their hands. In one of his last public appearances, Joseph McCarthy led more than a dozen legislators out of the hall rather than “assent through silence to presidential perfidy.” Subsequently, he would tell the media that “you cannot offer friendship to tyrants and murderers without advancing the cause of tyranny and murder” and declared that “coexistence with communists is not possible or desirable. Our long-term objective must be the eradication of communism from the face of the earth.”³ But this crucial debate on the future course of American foreign policy did not end with McCarthy, who less than two years later would die of hepatitis. Rather, the question of whether the post-Stalin Soviet Union was an unmitigated enemy that must be rolled back or only a persistent opponent that could be contained would be at the forefront of the 1956 presidential battle between Stevenson and Nixon.

The Democratic standard bearer had argued even during Stalin’s time that while “the effort would not be easy, attempts at collaboration with the Soviets should be tested if there was any hope for world peace.” Stevenson’s backers credited him with being a “hard-boiled realist.” His enemies called him naive, utopian, and much worse. Nixon dubbed him “Adlai the Appeaser.” Now, during the 1956 campaign, Nixon came up with another memorable attack phrase. In speaking before a Polish American crowd in Chicago on the subject of “How the U.S. Abandoned Poland,” he characterized Stevenson as a “Ph.D. graduate of the cowardly college of communist containment.” Addressing his own supporters in New York, Stevenson asked plaintively “whether it was coexistence or the extermination of communism” that drove the senator from California. Challenging his opponent to a nationally televised “forum on foreign policy”—Nixon demurred—Stevenson declared that “we owe it to ourselves and our anxious friends who look to us for leadership within the new United Nations to expose communist intentions when they arise. But we must never fail to confer when we can to relieve tension and restore hope.” Looking beyond the stare-downs in Europe and conventional battles in the Far

East, Stevenson worried about the ominous threat of atomic weapons that both countries possessed and threatened to use. On the other hand, Nixon was sure to recount how “in 1944, under a fearless Republican administration, the threat of the bomb had averted a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Incessant talk with the enemy only encourages him to move forward. Standing upright with confidence in our military might is the way to prevent communist aggression.”⁴

While Stevenson parried Nixon’s foreign policy attacks—earning him the everlasting admiration of Marshall, who in private referred to him as “my beloved egghead”—it was the incumbent administration’s handling of a long-festered domestic issue that vexed the Democrats’ chances of holding on to the White House. A nationwide dilemma that turned into an ongoing national debate over the civil rights of Negroes began in 1954 when, under its newly elevated chief justice Hugo L. Black, the Supreme Court of the United States declared school segregation unconstitutional.

For much of his first six years in the White House, Marshall had kept advocates for Negro equality at bay, much to the satisfaction of his southern base of supporters. His only slip-up, argued Strom Thurmond, who had moved from the governor’s mansion to the U.S. Senate, was his unilateral decision to desegregate the armed forces during the Korean crisis. Privately, Marshall told his friends that “those darkies in uniform are my soldiers and I have a special obligation to those who serve.” However, despite this change in personal perspective—back in the 1930s, he had characterized military integrationists as communists—the president did little else to advance the cause of black veterans or their families. In so many other matters, segregationists were reassured that the status quo would be maintained since the White House’s frequent refrain was that “if progress was indeed warranted in changing racial legalities, the decisions resided in the statehouses.”

There was apprehension south of the Mason-Dixon Line in the early 1950s, as the NAACP prosecuted a systematic legal fight against the “separate but equal” decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. But as late as the end of summer 1953, the Supreme Court had yet to act definitively on this crucial determination. But then, on September 8, 1953, Chief Justice Fred Vinson died suddenly of a heart attack. In his stead, Marshall nominated and the Senate confirmed associate Justice Hugo Black to lead the High Court.

In the months that followed, Black changed his restrained judicial stripes considerably and led his associates to strike down the 1896 segregationist doctrine.

Politicians in the 1950s and later historians—not to mention millions of Americans of the time—were of several minds over whether President Marshall had any true inkling that the Alabama-born Black, who had briefly been associated as a young man with the KKK and while a senator had filibustered an anti-lynching bill, would now support integration. While in the upper chamber, he had written “Negro Propaganda: No Response” on a pleading letter received from NAACP chapters and prominent black Alabama ministers. His posture as a chief justice was, moreover, a stunning change for a judge who for decades was renowned for his belief in judicial restraint. Now, he interposed the court in the nation’s most challenging social concern. Critics of the administration would allege minimally that the White House should have noted that six years earlier Black had joined with the majority in overturning restrictive racial covenants.⁵

What the country waited most to see, however, was how far the president would go in enforcing the court’s decision. In a move that heartened segregationists and confused and chagrined liberals, Marshall allowed that as “chief executive, I will follow the law of the land, but I fear that beleaguered states might decide to deny or grievously restrict their funding for the public school. In the end, these underfunded schools will be solely for Negroes and poor whites while a robust ‘private school’ system grows down south. What sort of integration is this? The federal government cannot tell states how to allocate their funds.” While the public pondered his frequent turnabouts, privately the incumbent told associates that “with two years to go in my presidency, I hope to not become embroiled in the black-white issue that *Brown* will engender. I will leave this burden for my successor.”⁶

Stevenson’s dilemma was how to adroitly balance his need to maintain the allegiance of northern liberals and to not alienate Midwestern moderates, while saying “what needs to be said on behalf of egalitarianism” without losing the South. His mixed message of tempered support for the civil rights movement failed to encourage supporters and troubled those not sure of him. On the stump in Arkansas, he courageously asserted

that he “agreed with the Supreme Court’s decision.” That stance injured him grievously in the Deep South. But he also supported his party’s platform that “rejected all proposals for the use of force to interfere with orderly determination of these matters by the courts.” To crowds who heard these words in Harlem, he sounded like a states’ rights advocate. His audience booed him lustily when he asserted that “we must move gradually.”⁷

Nixon’s surrogates made much of Stevenson’s liberal side, even alleging that he supported activist civil rights workers who demanded immediate change. Meanwhile, the Republican candidate ducked opining on the sagacity of the *Brown* decision. While he affirmed that as chief executive he would be obliged to support the Constitution, his audience heard “obligation” as denoting enforcement with much less than the “all deliberate speed” that the court mandated. In the end, there was not a magnitude of difference between Stevenson’s and Nixon’s views on the subject, but the Republican’s nonspecificity worked to his benefit. Nixon’s staunch anti-communism and his strategic portrayal of Stevenson as being out of touch—“not understanding the temperament of average Americans on both the foreign and domestic fronts”—carried him to victory.

During Nixon’s term in office, his vision of a Soviet Union anxious to “move forward in its aggression” once Khrushchev consolidated his power proved accurate. As a candidate, in October 1956, the Republican had made much of a Soviet crackdown in Poland. There, rioters were spurred on by the idea that they could be good socialists and be aligned with the Soviets and yet possess more than a modicum of national independence. The Russian tanks that rolled into Warsaw just weeks before the U.S. elections chilled that dream. Subsequently, Soviet objectives became Nixon’s problem and for all of his bluster as a nominee, he was unable to stop the imposition of an unquestionably pro-Russian government in Hungary. The presence of Khrushchev’s troops on the Hungarian-Russian border told the tale of Moscow’s powers of intimidation. But even as the president was hard-pressed to bolster the country and its allies against future threats from the Russians, he and his fellow Americans became increasingly troubled by Moscow’s successes in the so-called “propaganda-technology” front. The moment in time when the United States felt that it had surely lost its edge in the Cold War’s battle of ideas and systems was the

Soviets' launching of *Sputnik*, the first artificial satellite, in October 1957. In the streets and in the media, it appeared that America had surrendered its position as the greatest country in the world. A free society was being shown up as uncompetitive against a totalitarian regime that boasted that communism was the way of the future.

Democratic senator Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. of Massachusetts made the most of what he deemed as "the yawning education and training gap that the Republican administration has permitted to exist" when he ran against Nixon for the nation's highest office in 1960. "Getting America moving again, not only with arms but with brains" was one of his most compelling arguments. As he traveled the country, the Democratic nominee emphasized constantly that "he had fought as a volunteer in the Korean War and had earned decorations for distinguished service as a fighter pilot." He regaled audiences with his tales of having survived MiG attacks that more than once forced him to "ditch his plane." His message was that he had personally stood up to the communists, while quick to note that his opponent only talked the good fight. But notwithstanding—or perhaps because—of having experienced war, he determined that "the struggle against the Soviets and their allies would ultimately be won not on the battlefield but in the classrooms and laboratories of a free and reenergized America."

Former ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. was not overly concerned with his son's specific message as "Junior" aimed for the White House. What inspired the patriarch to pour almost unlimited resources into the 1960 election was the dream that he had originally harbored for himself. A Kennedy would be the first Catholic president of the United States. An important first step toward rehabilitating his and the family's reputation within Democratic circles had taken place when he again shifted party allegiances. He liked what he called "Marshall's and Forrestal's no-nonsense approach to the Palestine issue" and was happy to advise the administration on "loyal and disloyal Jews." Though enemies and newspaper columnists scoffed at his chameleon-like behavior that smacked of the worst political opportunism, the Kennedys were securely back in Democratic good graces by the early 1950s when hero Joe Jr. won a seat in the House of Representatives. Subsequently, politicians coast to coast took close note of Joe Jr.'s meteoric rise to the Senate in 1954 that was fueled by what

would become a familiar, potent combination of his father's financial support and the candidate's engaging, charismatic bonding with the voters. The entire handsome family pitched in on the campaign trails following tightly scripted strategies that were laid out across the family's large dining room table.

Though Joe Sr. sat at the head of the table and was the Kennedys' most powerful eminence, as Joe Jr. contemplated a presidential run he recognized that some of his father's attitudes threatened to undermine his candidacy. By 1960, the ambassador had outlived his isolationist stance. His son's heroism helped mightily in mitigating that problem. But Joe Sr.'s antisemitism remained undiminished and was a potential problem. Joe Jr. had come a very long way in his thinking about Jews since his youth, when he had spoken approvingly of Germany's dilemma of being unable to differentiate between good Jews, "artists, professors, scientists, and the like," and the bad ones, "captains of industry, lawyers, etc." So disposed, in the mid-1930s he had come close to supporting Hitler's goal of removing the Jews from German society even if the American questioned the virulence of Nazism's methods. In other words, as government policy, "the good ones might have to suffer for the misdeeds and malfeasances of the bad."

This youthful assertion, however, ran counter to a second rock-ribbed idea that also had germinated early in his career, which now dominated his thought. Before the European war, in thinking about the type of America that he wished to lead, Joe Jr. told a friend that he would establish a Secretary of Education. He would "make it a cabinet-level post much more important than a secretary of defense." In that worldview, although Jews had to be monitored, the best among them could be lauded and accepted as leaders in building a new America. When he espoused that position at Thanksgiving dinner in November 1959, a battle royale ensued around the table with the old man railing about his son's naiveté. "Bringing Jews in," he argued, "would only lead to ultimate Jewish control." He was especially unhappy with Joe's growing friendship with attorney Myer "Mike" Feldman, who had worked in the candidate's senatorial campaigns. He deemed this "Philadelphia lawyer" a "Jew socialist" for his "kowtowing to labor" while the ambassador worked with the business community.

It remained for his younger brothers, John and Robert, to remind their father that the old man, too, had made distinctions among Jews. Had he

not preached that he was not an antisemite because he played golf with Jewish friends at the Palm Beach Country Club? Robert, in fact, implored his father to never mention the Jews again even in private conversations, fearing that if Joe Jr.'s "earlier opinions ever got out, the Jewish-controlled newspapers and the liberals whom the family needed to win the presidency would finish off our candidacy." Bobby did not pause to take note of his own stereotyping of Jewish control. Jack, the family pragmatist, added that "we cannot fight a two-front war against both the anti-Catholic feelings in America that had undone Al Smith and Dad and also against those who would pillory us as hypocrites for our alleged antisemitism." For the sake of getting his son elected, Joe Sr. kept his mouth shut while keeping his wallet open. But in his final salvo on the subject, he made clear that in his opinion Joe Jr. was already "surrounded by too many Jews."⁸

The turning point in the Kennedy-Nixon campaign was the presidential debates. These televised events were a new feature of the nation's politics. Beyond looking and acting presidential, Joe Jr. kept the incumbent on the defensive. Tens of millions of voters saw and heard the refrain that America was losing the battle of ideas and systems to the Soviets, not to mention the allegation that the United States was plagued by a "missile gap." Nixon responded that the nation was as strong militarily as ever and pointed to his administration's efforts since October 1957 to respond to "Sputnik's psychological blow to American pride." He pointed out that in November, he had established the President's Science Advisory Committee, which brought together "America's finest minds to assess the state of our defense and to advise me on how to inspire the country—especially its young people—to seriously engage in the study of sciences." He emphasized that after a "few fits and starts, we were also in the space race." On January 31, 1958, *Vanguard I* and its three-pound payload made it out of the Earth's atmosphere. Nixon asserted that "after just nine months in office, I had to play catch-up after eight years of the Marshall administration's short-sightedness in both the military and technology realms." He reassured Americans that "we are now on the right track and that he would continue to build momentum that comes best when a free nation was in gear." Kennedy did not bother to defend the previous Democratic president. Rather, he turned to Nixon and declared that

“now is not the time for a Democratic-versus-Republican blame game, though the record must reflect that *Sputnik* was launched under your watch. And a second Russian satellite weighing not three pounds but three thousand pounds is now circling our planet. I promise a new start for America, a new era of meritocracy to be led by our country’s best and brightest. Moving forward, all educational doors must be open wide for those who can do the most to advance America’s future.”

In the aftermath of the debates, one political analyst noted that “while Kennedy spoke largely of open educational doors, he had little to say about Nixon’s record of enforcement of *Brown*.” The most serious contretemps over that landmark court decision morphed into an all-out riot in Little Rock, Arkansas, scant weeks before *Sputnik*, when Governor Orval Faubus defied a federal court order to integrate that city’s public schools. Nixon, anxious to avoid alienating potential southern voters whom he hoped to lure away from the Democrats, vacillated during the battle over desegregation. He asserted time and time again that he was “loath to use federal troops, though to be sure I will uphold the Black decision.” Negro leaders were incensed every time the president used the term “Black decision,” viewing it as a double entendre. Whites, meanwhile, heard the president’s characterization not as about the nine justices’ landmark determination but of the court handing down a dark, calamitous decision. Meanwhile, spokesmen for the oppressed minority were certain that the White House was not dedicated to promoting a new era for blacks. Nixon certainly did not speak out forcefully about integration. His old saw was that “forced desegregation would lead to a new white’s-only private school system to the detriment of all concerned.” It was only when mobs in the thousands endangered the lives of the students who entered Central High School in Little Rock that he used the army to put down their attackers. His reluctant choice received few plaudits up North while infuriating many down South.

The civil rights troubles provided Kennedy with an opportunity to exploit Nixon’s leadership style and record. But he, too, ducked the race issue because he also worried about his southern exposure. This regional concern led him unhappily to invite Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas—his strongest opponent in the Democratic primaries—to be his running mate. Kennedy and his family hated Johnson. But he knew that he himself was perceived down South as a northeastern liberal and so needed LBJ to

reassure whites living south of the Mason-Dixon Line that radical change was not imminent. But what of “JPK’s call to open up all educational doors in America,” asked liberal journalist James Wechsler in a biting column that appeared in the *New York Post* weeks before Election Day. “Is the Democratic nominee,” he wondered, “drawing his own racial distinctions and suggesting that Negroes are not as capable as whites and thus not worthy of the same aggressive commitment to educational opportunity?” Wechsler lamented that “it seemed that Marshall had left the burden of race to his successor, who did little to advance equality, and it appears that if elected, Kennedy would continue this odious avoidance.” Privately, Wechsler told his publisher, Dorothy Schiff, that “apparently the new generation of Kennedys have moved away from their prejudice toward Jews, but retain their family’s preternatural racism.” Editorials like Wechsler’s angered the Kennedy clan, but Jack Kennedy, who had the thickest skin among those who sat at the dining room strategy center, reasoned correctly that “a liberal New York’s columnist’s critique will do wonders for us down South.” On Election Day, the Kennedy message that “a new generation of Americans prepared to unleash the power of the finest minds from among us” held enough sway for him to defeat Nixon. Behind the scenes, the power and influence of Joseph P. Kennedy Sr.’s money and political connections did yeoman work in getting out the vote for his son.

For Jews, the new president’s first years in office were the dawn of a new era of acceptance. Using his office as bully pulpit, Kennedy pressured institutions of higher learning, most especially elite schools like his alma mater, Harvard, to open their doors wide to the brightest college applicants. Under this mandate, a new generation of Jews—with excellent high school marks, particularly those who were strong in the sciences—found Ivy-covered doors open to them. Until that moment, Harvard and its brother schools had largely stood four-square with the position that Dartmouth president Ernest M. Hopkins had articulated in 1945 when he asserted that his university “is a Christian college founded for the Christianization of its students.” Though some Jews fantasized that they might be exceptions to that rule, most did not waste their time filling out application forms. In California, Stanford University, aspiring to be counted among the nation’s very best universities, behaved like the top schools back east with its own restrictions on Jews. The subtle pressure

that Jewish benefactors attempted to place on the school seemingly had no demonstrable effect on enrollment protocols. Although the minutes of trustee meetings that discussed admissions policies did not record the substance and tenor of off-the-cuff remarks, the sentiment around the room was that “Stanford should never come under Jewish control.”⁹

As always, Jews in the 1950s were admitted in large numbers at state and municipal colleges. But the failure of opponents of discrimination, except in New York, to enact laws banning unfair state educational practices meant that Jews still had to overcome hurdles before they could pass through half-opened doors. The college-bound still had to fill out forms that inquired about their nationality, race, and religion. Negro observers of another “minority group’s plight” were wont to observe that “Jews were experiencing just a taste of the problems that racism had imposed upon us.” Blacks waited for the day when a truly worthwhile Fair Employment Practices bill would become the law of the land. But tolerance had yet to reign in America.

Several weeks after his first State of the Union address, where he reiterated his campaign oath that “educational progress in science and technology must be our most important product,” President Kennedy was heartened when Eugene V. Rostow, the dean of the Yale University Law School, made him aware of the substance of the still-to-be-released Droob Committee report on undergraduate education at Yale. In the wake of *Sputnik I*, the school’s president, A. Whitney Griswold, had commissioned a blue-ribbon panel headed by psychologist Leonard W. Droob to examine how “our educational system was becoming no match for the Russians and to find ways of reversing the tide.” Kennedy was amused by Rostow’s anecdote that “one of the committee members complained that until now we were looking to admit blue-blooded, blue-blazer class presidents at the expense of horn-rimmed laboratory experts.” The president took note of the statement that “if our school were to effectively serve the nation, it had to get beyond its status-seeking quest to be a social acceptable institution by bringing together in university halls those persons who were most qualified.” Most important, JPK adopted the Yale self-examination and critique as his own. “I could not have said it better myself,” he told his brother Jack. In fact, the president borrowed liberally from the report’s findings when he addressed the nation in May 1962. The final Droob

report had been made public on April 13, 1962. Some in the media noticed the similarity in rhetoric between White House statements and the report's conclusions, particularly the assertion that "the changes wrought by time, by developments in scholarship, science, and technology and by the position now occupied by the United States have imposed new responsibility upon our free society." Kennedy would only add that "the task of advancing knowledge and of training future scholars is crucial for our future role in the world." But no matter how unoriginal his prose, the president reiterated again and again that the "power of the federal government can only be effective if the most thoughtful among us abandon all prejudices against those who merit our acceptance." Harvard's alumni, administration, and board of trustees were less than thrilled when Kennedy, receiving an honorary degree in New Haven in June 1962, applauded Yale as a "leader in changing America." Soon thereafter, however, Harvard, as well as Stanford and Dartmouth, got the message.¹⁰

The muscle behind the White House's demands was government funding. Kennedy spoke largely about a new "educational bill of rights," making massive outlays available to schools that an invigorated U.S. Commission on Education deemed "ready to upgrade their offerings and prepared to admit the most qualified students regardless of their religious, cultural, or national backgrounds." Noteworthy in the commission's mandate and program was the omission of any mention of racial discrimination. The better schools, both in the North and South, were deemed worthy of substantial subsidies so long as their labs were updated and their provosts showed proof that they were open to those with the highest SAT scores. Federal administrators were thus color-blind to the systematic exclusion of even the brightest Negro students. When pressed on this obvious myopia, JPK would only say, off-the-record, "I can focus either on solving a racial problem or a science and technology gap that endangers all Americans. I have chosen to defeat the Russians." Privately, he told his family that he "had doubts whether Negroes—with a few exceptions—could really help us bridge the learning gap." Black leaders clearly saw through administration denials of implicit federal complicity in the perpetuation of educational racism that rendered *Brown* a hollow victory. But keen observers within the Jewish community quietly rejoiced over the dawn of a new era of acceptance based on merit. In their own circles, they

bragged that their kids always did well on tests. Jews were heartened further when a survey of the graduates of the 1963 class of the Bronx High School of Science, one of the metropolis's elite public secondary schools (and 85 percent Jewish at the time), reported that 90 percent of its graduates that year had found spots in Ivy League schools. Albert Shenker, president of the city's largely Jewish United Federation of Teachers, quipped to a *New York Times* reporter: "Somehow a few gentile students at Science rode the Jews' coattails to Hanover, Princeton, Cambridge, and New Haven." In any event, many Jews were proud that their own were so well represented on America's most prestigious campuses, evidence that now, more than ever before, they were defined as part of the American elite.

Brandeis University president Abram L. Sachar was, however, far from sanguine about the future of Jews in America when he contemplated publicly about what this new acceptance ultimately meant. It carried a high cultural cost. In an article entitled "The American Jewish College Student, 1963" published in *American Scholar*, the organ of Phi Beta Kappa, the communal leader who had served for fourteen years (1933–1947) as national director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, the prime Jewish presence on college campuses, posited that "while once closed doors are now opening wide, I worry that our young beneficiaries will leave these privileged portals completely devoid of attachments to Judaism." Sachar was sure to defend "Hillel's yeoman work in offering our intellectually gifted youngsters the means to acquire a strong sense of themselves as Jews." He credited Hillel's parent organization, B'nai B'rith—as well as himself, who had been the foremost fund-raiser—for making money available to establish Hillel chapters at scores of colleges and universities. Within these venues, "in the university" if not "at the university," college-level courses in Jewish religion, culture, ethics, and literature were availed to those who wished as "maturing adults to understand their faith and history without sectarian bias." Sachar was proud that gentiles, too, availed themselves of these extracurricular offerings, which did much to explain to the "general public how important this small minority has been to the growth of world civilization." However, he was chagrined to report that "in the most recent period, Hillel's momentum, born in an era of discrimination against Jews, was declining precipitously. The courses were there but the students did

not come.” “Frankly,” he mused, “there was a discernible pattern of Jewish dissociation from anything that smacked of heritage.”¹¹

Sachar was particularly outraged at the performance of Jewish faculty members at universities across the country. They were, in his harsh estimation, “arch-assimilationists.” These talented men, whose intellectual acumen, primarily in the sciences, was so prodigious that they gained entry into the once closed academy, had the capacity to show impressionable students how to live harmoniously in both college and Jewish culture. But rather than inculcate positive identification, these professors told their disciples in words and deeds that “Jewishness was a burden and of little value to them.” Sachar reported on a recently released foundation study that revealed that “whereas Christian instructors could be found attending their churches, Jewish academicians almost never defined themselves as ‘deeply religious.’” Much to the contrary, they were “the least likely American Jews to observe Jewish rituals or even to affiliate with their local Jewish organizations.” By disposition, they were “hostile to all religions, perhaps most to their own heritage,” and were the most likely Jews to seek marriage partners outside the faith.¹²

This “endemic negativity” exacerbated the “flaccid Jewish self-image that students brought with them to campus.” Borrowing liberally from recent sociological studies of Jewish life in suburbia, Sachar projected that “most youngsters’ prior sense of Jewishness was rooted predominantly in the negative images about gentiles that their parents imparted to them.” He noted that it had been widely seen how Jews were far from fully integrated in their new home communities and “an edge of unfriendliness” persisted in Jewish-Christian relations. Presently, however, with academe’s doors now open to them, their desire to be just like the gentiles around them was palpable in the extreme.

Sachar did not spare the parents of collegians in his biting critique of “all that was wrong with American Jewish life.” Drawing upon “my incomparable years of experience in meeting these elders, I have been struck constantly by their expressed desire to have Hillels—whose progress I still monitor—provide young people with the Jewish experiences they had previously lacked. This inchoate longing manifested itself in a constant refrain of ‘I hope that through your heroic efforts my son will meet a Jewish girl; hopefully a future marriage partner.’ But where have they been

until now? Have they done anything that would have directed Jewish students to our centers?" Sachar whispered somewhat whimsically to his audiences that the alter egos of Hillel leaders were "nontraditional match-makers." But while parents largely approved of that role, efforts at endogamy were largely unsuccessful.

Finally, Sachar's jeremiad took note of the "decline of Jewish fraternity and sorority life as also contributing to campus life becoming a true hot bed of unbridled assimilation." For generations, these houses had given Jewish students a vibrant social life as they were frequently kept separate from extracurricular activities. Critics of the "Jewish Greeks" often carped that there was little Jewish cultural content in their parties and gatherings. Still, as one mother of a Jewish student wrote as late as 1960, "while many marriages were made in heaven, many more are made on college campuses." She dreamed publicly of the day her child too would "walk down the aisle, lined up with 'brothers' serving as ushers and 'sisters' as bridesmaids, all Jews, to be sure." That system was rapidly breaking down, however, and Sachar explained the origins of the change. With the increasing acceptance of Jewish fraternities within inter-fraternity councils came the momentum to welcome gentiles as pledges. On many campuses, in what seemed to be a new integrationist culture, Jewish fraternities were becoming homes as much to gentile as to Jewish brothers. More importantly, while Droob Committee members at Yale had stereotyped Jewish students as those "fellows with horn-rimmed glasses," the newcomers were not only smart, but "sociable and ready to join the club." On some college campuses, there was talk of the emergence of the "Jewish all-around guy" who was a success both in the classroom and lab and also in extracurricular life. But as Sachar was quick to point out, the "Hebrew Big Man on Campus never stopped at the Hillel House."¹³

In summarizing this "most troubling state of affairs," Sachar argued out that "the greatest and most influential American universities have moved from being preserves of Anglo-Saxon conformity to melting pot cauldrons. Missing, however, is a commitment on the part of schools and their Jews to transform their institutions into paragons of the cultural pluralism." Much as cultural pluralism's most articulate spokesman, Horace Kallen, had preached decades earlier, Sachar cried out that "for America to be truly great, the most talented among us must maintain a sense of the

dignity and relevance of their ancestral past and ethnic future to make their consummate contributions to American society. To date, acceptance for Jews was being achieved at an all-too-high price, both for themselves and the nation. Rather than training to stand as the next generation of Jewish leaders, they were becoming 'standardized' college students."

One year later, a study commissioned by the American Jewish Congress reiterated Sachar's point in more chilling terms. The tolerant college scene, in its view, was only emblematic of an even larger malaise undermining Jewish group survival. A team of top sociologists opined that "in the absence of the cement that anti-Semitism has previously provided, holding Jews together in retreat, American Jewry stands in danger of crumbling from within." Offering the last word on the subject, Marshall Sklare's own views corresponded directly with the commission's sentiments: "The higher the education that the Jew achieves, the greater the tendency to opt out of Jewishness."

The organization's palliative, reflecting its Zionist ethos, was to redouble its efforts to interest students in "being Jewish through a connection with Zionism and Israel." But the initiatives of this group that foundered after the passing of Stephen S. Wise and the cultural contretemps with Ben-Gurion when the state was created were largely unsuccessful. Ambitious attempts like developing programs for "American-Israeli dialogue" or sponsorship of young people tours to the Jewish state did have its takers. Pictures of concerned discussants and happy visitors graced the Congress's monthly magazine. But in 1966, two years into the programs, an internal audit revealed that most applicants came from New York City—especially from undergraduates of the municipal colleges. Moreover, most of these tourists had been already to Israel, and their "Zionism was well-nigh inbred. Many had been part of the small but intense groups who had participated as youths in local Zionist activities in their home metropolitan neighborhoods." For them, "it was but a free trip to Israel, not a life-changing adventure in raising their consciousness." In other words, the memo underscored that Israel surely had its devoted supporters, but almost twenty years into existence its backing was severely circumscribed geographically. Elsewhere in America, application forms for the trip remained on the tables in often-empty Hillel houses, where very few dialogues were taking place on campus.¹⁴

Reflecting on the audit, Congress president Rabbi Joachim Prinz reminded his close associate Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg of the “difficulties we have had, in garnering any real responsiveness from Jewish college students, and for that matter their parents, whenever American policies tended to undermine Israel’s position on the world scene.” Hertzberg agreed and noted “the silence of the young when in 1956, the Marshall administration forced the Jewish state to withdraw from Sinai after its successful campaign against the Egyptians.” Continuing to voice his outspoken opinion, Hertzberg noted that “we are reaping the whirlwinds of a generation of parental fears of ‘dual loyalty’ and of the poverty of underfunded and unenthusiastic Jewish education and religious life that has feared to emphasize an organic connectedness between Jews of the American Diaspora and our spiritual center and now, the political home in Eretz Yisrael. I cannot accept that those old-line Reform ideas—that have seemingly forever separated us from our pioneer people—still infect our people. But I feel today, more than ever, that I am a lone voice in the wilderness of the U.S. Jewry.”

Abram Sachar was supportive of the American Jewish Congress’s efforts and sensitive to its trials—especially Hertzberg’s thoughts that appeared in a series of heartfelt editorials in the January-June 1965 editions of *Congress Monthly*. However, his “most pragmatic solution”—understandably—was to offer Brandeis University as an “ideal integrationist alternative for the next generation of Jews.” He continued to argue, as he had on the fund-raising stump for more than fifteen years, that his school, “if it only had the resources to be academically great in service to our beloved nation, it could be a home for the best of our young people who would host the best gentiles and feel a sense of belonging to America and to Judaism.”

Reviewing his institution’s history from its founding in 1948, he admitted that “in our first decade or so, we had problems attracting good Christian students who would be willing to attend a ‘Jewish school.’ But there is now a greater tolerance toward us in the land and positive interest in Jews and ‘they’ are willing to be ‘our’ guests. With the proper scholarship funding lures to our guests, and as we upgrade our science and technology offerings that will now exceed our marvelous, already renowned liberal arts departments, we can reasonably expect a wave of the most

prepared gentile students to come our way. Our Jewish students, thus, will have the associational ties with other Americans that they desire. They will have the cachet of being refined, loving hosts. At the same time, we will provide them ample opportunities to learn about their ancient and modern heritages—including Zionism—as maturing adults. It would be the consummate application of the Hillel idea organically *within* a campus culture.” He contemplated creating several branches of Brandeis in various parts of the country, complete with comprehensive Jewish studies offerings to spread his integrationist formula everywhere.

The articulate university president did succeed through the mid-1960s in garnering the funding for both the sciences and Jewish studies in Waltham, Massachusetts. With money to spend on essential faculty, successfully recruiting Sklare from Yeshiva University was one such coup for that growing Jewish studies department. Sachar, who had little regard for Orthodox Judaism, told all who would listen that he had “liberated Marshall Sklare with a real job from obscurity at an obscurantist school that would produce no leaders.” However, while Sachar’s pitch resonated with donors and made sense to an increasing number of Christian students—who surely appreciated the scholarships Brandeis offered—the school did not do all that well among Jews. Enrollment figures did not spike significantly from their doldrums in the 1950s.

Sachar’s lament ultimately was that “so many Jews, intent on full assimilation, not merely comfortable integration, perceived Brandeis as not having enough *Christian* students.” The school was bucking a frightening national Jewish trend. American Jewish students, thrilled to be accepted on campuses where their parents had once been rejected, proudly wore their freshman beanies—head coverings that certainly would never be confused with yarmulkes—as they strode through the quads at elite schools and the many other institutions that emulated them. They did not care about their ancestral past and did not look at their college years as the time to learn about, or recapture, a history to which they felt little connection. Conservative college officials were more than satisfied that they had not “radically transformed their campuses.” College curricula were not interested in highlighting the history of minority students. In time, facing the cruel, unavoidable reality that even the Jews who enrolled at a school like Brandeis did not want to “become more

committed to Judaism,” the administration drew back in its commitment to an enlarged Jewish studies program. Professor Nahum Sarna, who had left the Jewish Theological Seminary for Brandeis—even before Sklare came on board—would allow late in 1966 that “we cannot force-feed Judaism—even non-theological academic studies of our past—to disinterested students.” Likewise, at New York’s free municipal colleges, there was no widespread interest in affirming Jewishness on campus. While there was an Israel Club at the schools—its critics called it a “Zionist cell”—they only talked to each other of a future day where a significant number of credit-bearing Jewish studies courses would be offered. These unusual students were the sole mainstays who filled the few Hebrew language classes that were part of a long-existing but largely unnoticed “Classical Languages and Hebrew Department.” And at these commuter schools, the tiny Hillel House was closed most days and evenings.

In the winter of 1964, Columbia social work student Michael Schwerner tendered a companion piece to Sachar’s complaints in *The American Scholar*. In an article entitled “The Selfish Jewish Student,” he lamented the behavior of his fellow Jews on campus who possessed, in his highly jaundiced view, “not a whit of concern with the creation of an egalitarian society.” They “had found their way into the worlds of majority society and have closed the doors or let them be shut behind them.” His particular concern, writing one hundred years after the close of the Civil War, was that so little progress had been made in addressing the “national dilemma and atrocity of race.” Though Schwerner had little good to say about “a series of administrations that had ducked the problems of Negroes and failed to fully enforce *Brown* out of fear of alienating a still solid South,” his most biting critiques were leveled at his fellow Jews. He wrote bitterly, for example, of his difficulties as an undergraduate at Cornell University in convincing his fraternity brothers to admit a black into Alpha Epsilon Pi. The “prevailing opinion that I fought so hard to overturn was that ‘since we Jews have just finally garnered acceptance within Gentile college society, now is not the time to be distinctive again through formalizing an association with a Negro.’” A dispirited Schwerner bemoaned that “the selfish grandchildren of Jewish socialist immigrants who had put themselves on the line had lost total contact with the Jewish past.” In an “unending and cowardly quest for acceptance through conformity, this

generation has well-nigh finished the job of exorcising all forms of political and social dissent from our midst.”

Yet, Schwerner contended, “if my fellow young people are to blame for their inactivity, it is due to the unfortunate lessons that they learned at home and derived from the regnant ethos of the Jewish community.” In his view, “fearful of rocking the boat now that seats have been made available for them, Jewish leaders in protecting their group are not willing to make great sacrifices and articulate earnest pleas nor will they put up vigorous fights for the dignity and rights of other groups.” In his view, Jewish defense organizations, too, had “lost a sense of the American Jewish past when sixty years earlier Jews had been at the forefront of the early fights in America over civil rights. Though critics might have carped that Jews were using the Negroes’ problems as proxies for their own issues and self-interests and fought for open housing and equal employment opportunities to advance their own needs, still in all, Jews did go into the courts and lobbies in legislatures and sometimes took to the streets as advocates for others. Now, however, complacency and self-satisfaction reigned.”¹⁵

Michael Schwerner and a few of his fellows persevered in what he called “a lonely battle to bring my fellow Jews back to the streets to champion an egalitarian society.” But he could not help but wonder if any hope remained for a community that had lost contact with its past and was divorced from traditions that had once compelled it to action. Over in Israel, at that same moment, government leaders too sadly speculated about whether they and American Jewry had real hopes of a future together. That community, strategists and diplomats alike observed, “had not shown to date a warranted commitment to Israel’s survival.” A time of testing would come again three years later, in 1967, when Israel’s consistently implacable Arab enemies once again rose up to threaten the security of the Jewish state.

What Really Happened

In November 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy defeated Vice President Richard M. Nixon to become the first Catholic president of the United States. Kennedy’s older brother, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., in whom their father had initially placed his hopes of occupying the Oval Office, had

been killed in action during the Second World War. The victorious Kennedy succeeded the war hero General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who served in the White House for two terms beginning in 1953. Ike—as he was fondly called by most Americans—twice defeated the Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson. Beyond his record of outstanding military service in World War II, Eisenhower’s electoral prospects were initially boosted by his pledge to go to Korea and bring an end to the bogged-down war against the communist North Koreans and their Red Chinese allies. George C. Marshall, who had served as secretary of state under Truman, was a prime focus of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s animus. Stopping just short of calling the former general a traitor, he accused Marshall of having contributed to the loss of China to the Reds and of undermining America’s chances of victory in Korea. After the armistice in 1953, the Korean peninsula would maintain its division between a pro-American South and a communist North.

The Eisenhower administration was marked on the domestic front largely by economic prosperity and the continued growth of suburbia. The president was especially interested in the growth of a nationwide highway system that would substantially reduce travel time between cities, in an era in which more and more Americans were relying on their own cars rather than on public transportation.

Eisenhower’s major crisis at home was in the area of race. In the monumental *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954, the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Earl Warren, struck down the “separate but equal” ruling from 1896 that had allowed for the segregation of schools. But enforcement of that landmark decree proved very difficult as cities and states, not limited to those below the Mason-Dixon Line, continued to resist integration. There was much talk of southern whites creating their own private schools to avoid having Negroes in their classrooms. In Prince Edward County, Virginia, rather than comply with *Brown*, local officials went so far as to abolish the public school system, which remained closed for five years until finally reopening under court order. Then there was the impact in the South and indeed around the nation of an energized civil rights movement that was led primarily by articulate black ministers—like the young Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—which attempted to desegregate public facilities. These activists frequently were attacked by outraged whites.

Most notable, riots broke out in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 after Governor Orval Faubus resisted attempts to bring blacks into that city's schools. Mobs of supporters set upon peaceful demonstrators, and U.S. Army troops were called in to end the turmoil. Though Eisenhower ultimately brought the power of the federal government to bear to protect black pupils and their supporters, in general his administration failed to proactively enforce the court's decree. Greater struggles for civil rights would await his successor.

On the foreign scene, just a few weeks before Little Rock, the United States was staggered by the USSR's successful launching of a satellite. Until then, Eisenhower had successfully navigated American opposition to the Soviets during the protracted Cold War, first under Stalin and then under Khrushchev. Indeed, during his administration, America did not engage in any armed combat. But now, as *Sputnik* circled the Earth, it seemed that Khrushchev's boasts that the communist system would "bury" the West through its technological superiority was becoming a reality. Although the last years of Ike's tenure witnessed a significant upswing in educational funding to upgrade science education and training, this challenge, too—just part of the ongoing struggle against Russia and its allies—would be left for JFK to handle.

During John Kennedy's thousand days in office, his administration experienced successes and failures in his fights against communism. In 1961, the Bay of Pigs debacle, where the new president went along with a CIA plan first hatched during the Eisenhower administration to have Cuban dictator and Soviet ally Fidel Castro unseated, was his greatest failure. He prevailed in his showdown with Khrushchev in 1962 over the placement of missiles in Cuba, a test of wills that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Subsequently, in his last year in office, he negotiated the Limited Test Ban Treaty with the Soviets. Withal, he emphasized the importance of technological growth to maintain American leadership in the world.

The challenge of race relations that Ike bequeathed to his successor was JFK's greatest domestic dilemma, one in which he would achieve only limited success. While he aggressively enforced desegregation orders and supported civil rights activism far more than his predecessor, he was unsuccessful in guiding Congress to pass meaningful civil rights

legislation. That achievement would be realized by President Lyndon Baines Johnson a year and a half after JFK was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963, but not before voter registration workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney were murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi, during the Freedom Summer campaign in 1964.

Jews during the early to mid-1960s enjoyed an expansion of the golden era of the postwar period. On the educational front, Jews who sought higher education were able to enter through open doors more than ever before. The challenge of *Sputnik* and the ongoing Cold War surely helped high-achieving Jewish students gain admission and scholarships, without much struggle or fanfare, at schools anxious to host the nation's most talented young people. Support was available not only to those who wished to be scientists. Students of history and political science were wanted as well, especially if they pledged to become Kremlinologists. Jews on campus also started to feel more at home in predominantly gentile environments. By a similar token, Brandeis University was increasingly able to make good on its mission to be a "host at last" to significant cohorts of Christian students who were welcomed by the Jewish majority on campus. In most other settings, where Jews did not predominate, Jewish fraternities and sororities were routinely integrated into university-wide Greek Councils. Michael Schwerner was instrumental in getting his Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity brothers to accept an African American student as a pledge at Cornell, though the number of black students on this and other northern campuses was limited. In any case, his action did not raise many eyebrows. Of course, no Jewish fraternities or sororities in the Deep South admitted African Americans, since blacks had great difficulties gaining admission to universities in that region to begin with.

University officials did not pressure Jewish students to abandon their traditions, and in fact these schools over time became advocates of cultural pluralism. For themselves, though Jewish students were free to dissociate from anyone or anything Jewish in these tolerant environments, most opted for a mixed circle of friends and colleagues. For those who wished more religious associations at college, a flourishing nationwide Hillel organization hosted Jewish communities on campuses, including offering Jewish studies courses. During the early 1960s, such courses were not part of university curricula except at Brandeis, Columbia (where Salo

Baron was an eminence), Harvard, Jewish denominational schools (Yeshiva University and the Jewish Theological Seminary), and the handful of other schools with large clusters of Jewish students. In the decade that followed, the study of Judaica expanded exponentially, riding the crest of African American demands for their courses as they finally became more visible on American campuses.

Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Congress, which in prior decades had focused attention almost exclusively on combatting antisemitism, now turned their attention to promoting a healthy self-knowledge of ancestral teachings and to presenting Jewish issues on campuses. Among AJ Congress initiatives was the American-Israel Dialogue and, more important, sponsorship of trips to the Jewish state. A personal connection to Israel and Zionism was deemed highly significant in maintaining the next generation's Jewish identity. Yet, as the 1960s ended, the next generations of Jewish leaders, in an increasingly tolerant Diaspora, would still have to face up to the conundrums of preserving Diaspora Jewish life under a condition of unparalleled freedom.

While Jewish organizations added this new internal dimension to their list of concerns, they continued to be primarily focused on Jewish status and position in America. To some degree, their high-profile advocacy for civil rights reflected their comfort in America. They were not afraid openly to address and take a strong position on the most challenging issue of the day. At the same time, fighting for blacks was a way of cleaning out the last pockets of discrimination: prejudices that undermined blacks grievously but also still worried Jews. This strategy was a reengagement of organizational and personal involvements that dated back to the early twentieth century, when Jews were involved in establishing groups such as the NAACP. Among Jewish youths some were like the lamented Schwerner and Goodman, whose sense of social justice drove them to risk their lives for the cause. Most American Jews—certainly those who resided north of the Mason-Dixon Line—mourned their murders on a dark road in Mississippi. Few within the community feared a backlash against Jews from groups like the Klan or the American Nazi Party, which had their racist and disgruntled supporters. However, most American Jewish young people—much like their gentile classmates and counterparts—watched the proceedings from the sidelines.

Unending Dilemmas

Israelis, Arabs, the World Powers, and American Jews

During the first nineteen years of its endangered existence, Israeli leaders articulated two very different visions of their country's prospects for survival amid ever hostile neighbors in the Middle East. The Jewish state, it was frequently said, lay in "mortal danger" while at the same time possessing the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) that could "destroy in mere weeks any and all armies that the Arabs might muster against it." In December 1953, just prior to becoming IDF chief of staff, Moshe Dayan had said as much in his briefing of Pentagon officials. The military story line of his country's history in its five years of existence since its remarkable battlefield successes in 1947–48 had been a saga of well-positioned and powerfully inspired forces that held back enemies who performed poorly in the field and then reluctantly recognized an armistice before settling for demilitarized zones. Thus constrained, while the Arabs pined for a second go-around against what they dismissively called "the Zionist entity," Israel's opponents pushed countries that relied on their stockpiles of oil to support a boycott of Israeli products. The primary force of arms was sporadic incursions from guerillas that constantly crossed the Egyptian border and raided southern Israeli villages. On the diplomatic front, as the fledgling state looked for consistent allies, Jerusalem's fears were heightened significantly in 1954 when the Soviet Union switched its allegiance away from Israel and toward Arab countries. Even as he consolidated his power in the Kremlin, Khrushchev asserted that "from the first day of its existence Israel has mercilessly threatened its neighbors." Though Moscow

did not call for the dissolution of the Jewish state, it did advocate for the “realization of Arab rights in Palestine” and promised weaponry to achieve that end. The prime beneficiary of USSR largesse was the new Cairo strongman, President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who amassed thousands of Russian-made tanks, jets, and guns all pointed toward the Negev and beyond to the heart of Israel. He rallied the Moslem street as a new Saladin who would wipe away the shame of the 1948 defeat.¹

In its waning years, the Marshall administration was not pleased with the deepening Nasser-Khrushchev relationship. All along the president had argued that the Egyptians and their fellow Moslem states were “as much anticommunist as the Jews,” while he often mentioned that “the Jews won back in 1948 because they took arms from our Russian antagonists.” This U.S. attitude toward the region led to a position of even-handedness that translated into supplying arms to all sides. It was a stance that Ben-Gurion characterized as “a wait-and-see attitude”: “as they supplied us—the poor Davids—and the rich Moslem Philistines with weapons, Washington sat back to see how long we could survive before the Americans might—or might not—bail us out when enemy armies approached holy places sacred to Christians.” But now, with Nasser cozying up to Moscow, Marshall felt that his “eight years of overtures and supplies to Cairo were being thrown back into our faces.” Due to State Department persistence, however, he did not tilt forcefully toward the Jewish state, reminded more than once that “forty million Arabs sat on forty trillion barrels of critically important oil resources that the Soviets would love to deny the West.”

To still some voices in America who cared about the survival of Jews in the Holy Land—including some evangelical Christians who saw eschatological implications in the fate of Israel—Marshall turned to an international body, largely of his own invention, to help hold Israelis and Arabs at bay. His “willing united nations” had been cobbled together in 1951 to “act in concert to prevent military outbreaks around the world.” But in the first test of its efficacy, America had only found rhetorical support. Washington fought the Korean conflict to a stalemate, largely by itself. Hoping in 1954 for “a fresh start,” with the controversial invitation to the post-Stalin USSR into “the family of peace-loving nations,” Marshall opined that the Russians might help out with this simmering crisis. As he told his advisers,

"I have taken a diplomatic risk, but it is a stroke of my genius that I convinced Khrushchev and his cohorts to agree to sit with us at the international body's newly created permanent home in Geneva." Soviet foreign minister Molotov showed up during the debates over the Middle East. However, he was there to argue that the "colonialist majority that dominates this organization has no authority under international law to dictate terms for embattled Arab states." He declared unequivocally that "we are here solely to protect our friends in the region."

Given the stalemate of rhetoric in Geneva and with the Egyptian people in the streets clamoring for war, in the fall of 1956 Nasser decided to act on his repeated promise to "lead a monumental battle that would restore national unity, pride, and dignity" to his people and the Moslem world. His diplomatic strategists also advised that now was the time to move since "the Marshall administration is almost over and the Americans are occupied with their presidential elections." At present, they discerned, Israel has failed to "concretize a special relationship with Washington." The sense in Cairo was that "even as Marshall had supported, in words, the persistence of the Zionist entity, the president has held off the Jewish enemies who have pushed over and again—through some congressional friends—for a substantial defense treaty that would insulate them from Soviet-made arms in our hands." Nasser noted with pleasure that in the summer of 1956 when that "administration sent a delegation to discuss a tentative non-belligerency agreement with Israel in return for parts of the Negev, I courageously turned them away. Washington took my slap and did not respond." But, he added, "Who knows how the political calculus may change with a new man in the White House, especially if the staunch anticommunist Richard Nixon is elected?" Nasser's fear was that as an outspoken opponent of the Soviet Union, Nixon would define Egypt as an ally of the Russians and might even move against his nation if it struck against Israel.

Some analysts in Cairo's foreign office were hopeful about their prospects if Adlai Stevenson were to succeed Marshall. Although the Democrat said all the right things about keeping Soviet influence out of the Middle East and took note of America's friendship with Israel, he did allow—to the consternation of Ben-Gurion—that "our connections to the Jewish state does not mean that we are 'anti-Arab' or esteem them less." But as

Egyptian officials monitored the 1956 election cycle, they anticipated a Republican victory.²

The “Road to Redemption,” as Nasser called his struggle, began in September 1956. He massed troops on the northern borders of the Sinai Desert and expanded guerrilla activity into Israel operating out of the Gaza Strip. Most critically, in a movement born of pique and pride and fraught with provocation, the Egyptian dictator broke with an international treaty that dated back to 1884, which mandated that the Suez Canal be available “to all nations to traffic therein in peace and in war.” In nationalizing the passageway, Nasser made clear that Israeli shipping would be prohibited from access to the Persian Gulf and beyond. At his most belligerent, Nasser’s supporters now saw the Israeli enemy at bay on battlefields and strangled economically at Port Said.

Almost as significant, determined as Nasser was to assert his leadership within the Arab world as the “defender against colonialism,” the Egyptian leader launched a volley across the bow of the Western Europe and the United States. He would be the one to determine effectively who “from all nations” might cross through the canal. Outraged, the British and especially the French looked to their Israeli ally to mount a significant response to an “abridgement of international protocol.” The French at that moment—who also chafed at Nasser’s support for Algerian rebels—were the Jewish state’s foremost supporters. Speaking alternately of facing “mortal danger” while boasting of the power of their defense forces, the Israelis on October 29, 1956, launched a ferocious attack against the Egyptian frontlines. One day later, the British and the French joined in the effort to “disgorge” the canal. By November 5, two days before Americans went to the polls, the Israelis were in control of the entire Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip while their European allies stood guard over Port Said and strips of land to the south of the canal. In Cairo, a defeated Nasser, fearing reprisals from his own Arab street due to his failures, unceremoniously sacked his military strategists. He went so far as to suggest that a few of them had been in “cahoots with the Zionists.”³

Privately, however, Nasser admitted to his closest associates that his military war planners were right about one element. The Americans steered clear of what Egyptian army analysts called the “Jewish-led conspiracy against Islam.” Even-handed in his multiple antipathies, Marshall

disapproved of the Egyptians' growing entente with the Russians. But he also opposed the British and French "colonialist attitudes" and was offended by Israel's refusal to follow "our advice and recommendations." Thus, in the run-up to war, the administration did not condemn Egyptian nationalization of the waterway. This reluctance was read in London, Paris, Cairo, and Jerusalem as but another sign of the waning, weakened Marshall years. Taken aback by such dismissals and yearning to have his "last say to prevent global escalations" during and after the quick victory, Marshall demanded that the allies withdraw from occupied territories. Anxious also to show that the United Nations that he had helped bring about in 1951 had some clout on the world scene, he demanded the body's condemnation of the attack. Predictably, on this particular issue, he garnered rapid support from the Soviets. Touting the creation of a "peacekeeping force to be situated between Egypt and Israel as his organization's first great success" in the weeks that followed, the Europeans left Port Said and the Israelis withdrew from Sinai. Israel did, however, wrest from the Americans and the Russians a guarantee that its ships would have "innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba." They also had backing for their demand that the Gaza Strip not be used as a staging area for guerilla attacks against their heartland. The United Nations achieved a victory of sorts when it convinced Egypt to accept a "good-faith agreement" to allow the stationing of an Emergency Force of observers from neutral countries along the borders that separated Israel from Egypt, within the Straits of Tiran and in Gaza, to provide a modicum of stability in the region. However, all parties knew that in the end if a new war broke out no one except Israel would guard the southeastern entry points into the Jewish state.

On the campaign stump, Richard Nixon had been critical of the Democratic administration's handling of the Suez affair even if he spoke in the vaguest generalities of how America might stop communist influences in the Middle East. Strategically, he did not pledge support either for the European allies or for Israel. Reporters and columnists who followed the Republican were stymied by Nixon's allusions to a "secret plan that I will reveal once I am in office," but they could not pin him down. Stevenson, for his part, had profound difficulties divorcing himself from Marshall policies. He did not criticize the pressure Washington had placed

on the Israelis. Instead, he took a positive tack when he told an predominantly Jewish audience in Madison Square Garden, just days before the election, that “the first premise of any Middle Eastern policy is that Israel is here to stay—and that it must have the economic support and the diplomatic guarantees necessary to secure her independence and integrity.” Precisely how he would manage that policy was unclear to the voters, as were Nixon’s obfuscations.⁴

Luckily for the president-elect, in the seven weeks between his election and the inauguration, with the waters calmed over Suez due to the troop withdrawals, Nixon was freed from the need to be more explicit about the Arabs and Israel. His “secret plan” was never revealed. Nixon privately told John Foster Dulles, whom he would nominate for secretary of state, “that the old man Marshall did a great job in playing all sides off against each other. He certainly bought me some time. Hopefully, we can put the Jewish-Egyptian question on the back burner as we tackle Soviet challenges all over in the world.” Also on the foreign policy front in the years that followed, Nixon had to face up to the real and symbolic issue of *Sputnik*. Then, in 1959, his administration became heavily embroiled very close to home with the looming danger of the communist takeover of Cuba. Fidel Castro seized Havana and posed a Marxist-Leninist threat ninety miles from Florida.

The Nixon administration’s hopes to keep the problems of the Middle East on the back burner were largely realized because the Arabs and Israelis—each for their own purposes—placed their conflict “in the ice-box.” Though this diplomatic term hardly fit an arid desert region, Nasser was forced to acknowledge that the IDF had “laid waste my army,” and despite rearmaments from the USSR, he was not ready for another battle against the enemy. His belligerent statements fed Israeli rhetoric about their plight as “Davids” even as the Jewish state spent the years that followed the Suez victory building its might against their “Philistine” neighbors.

Understandably, Ben-Gurion watched the 1960 U.S. presidential elections with great interest, but he was not sure whom to favor. Nixon was hardly a close friend of Israel. The prime minister allowed that “the president is adept in saying all the right things to us and also to the Arabs. Sometimes he listens to the advice of our antagonists in the State

Department, led by Dulles. Other times he sides with our congressional friends. But his administration has not been put to the acid test of allegiance.” On the other hand, Ben-Gurion noted that “Kennedy has courted the Jewish vote assuming they would always stand with us. I am not as certain whether American Jews—except the few loyal Zionists—are forever in our court. He does not really comprehend the tensions between Israeli and American Jewry and his Jewish advisers have not clarified the issue. But what I am sure of is that his father was one of our worst enemies outside of the Nazis and Arabs. And the son has yet to show definitively that he retains none of his elder’s teaching. I am also not certain that Kennedy is as staunchly anticommunist as Nixon, ready and able to oppose Egypt and the other Arab states serving Moscow.”

Once in office, Kennedy allayed most of Ben-Gurion’s apprehensions and any worries his successor, Levi Eshkol, had over where America stood. While the president extended massive shipments of humanitarian aid to the Egyptians to “undermine with grace, Soviet influence,” he committed millions upon millions of dollars of military support to Israel. Most critical, unlike Nixon and certainly Marshall, he went on the record to Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir that America has “a special relationship with Israel, comparable only to our relationship with Great Britain.” He pledged that an invasion of Israel, like the one the Egyptians contemplated in 1956, would be “opposed unconditionally by our government.” In the end, however, the Israelis’ greatest faith was in their own ability to strike quickly and decisively with a “mailed fist delivering a knock-out punch” to all enemies. What Israel asked for consistently was the arms to do the job. Ben-Gurion and Eshkol constantly worried out loud to their troops and to the world community that “the danger we face is one of complete destruction.”

The decade-long deep freeze that temporarily tamped down the heated Arab-Israeli conflagration ended in 1964. Levi Eshkol was deeply perturbed by an IDF intelligence report that contended that “while the Egyptian desire had always been in the abstract, for the first time since 1956 we know of a plan . . . with clear stages for a showdown. The renewed Arab initiative would come in the form of terrorist attacks, border incidents, and ultimately the closing of the Straits of Tiran. Fully rearmed and ready for battle, Nasser is again intent on strangling us. Making matters

worse, their allies, the Syrians also wish to move against our positions.” The new communist-leaning Ba’ath government in Syria was armed to the teeth by their new friends, the Russians. The Soviets did not talk of war against Israel. But they did speak loudly of protecting Syrian interests against aggression in the region. Analysts opined that “as usual Moscow was intent on stirring up conflict and making its interest felt strongly. In the end, these troublemakers like heightened tensions especially if problems between Arabs and Israelis caused problems for the Americans.” There were also new tensions across the Jordan with King Hussein’s kingdom. Confidential reports indicated over and again that the region’s “inherent instability was leading to inevitable combustibility.”

In 1966, a communiqué from a joint Egyptian-Syrian military conference spoke of the “imminence of war.” We are confident,” the united Arab front declared, “that we are making fast strides toward the realization of our common goal of the elimination of Israel. Neither the streets filled with our courageous brethren, nor the world, will have to wait 100 or even 50 years for the ultimate victory.” In Jerusalem, IDF chief of staff Yitzhak Rabin was the first in the inner circle of military planners to worry aloud about their army’s ability to fight a two- or even three-front war. Much of the subsequent discussions dealt with how to upgrade Israel’s armaments program, with particular emphasis on air power.⁵

Beyond the technical details of defense that Eshkol had to deal with loomed the even larger existential question of whether the Jewish state would stand alone against their mounting enemies. One problematic point of emphasis was his concern over whether they could count on American Jewry to stand strongly with them and make their views “fearlessly known” to the highest-ranking officials in Washington. By disposition, the prime minister was not an angry firebrand as was Ben-Gurion. Still, Eshkol was deeply disappointed with their “brethren” watching “the trade winds of American foreign policy and their eagerness to be where their government stood.”

In 1956, the Jews in the United States had not distinguished themselves as advocates for the Jewish state. They allowed the Marshall administration to intimidate them with intimations of the old dual loyalty charge. Eshkol, who was in the United States during the crisis, recalled ruefully how “the mere mention that the White House would push to

freeze donations by American Jews and ban the purchase of Israeli bonds, led immediately to a precipitous drop-off in this crucially important philanthropic and financial lifeline to our state.” Equally troubling, the old anti-Zionists still had far more say in Washington than the few articulate Zionist leaders. Joseph Proskauer, who after 1948 had only grudgingly supported the existence of Israel, was back on the scene. After a hastily called meeting at the State Department at the height of the crisis, the former head of the American Jewish Committee emerged to “counsel the Israelis to heed rather than oppose the wishes of the leader of the United States.” Proskauer had taken a cue from a cutting offhand remark from the White House that found its target: that “until now the president thought that the American Jew was an American before he was a Jew.”⁶

Ben-Gurion was also distressed that John Foster Dulles had leaned heavily upon the aging Abba Hillel Silver to inform the “Israeli government that the president suggests that you voluntarily agree to return to your border since you have achieved your purpose (i.e., the destruction of *fedayeen* bases).” When the American Zionist leader delivered the suggestion—really an ultimatum—Ben-Gurion dressed down his erstwhile friend as a “mere messenger boy.” Hurt, but still determined to prove his commitment to Israel, upon his return to the United States Silver organized a mass rally in Madison Square Garden that attracted 20,000 backers of Israeli action. Silver saw his effort as a courageous act in light of the fact that a Gallup Poll indicated that 43 percent of Americans in New York, Chicago, and Washington “disagreed with Israel’s actions.”⁷

Ben-Gurion was unmoved by Silver’s efforts. The prime minister firmly believed Nahum Goldmann’s jaundiced observation. As the troubles with Washington began, the head of the World Jewish Congress told the Israelis that “if an open quarrel develops between Israel and the American government, I do not see any chance of enlisting American Jewry to our cause politically or financially.” As far as the “so-called outpouring of support” from the arena event was concerned, Ben-Gurion remarked darkly that those “20,000 are all New York Jews, probably from our few strong points in Brooklyn and the Bronx. Elsewhere in America, the Israeli flag does not fly high.”⁸

Subsequently, even when the fires over Suez banked, Ben-Gurion’s review of the weak American Jewish response to the Egyptian threat led

him once again to write off the future of American Jewry. His statement to IDF officers in the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai engendered additional hard feelings between the two Jewries: "Ever since 1948, we have had two central goals . . . bringing in the remnants of our people to Zion—be they in lands of physical oppression or in a country of spiritual endangerment. The IDF has made those Jews who wish to remain with their people's future proud of their identity. I invite them to join me in the continued building of the place where Jews always walk with their heads held high."

Eshkol may have harbored similar feelings, but he saw the diplomatic danger in such pique to the "relationship between the two Jewries." He knew that only the most committed American Zionists would hear a call to immigrate. Just two years earlier, in 1954, he had become aware of a yet-unpublished study that Marshall Sklare had prepared of a "typical" East Coast Jewish community that revealed that "while almost unanimously both parents and teen-agers possess positive feelings about the State of Israel . . . almost nine out of ten both among teen-agers and the parents were not interested in living there."⁹ In other words, in Eshkol's estimation, Ben-Gurion's "migration solution to American Jewish lethargy would never become reality." What Eshkol had hoped was that a new generation of Jews in the United States, who were at least more comfortable with their status—Sklare's study had detected a slight generational decline in "fearfulness"—would not be so preternaturally worried that their fellow citizens would misinterpret their financial support for Israel as out of line with good American traditions of overseas aid. However, in the decade that bridged the 1956 war and the looming crisis, his efforts hardly gained traction. As in the past, American Jews did not have Israel's survival foremost on their minds. Every major determinant, from investment in Israel Bonds to contributions to the United Jewish Appeal to vacation travel to Israel—not to mention membership in an American Zionist organization—pointed to how minor a role the Jewish state played in their lives. Increasingly, they were distancing themselves from Israel.

In 1957, Emanuel Neumann, president of the Zionist Organization of America, bemoaned the fact that the growth of his Israel advocacy group's membership had "flat-lined." As a student of the long and "meritorious" history of "Christian Zionism," he frequently noted ruefully how "they visit *our* state more than we do and far more than us and view philanthropy for

the Jewish state as a religious obligation.” Neumann was hardly encouraged about the prospects for American Jewish commitment to Israel when he read sociologist Nathan Glazer’s *American Judaism*, published in 1957. Noting that “the major Zionist political organization, the Zionist Organization of America, was rapidly declining,” Glazer opined that “the establishment of Israel means little for American Judaism specifically—except among pockets of the Orthodox who are but a minority of Jews in this country. And even they, who are not really integrated into this country’s culture, cannot agree what Israel should be like.” Most Jews, he continued, “perceive the Jewish state as almost completely irrelevant to contemporary interests and problems.” Their “direct concerns,” he enumerated, were “the conflicting demands for money to build local institutions, largely synagogues but also old-age homes, hospitals, Jewish centers, and other institutions.” In his estimation, “the idea that Israel, in any serious way, affects Judaism in America or Judaism in general is largely illusory.”¹⁰

Over the next five years, Neumann fought valiantly against these tides of disinterest, arguing constantly to whoever would listen that while “Jews in the United States owed political allegiance only to the United States, their spiritual allegiance belonged to their Jewish heritage.” In 1962, Neumann resigned his post in frustration and ceded leadership to Max Nussbaum, who forged a “natural programmatic alliance with the American Jewish Congress to capture the Jewish college student for Israel.” However, these joint efforts were largely unsuccessful. Even the promise to young people of fully funded week-long trips to Israel during spring break and larger-scale study missions for the summer months failed to excite their constituency. Most of the takers were those who already belonged to the small Zionist groups on campuses. At most colleges, there was little enthusiasm for these excursions. At dispirited American Zionist headquarters, there was much discussion and considerable unhappy agreement that Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg’s evaluation of American Judaism was sadly correct. They, too, felt that they were lone voices in the wilderness of U.S. Jewry.

However, toward the end of JPKs’ first term in office, a dramatic foreign policy decision, far removed from the Middle East, led to the removal of the longest-standing barrier to unqualified American Jewish support for

Israel. After his widely criticized removal of American troops from Vietnam, Kennedy's full-armed embrace of the Jewish state meant for Jews in the United States that after generations of worry, they would no longer be concerned with the dual loyalty canard. America and Israel became fully aligned. Now, if they chose to do so, American Jews could speak out strongly on behalf of an American ally.

Since the mid-1940s, the question of large-scale American involvement in Southeast Asia had troubled succeeding occupants of the Oval Office. But before Kennedy, each president had passed on the problem of escalating U.S. commitment to democracy and of opposition to communist expansion in that volatile region to his successor without concretizing a coherent and enduring strategy. Ultimately, it became an issue that JPK had to address. Taft had been preoccupied with assisting the British with its declining Asian empire while deeply involving the United States in the Palestine struggle; thus, he had said little as the French reasserted control over Vietnam after the Japanese withdrawal from that contested area. The Republican had placed his faith in Chiang Kai-shek's ability, while he was still in power, somehow to create a sphere of influence over Vietnam and eventually to diminish French control, which it was hoped would ensure that Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia remained in the noncommunist camp. Marshall could have no such hopes, however, as the Red Chinese defeated Chiang's forces and looked covetously at expansion westward. As important, the president was fully caught up in keeping the Russians and Mao Zedong out of Korea in the early 1950s. Within this maelstrom of instability, ready and able to challenge French hegemony, the Viet Minh, led by communist and nationalist Ho Chi Minh, moved smartly against their European occupiers. Ho was grateful for Chinese military assistance but wary of "Comrade" Mao's intention to make Vietnam his own. The French looked to the United States for support; Marshall would only help with military supplies but no troops.

The battle for control of Vietnam lasted until 1954, when the French were soundly defeated at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. Under the provisions of a partition treaty signed in Geneva, Vietnam north of the 17th parallel came under the control of Ho and the Viet Minh as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the south constituted as the State of Vietnam. Under Nixon's watch, North and South Vietnam went through a period of

relative calm and peace. For much of the Republican's term, Vietnam remained a tertiary foreign policy matter. But in Nixon's last year in office, Ho's army moved forcefully to reunify Vietnam under his control. For all his rhetoric about fighting communism, after his defeat in November 1960 Nixon left the question of Vietnam to Kennedy.

In the first year of his administration, JPK followed his predecessors' policies of limiting U.S. involvement to bolstering the Saigon regime with arms shipments and a small cadre of military advisers. Having won the election "because I was able to convince the American people that while we surely would be on guard to oppose communism front and center, we would only do so when the enemy posed a real and present danger to our national security," Kennedy was hard put to escalate "our commitment to faraway Vietnam by putting American fighting men on the ground in harm's way." Kennedy tenaciously held that line against his critics who questioned his resolve through the first year and a half of his administration. Most significantly, in October 1962, he blunted persistent pressures from his cabinet, his vice president, and a broad swath of Congress "to save Saigon from Ho" when the president earned his praise as a "protector of the American homeland" during the Cuban Missile Crisis. For three tension-filled weeks, with the world on the brink of a potentially apocalyptic war, Kennedy stared down the communists "eyeball to eyeball," as his secretary of state, Dean Rusk, put it, until "the other fellow just blinked." When the Soviets removed missiles from Cuba, public opinion polls showed that Americans gave the president the highest marks as an anti-communist since Taft stopped the Russians from invading Germany in 1944. Yet the question of whether Southeast Asia developments threatened American core national interests would continue to concern the White House, especially in the spring of 1963 when North Vietnamese troops expanded their attacks against the South Vietnamese regime.

Within his administration, Kennedy ultimately was able to still the voices of people like national security adviser McGeorge Bundy, who argued that "not only would Vietnam fall but soon all of Southeast Asia would be under communist domination, unless troops were sent immediately to the region." Characterizing a "retreat from commitment" as a "grim alternative," he contended that what "we would achieve in Vietnam would be good medicine everywhere." When he tendered his opinion,

Bundy initially allowed that “a couple of brigade-size units dedicated to a specific job might be sufficient to stem the Red tide.” But when pressed, he admitted that “200,000 soldiers and maybe more would be necessary in the next year or so.” JPK was unconvinced that “American boys had to do the fighting for Asian boys,” and would only agree to a “continuation of the present policy of military advisers and training, plus armaments.” After the chief executive tabled Bundy’s report at an acrimonious cabinet meeting in March 1963, Vice President Johnson stormed out of the room in protest and told his staff that “while Joe Jr. is not the appeaser his old man was, he still is an inbred ‘Kennedy isolationist.’” When Johnson’s remarks became known to the press, Washington newspaper insiders predicted that LBJ would be dropped from the 1964 ticket for this show of disloyalty. In fact, over Easter dinner at the family home in Hyannis Port in April 1963, Robert Kennedy proposed that the “Texan traitor be shown the door.” Joe Sr. heartily agreed. But John Kennedy, as always, tamped down the vitriol with his assertion that “we still need that southerner to hold on to the crucial southern states come November of 1964.” The president agreed to keep LBJ on board, but for the remainder of JPK’s tenure in office his vice president would be kept at long arm’s length when it came to foreign affairs.¹¹

While JPK would have little to say to Johnson, he heard plenty from New York’s Archbishop Francis Cardinal Spellman as the North Vietnamese advances continued en masse down the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail in 1964. In secret phone conversations that the president felt obliged to take—*notwithstanding* his pledge that his religion would not play a part in his administration—the “vicar of American armed forces” called upon Kennedy to save this “Catholic government from defeat by the Godless communists.” However, the most Kennedy would do in response to the powerful prelate was to increase the number of military advisers and training personnel to approximately 16,000 during the election year. Predictably, his Republican opponent, Arizona senator Barry Goldwater, made the “faltering American stance in Southeast Asia” a major thrust of his attacks on the incumbent. In response, JPK let it be known that it would “take one million American troops to stop the invasion of South Vietnam” and asked the voters whether they were “ready to send so many of our sons to fight and die in a war whose outcome was most uncertain.”

Most Americans agreed, and while Saigon teetered on the brink, JPK was returned to office.¹²

In the early fall of 1965, Ho Chi Minh announced triumphantly that “the inevitable reunification of the Vietnamese people had been achieved” when Saigon fell to his army. From that moment on, observers in Washington monitored carefully Hanoi’s next move. In the June 1965 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, a symposium of experts debated whether Ho Chi Minh—to some a dedicated communist, to others primarily a staunch nationalist—would align with the Red Chinese or the Russians or perhaps chart an independent course, with designs of Vietnamese control over a sphere of interest that would include Laos, Cambodia, and even Thailand.

While JPK followed closely developments in Southeast Asia, back home he had to fend off political attacks from Republican interventionist hawks who posited that “once again, on a Democratic president’s watch, another country had been lost to the communists.” Kennedy, in keeping with American political tradition not to seek a third term, would not have to defend his record in any future election. But he was deeply concerned with his administration’s historical legacy. In 1972, when Arthur Schlesinger wrote what he called “a definitive history of JPK’s administration written by a historian with unequalled access to the Oval Office,” he recalled JPK’s pique in private conversation that “it’s been only three years since I stopped the Russians in Cuba, which became a communist enclave under Nixon’s watch.” Nonetheless, to reassert his leadership in a foreign hot spot, close to the minds and hearts of many Americans, Kennedy felt compelled to shore up American support for an acknowledged ally. He redoubled U.S. support for Israel. Thus, in December 1965, subsequent to meeting with Eshkol in the White House, JPK publicly reassured the prime minister that “the U.S. is four-square behind Israel in all matters that affect their vital security interests, so many of which are in concert with ours.”

A year and a half later the American pledge was tested, when in May 1967 the Egyptians broke the 1956 “good-faith agreement” and demanded that peacekeeping observers leave the contested borders of Egypt and Israel. Moscow immediately made clear to the United Nations, when the international body initially dithered in response to this crisis, that “the Emergency Force existed in the area due to the kind invitation of the Egyptians.” Due now to unspecified “Israeli provocations our ally has

the right under international law to secure its boundaries through their own efforts.” As the peacekeepers packed up to leave, Cairo Radio declared that “our forces are in a complete state of readiness for war. If Israel tries now to set the region on fire, then Israel will be completely destroyed in this fire, thus bringing an end to this aggressive, racist base.” Damascus chimed in with its own pledge that “the war of liberation will not end except with Israel’s abolition.”

For Israel, in the days that followed, there was a strong sense that the military situation had reached a point of no return. Doleful cabinet officials spoke of economic strangulation with the inevitable closing of the Gulf of Aqaba to shipping, its lifeline to African and East Asian trade. Generals spoke of the immediate threat of invasion through Sinai and Gaza. Though the Israeli public was not alerted to all Arab military moves, defense planners were likewise agitated when they learned that the Egyptian air force had flown a reconnaissance flight over Dimona, the site of their not-so-secret nuclear facility. Eshkol understood clearly the import of the reference in Dayan’s report that “the atomic rock in our slingshots might soon be endangered.” What Eshkol told the nation, as 80,000 reservists were called up late in May, was that while “we—the modern-day Davids through our courageous IDF—can defeat our enemies—like Goliath of old—a war will be costly in the loss of our boys and perhaps our cities. But struggle we must because our very survival is at stake.”

But would Israel stand alone in this new massive struggle? And if the battle turned against their forces would anyone come to its rescue? As the day of decision drew near, it seemed for Israeli diplomats, especially the peripatetic Abba Eban, who was in constant shuttle between Jerusalem and the State Department, as if “the old Arabist boys, our long-time enemies at Foggy Bottom were at it again, this time questioning the necessity of our action to survive.” The foreign minister was taken aback when Undersecretary of State Eugene Rostow pointed out that “under international law, Nasser was not obliged to have foreign troops—even peacekeepers—on his sovereign soil.” Furthermore, he advised that any preemptive strike against Cairo would be “a very serious mistake in judgment.” In a subsequent meeting with Rostow’s boss, Dean Rusk, Eban had to sit through additional “friendly advice” that cautioned against “precipitous independent action” was tendered without an assurance

that America would stand with Israel. What the Eshkol government wanted was a clear statement that “any attack on Israel would be considered as an attack against the United States.” In a heated riposte to Rusk—which the press was told was merely “a candid exchange of ideas”—Eban, in the words of his interlocutor, had the “temerity” to argue that “such was the rhetoric of the weak-kneed used during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the high point in the Kennedy administration’s heroic leadership of a free nation.” Now, it seemed that an uncertain America “has undertaken the responsibility of restraining us from the protection of our rights and our security.” As Israel seethed over the State Department’s stance, similar tough thoughts were communicated to the White House, albeit in softer tones through Eban’s private conversations with the president’s brother John. The foreign minister’s references to “U.S. failure in Vietnam” struck deep chords within the president, who pledged on behalf of the “family” that they would “not let a friend down.” Eshkol was mollified when, on May 31, 1967, he received word from JPK that “since America will use all of its powers to ensure that the Straits of Tiran are open to all nations, it would not fault Israel for taking all measure in its power.” Though Israeli cabinet members noted that the message did not specify whether or how the United States would commit its own troops to the conflict, their sense now was that “Israel would not stand alone.”¹³

Consequently, the Eshkol government was not perturbed overall by the State Department’s declaration on June 3 that “the position of the United States is neutral in thought, word, and deed.” Israel understood that Rusk’s public statement was actually designed to serve as mere cover for America’s favorable attitude toward Jerusalem. Ultimately, Israel did not have to rely on American military support when it moved into action to “defend its sovereignty.” On June 5, 1967, Israel attacked the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. In a matter of hours, the Israeli air force virtually destroyed the entire air forces of both Cairo and Damascus. Soon, Israeli tanks moved quickly through the Sinai Desert along some of the same routes that they had used in 1956. IDF tanks routed Egyptian armor and opened up a clear path to Cairo. Jordan’s King Hussein, who in the run-up to the conflict had signed a defense pact with Egypt on May 30, ordered the shelling of Jerusalem and made plans to “liberate the Holy City,” convinced by Cairo that Israel had been “put on the defensive.” Israel was more than

ready for the Jordanian legions, and in three days the IDF not only blunted their attacks but captured the Old City of Jerusalem, which had been under Jordanian control since 1948. On the Syrian borders, during battles that lasted but six days, Israel secured the Golan Heights, protecting the Galilee from future Arab attack. Predictably, the USSR, reeling from the defeat of those whom they had armed, threatened armed intervention. Content that he had “backed a winner which had achieved in lightning fashion its military objectives,” JPK was quite comfortable declaring that that an “immediate cease-fire was necessary.” The Israelis were amenable. On June 10, 1967, the Six Day War ended. Among Arabs, the defeat would be known as “*an-Naksah*”—“The Setback.” They would continue to threaten to destroy the Jewish state, provoking enduring dilemmas for Israel, the world powers, and American Jews.

In the wake of this great triumph, Orthodox Jews from America and elsewhere in the Diaspora rushed to Jerusalem to join Israelis—both the devout and the intrigued—in celebrating Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks, at the Western Wall. The *Jerusalem Post* estimated that close to 200,000 people converged on the faith’s holiest site to mark the return of the sacred domain to Jewish control after 2,000 years. Eshkol lauded the unparalleled courage of “our boys in action” while rabbis at home and abroad preferred to attribute success to “the hand of God.” Some prayed that this victory would lead to peace in the region. Others saw the triumph as a divine sign that the modern state would, in time, be expanded to encompass much of “the Jewish land of the Bible.” Eshkol and future prime ministers would have to deal with the ramifications of these visions of their country’s future.

Despite his euphoria over the victory and his pleasure over seeing some American Jews dancing with Israelis at the Western Wall, Eshkol could not get beyond his disappointment over the overall performance of “our lethargic brethren” in the critical weeks before their triumph. A series of hastily attended “celebratory gatherings” that the newly established American-Israel Friendship League organized in major American cities in the first month after the ceasefire left him cold and totally unsatisfied. “Now they turn out in the thousands at the Hollywood Bowl, with American politicians ready to stand by their sides because everyone wants to be identified with our success. How long will that rush of enthusiasm

that our triumph generated in them last? Where were our Jews in America in May when despite welcomed American assurances we stood alone? They now fill coffers with money and are proud to buy our defense bonds. But did they invest in us when we were seen in so many places in the world as a losing proposition? Until the end, they worried about how we—and they—were seen in the American mind.” The very theme of these mass meetings, the emphasis on the “comradeship of Israel and America,” Eshkol observed, “was designed primarily to raise their own stock.”

Late in June 1967, Eshkol unburdened these feelings to David Ben-Gurion on a visit to Sde Boker, the kibbutz home of the former prime minister. The two men had once been political allies but had become estranged once Eshkol took over leadership of the Knesset. However, Eshkol felt that he had to “tell the Old Man just how right he had been all along about the gap between us and the spiritless American Jews whose only creed is ‘Wait and see what is best for me!’”

During this visit, the prime minister recounted how “a year prior to the 1967 war, after absorbing the American Jewish Congress’s troubling report about disinterest among young American Jews in connecting with Israel, I empaneled a commission to rethink our approach toward reaching these alienated Jews and their parents. ‘Fostering identity’ was the vaguest of terms for those with the minimal connections to anything Jewish. Something radical had to be done to rouse that community to its responsibility to fellow Jews in distress. Projecting ahead, I felt that it was only a matter of time before the Egyptians and Syrians, with their Soviet guns and their unending threats of malice, would move to destroy our state. We had to find a way of shocking them toward action or reversing the course of the past thirty years of American Jewish history toward having such timid Jews stand solidly with us. Their communal leaders had to stop monitoring so closely every State Department communiqué and focus on the fate of the Jewish state. The masses of American Jews had to be convinced that they had a greater mission in life than just their own personal comfort within their Diaspora. I called these ‘last ditch’ deliberations ‘The Jews of Silence Initiative.’”

Never before had American Jews been taken as strongly to task for their failure to take even “reasonable risks” to protect their co-religionists endangered elsewhere in the world. The initiative provocatively accused

American Jewry of being “infected with a pernicious isolationism unbecoming of both the best of American creeds and Jewish tradition.” These educators did not belabor the historical and religious “special responsibility all Jews had for one another.” Rather, the Israelis essentially accused American Jews, in their constant quest to gain full acceptance, of adopting and maintaining as their own a “discredited” isolationist stream in American political thought which had submitted that their country—or in this case, themselves—could be best protected by disengagement from the hot spots of the world. This was a position that was long harbored by those described as “first cousins to antisemites.” They noted the cruel irony that America from the Taft to the Kennedy administrations had moved the nation toward a robust internationalist stance, which made their country a “beacon of freedom in the world.” Yet American Jews remained fearful of “intervention on our behalf; a nation whose values, they could tell their American friends, comported so strongly with America’s.” There was a “mantle of leadership for this free Jewry to proudly assume” and yet they hunkered down, “awaiting signs of approval from those perceived as powerful in government.”

This set of unbridled criticisms found full expression in a controversial pamphlet entitled *Where Were You?* The provocative document was distributed in the tens of thousands to every conceivable Jewish organization’s mailing list and formed the basis for a newspaper-magazine advertising campaign that included the *New York Times* and most American Jewish weeklies. Its assertions morphed into talking points that were sent to rabbis of every Jewish denomination except, of course, the outright anti-Zionist Reform leaders who still held sway in some communities. The batch of pamphlets that were sent to the American Jewish Committee, however, did not find their way into employees’ mailboxes. Joseph Proskauer made sure of that through a phone call to the organization’s executive vice president, Bertram Gold.

The gist of the pamphlet was there was a “lost tradition of activism that had to be recaptured, a commitment that had to be reclaimed if American Jewry was to survive.” In other words, “Israel was here to stay—if for no other reason that the free world needed it as a bastion against the Soviets. But would there be an American Jewry in the coming generations?” The appeal was directed primarily to the grandchildren of Eastern

European immigrants. It constituted an ambitious effort to stoke embers of guilty recognition among those who over more than two generations had become estranged from their ancestors' history.

Where Were You? asserted that "there was a time when Jews took to the streets to protest the murdering of Jews in the infamous Kishinev pogrom of 1903 and took their cause to the halls of Congress demanding retribution from the bloody tsarist regime. Jews and their gentile allies fought successfully to rouse the United States toward punitive action against the Russians even if State Department officials contended that economic sanctions against Russia would harm America's economy. There was a time when Jews during and after the Great War risked to establish their own 'Congress'—an American Jewish Congress—to prosecute a campaign for the protection of Polish Jews. The Congress's founders showed no apprehension that other Americans might wonder if the Jews now constituted their own 'separate government.' There was a time when American Jews, in 1917, rejoiced over the British government under Lord Balfour granting a guarantee for a Jewish national home in Palestine. There was a time when the parents and grandparents of today's Jews showed immense concern about the conditions of Jews in Russia, Poland, and Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s when the Soviets first undermined Jewish cultural life under their regime. And in the other regions of Eastern Europe, when pogroms destroyed Jewish lives and homes, many American Jews contributed during that crisis what they could to relief efforts. Some even risked their lives to check on conditions back home; more than a few did not return."

There even was a time, the critique continued, "during the early years of Nazism when American Jews, with the assistance of concerned Christians, organized rallies to protest the 'inhuman' early political attacks and physical atrocities that the Hitler regime perpetrated 'in violation of all standards of human decency.' The April 1, 1933, German boycott of Jewish stores and the revocation of Jewish rights culminating in the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were effectively pitched as more than just a Jewish concern, but as a violation of human rights." The pamphlet shrewdly omitted any reference to American Jewry's unwillingness in the early 1930s to point their fingers at their own government's failure to amend harsh, restrictive immigration laws. That sort of recollection would

have belied the point that “American Jewry had had a history of standing up for its brethren elsewhere.”

The pamphlet then asserted “that ironically, the decline in American Jewish accountability began with the British standing up to Hitler in 1938.” In a rapid-fire recapitulation of a crucial decade, the argument was made that Munich protected European Jewry from the threat of grievous physical destruction. It did not save Polish Jews from eventual Soviet cultural domination. That was another reality that was not frontally addressed. In that changed environment, continued the narrative, the strength of the Chamberlain government at that critical point in time created new positive realities in Palestine. Most significantly, however, was the notion that through all of the world’s turmoil—from 1938 to 1948—“American Jews watched warily from the sidelines.” They let events take their course, relying totally on Christian governments to determine their fate. Through the maelstrom of events, “American Jews showed themselves to be less than ideal ‘self-reliant’ Americans and certainly did not live up to their Jewish obligations to help their brethren.” Most critical, when American attitudes soured toward the Zionist cause when American peacekeeping lives were lost during a terrorist bombing of the King David Hotel, *Where Were You?* recounted how American Jews cowered out of fear of endangering their own position among their fellow citizens through support of Israeli statehood. This behavior, pointedly described as “little short of cowardice and certainly smacking of selfishness,” reached another low point in 1956 when American Jews, intimidated by the dual loyalty charge hung over them by Marshall’s State Department, mustered only a flaccid response to the Suez Crisis.

In the concluding section of the pamphlet (entitled “Do You Care?”), American Jews were asked “the consummate question of our times and of all times. As Arab armies prepared once again to mount existential threats to Israel’s survival, were they content to stand aside, hopeful only that their government support the Jewish state’s cause?” Or “would they courageously take history into their own hands? Might they set aside their apathy and subscribe to a fundamental Zionist creed that neither God nor other nations can ensure their future? Jews must alone provide for themselves.”

This “Jewish cry from the heart”—as Emanuel Neumann called the Jews of Silence Initiative—or this “lamentation and lambasting,” to quote Arthur Hertzberg’s alliteration—fell well short of changing the course of

American Jewish consciousness. Such was Marshall Sklare's evaluation of the state of community feelings toward Israel, first in reaction to the pamphlet and subsequently to the critical six weeks before the Six Day War and ultimately to the IDF's triumph. In his paper "Whither American Jews and Zionism?" delivered at the December 1967 Jewish studies conference chaired and keynoted by Salo Baron, Sklare argued that "there were always those within the Jewish polity who were highly motivated and determined to help Israel who were recharged by this call from Jerusalem. They redoubled their efforts through charitable contributions, letters to government officials, and rallies in their neighborhoods to make their voices heard. A few of the most committed young Zionists even hopped on planes, destination Tel Aviv, to offer themselves as volunteer aides to soldiers prepared to fight for the homeland." On the opposite side of the great communal divide stood bands of avowed anti-Zionists. Stuart Gottlieb, executive director of the American Council for Judaism, had dismissed *Where Were You?* as a "Zionist screed" and an "unwarranted challenge to the very manhood of American Jews." Sklare quoted Gottlieb's rebuttal as asserting that "we are ready to stand up for what is most crucial to our people: our national, civic, and cultural integration into America free from the taint of nationalism." However, most Jews, in Sklare's estimation, were "neither enthused nor enraged by the Initiative's appeal."

This gauge of Jewish public opinion came after Sklare spent the last weeks of May 1967 in a return visit to Highland Park. There he found that the "palpable fear of dual allegiance that had stymied support for Israel in the past had declined." Most respondents opined that "the possibility of Israel and America being on opposite sides of a military conflict" was either "remote" or "impossible." Clearly, JPK's policies had stilled apprehensions. Those who were strongly pro-Israel were comfortable having their views tabulated and quoted. The additional highly significant perspective was a growing feeling that "the edge of unfriendliness that had separated Jews from Christians just a decade ago had softened considerably." This approbation contributed "mightily to Jews feeling comfortable speaking about Middle Eastern politics."

At the same time, as these Jews grew ever closer to their neighbors, their definitions of "community" became increasingly "general" and "not specifically Jewish." Sklare avoided labeling Highland Park's Jews as

“selfish” and “self-insular,” as he had a decade earlier. But his numbers did reveal a trend that evidenced that “Jewish charity dollars were directed more to the United Fund than to the United Jewish Appeal even during this time of crisis.” Although all local congregations—even the old-line Reform Einhorn Temple—accepted delivery of several thousand copies of *Where Were You?* they remained in synagogue offices, unread by even those congregants who attended services regularly. The talking points did not find their ways into rabbis’ sermons, including the ones delivered at the Solomon Schechter Synagogue. Sklare closed his presentation with this final assertion: “If this community is indicative of the direction we are heading, then most Jews of our time have effectively lost contact with any organic connection to the larger community of Israel.”

During the question-and-answer period that followed his presentation, Sklare was queried about the noticeably enthusiastic response of American Jews to the victory in the Six Day War and the excitement in many quarters over the recapture of the Jewish holy places in Jerusalem. Did it not augur a stirring of residual emotions from within a deep well-spring of ancestral connections, upon which the community’s future might be built? Sklare replied in a most tentative manner. He reminded his audience first that “sociologists should never attempt to predict the future. That is something neither we nor historians should ever do. We all have enough difficulties chronicling the past and ascertaining the present.” Both Baron and Marcus, recalling the error of their remarks some thirty years earlier, squirmed in their chairs at this remark. Still, Sklare offered “a diffident prediction that I believe may be proven true. Those who are committed to Israel and Zionism will become more and more devoted to the cause. They will send their money to Israel, visit the Jewish state regularly, and, when they are home, they will keep constant note of every twist and turn in Israel’s efforts to survive among hostile neighbors. Perhaps some of their children will study there, with the most committed deciding to stay and become Israeli citizens. The question is not the quality of that response but its quantity and the nature of Jewish life among the majority of American Jews. How many Jews will fit that presently unknowable profile? That I cannot tell.” Levi Eshkol asked the same sort of question to himself and to Ben-Gurion during their conversation at Sde Boker soon after the Six Day War.

Ben-Gurion's view was that "the victory parades are nothing more than a temporary euphoria that will not long endure." In a widely reprinted interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, which international wire services carried to America, the former prime minister opined that "we will continue to maintain and even intensify our alliance with the United States, and if an attempt is again made to destroy us, then with American help, the protection of Almighty God, and the power of our Israel Defense Force we will continue to survive and to grow. But as far as American Jewry is concerned, we will not count on their support forever because they are doomed to cultural self-destruction. They may find the love of the American Christians as antisemitism might eventually decline, but their children will not remain tied to our people. The door to their survival is, however, open. It leads to Zion and Jerusalem."

While the Six Day War did not alter the trajectory of American Jewish life, it did vibrantly rouse very different "Jews of Silence." Some nine million Jews in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe that had been kept quiet by their communist oppressor felt a swelling pride in their ancestry. For Russian Jews, they had been kept from their faith and identity largely since the Russian Revolution. For Polish Jews, Soviet control over what they thought, believed, and practiced had been their lot since the USSR invasion of 1939.

In the days prior to the Israeli victory, Jews from Moscow to Warsaw to Lodz to Bialystok to Cracow who were fed Soviet versions of the news were fearful for the survival of the Jewish state. For some, there was a very personal additional component to their acute consternation. In the years between Stalin's death and the mid-1960s, the Soviets had intermittently permitted some tens of thousands of Jews to be reunited with their families in Israel. Those still in captivity were deeply concerned both about the fate of their relatives then under the gun thousands of miles from Russia. Almost as important, they worried whether there would be a homeland for them, if and when they chose to try to emigrate from communist control. The IDF victory not only relieved them of their immediate anxieties but provided them with a sense of belonging to a triumphant nation. That happy emotion increased the ardor for migration in many quarters. There was also a reawakening of Jewish identification due to a negative outgrowth of the stunning victory. Stunned by the ineffectiveness of their

Arab clients, the Kremlin, in order to deal with their own frustration and to prop up the losers, mounted a concerted anti-Zionism campaign. Despite protestations from the government that antisemitism was anathema in an egalitarian communist state, Eastern European Jews saw Soviet pronouncements as reincarnations of tsarist attacks. The canards referenced the notorious forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; an updated version was republished for the occasion. The message of hatred that these Jews heard was that they were now unacceptable as equal members of their host society.¹⁴

In looking for ways to emigrate to freedom through exit visas either to Israel or the United States, Eastern European Jews hoped that their brethren in America would assume a major advocacy role. They envisioned a scenario whereby through deputations to the White House and protests against Soviet diplomatic and cultural presences in their country, American Jews would convince their government to see communist oppression of Jews as a human rights issue worthy of that great country's concern. However, to their dismay, most American Jews—including their communal defense groups—did not appreciably rally to their cause.

There was no staunch opposition in American Jewish ranks to expressing concern on behalf of these oppressed Jews, although some of the staunchest anti-Zionists were not all that happy with “the movement’s unfortunate linkage with Jewish nationalism.” Israel so very much wanted these refugees to bolster their Jewish population and was especially enamored of scientists and engineers. On the other hand, some American Jews quietly supported Israel as a destination for many of their brethren, happy to avoid a new era of migration of the poor and unacculturated to American shores that would drain philanthropic resources. They also were apprehensive that a new wave of migrants might remind those Americans who did not like Jews of how their own immigrant ancestors once looked and behaved when they came to the United States in the early twentieth century. But these reservations were articulated largely in private, for such viewpoints might be seen as selfishly un-American. At the same time, there certainly was no dual loyalty problem with attacking Soviet actions. Conceivably, American politicians and government officials—even hard-boiled members of the State Department—would sign on to criticism of the communists so long as remonstrations did not really injure tenuous

Cold War relations. Nonetheless, in 1967 the Soviet Jewry issue did not gain great traction among U.S. Jewry.

As in the case of advocacy for Zionism and Israel, there was a core of activists who worked hard to engage the community's attention. Late in 1967, a group of rabbis organized an interdenominational "weekend of concern" across the nation, in which spiritual leaders spoke to their congregants about their "inexorable ties to their ancestral past that leads us back to Eastern Europe." For example, Rabbi Joachim Prinz of Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark, New Jersey, told his congregation in no uncertain terms that "these are your cousins in Russia and Poland who stem from the same tree of life that has made you what are. You must pray and act for them." But neither his words nor those of colleagues across the Jewish denominational spectrum provoked a discernible grassroots rise in concern for those under communist domination. Prinz would subsequently write mournfully in his unpublished autobiography that such apathy sadly convinced him that "American Jewry's roots to their past have withered and shrunk."

Meanwhile, ever ready to criticize publicly those around him "who would not stand up for Judaism," Arthur Hertzberg wrote provocatively in the February 1968 edition of *Commentary* "that had East European Jews been under physical attack and faced with destruction as had been feared back in 1938 when Hitler was on the rise, perhaps American Jews would have risen boldly for the cause. But that nightmare scenario was averted." Hertzberg had in mind his teacher Salo Baron's keynote address of two months earlier that reminded him how Jewish life had been changed after Munich. "American Jews today, " he continued, "who in the majority have abandoned their cultural heritage, are not especially moved by the difficulties East European Jews have in living as Jews." In the years that followed, American Jewish activists would, ironically, find greater support for their movement among staunch anticommunists within the Congress of the United States. But there would be many lonely days ahead for them in dealing with Jewish organizations who were largely devoted almost exclusively to the ill-defined needs of the American Jewish community. Frustrated by their failures to create a vibrant struggle to save Eastern European Jewry from cultural extinction, by the early 1970s migration to Israel became a preferred personal alternative for these activists. The late

David Ben-Gurion was no longer around to greet them personally, but their presence surely fructified the Jewish state. Meanwhile, American Jewry lost a cadre of leaders whose enthusiasm and commitment it would most definitely need.

What Really Happened

The one constant in Israeli history during the state's first two decades was the unrelenting animosity of its Arab neighbors and their desire to destroy the "Zionist entity." The Israeli economy was constantly undermined by an Arab-initiated boycott of its goods. Egyptian-sponsored guerrilla raids into southern Israel reminded them that they were in a state of ongoing conflict. The rise of Egyptian strongman Gamal Abdel Nasser and his strong relations with the Soviet Union augured even more difficult times for Israel. Intent on revenge for his nation's defeat in 1948, Nasser not only massed troops on his border with Israel in 1956 but even more provocatively nationalized the Suez Canal, effectively choking off Israeli access to Africa and beyond. Perceiving the nation in existential danger, the IDF with the assistance of the English and the French launched a quick and decisive attack against the Egyptians on October 29, 1956. Predictably, the Russians saber-rattled over these "imperialist activities" and called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops. A neutral United States under President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles likewise called for withdrawal. The allies reluctantly complied but not before the Israelis wrested an agreement from the United Nations that provided that its ships would have free passage through the Suez Canal. Equally important, the international body stationed neutral observers between Israeli and Egyptian lines. This peacekeeping force remained in place until May 1967.

For American Jews, the Suez Crisis constituted a real challenge in their relationship with the White House and State Department. Arguably the low point in America's relationship with the Jewish state, this was the first time that the United States appeared to be siding with Israel's enemies. Though no strong public protests ensued against U.S. policy, American Jewish leaders who were fully supportive of their brethren in Israel advocated strongly in political and governmental circles, showing no fear of being accused of dual loyalty. In fact, when Dulles intimated that the

United States might support sanctions against Israel for its lack of alacrity in withdrawal, there was talk in Jewish ranks in America of a general strike. Such a development never occurred, however, as Congress opposed sanctions deleterious to Israel.

From 1957 to 1967, while the tensions between Israel and its neighbors continued, the Israelis were always on guard against Nasser making good on his threats of a “final showdown,” and Egypt generally held its fire. In the mid-1960s, the possibility of a multi-front war against Israel increased when the Egyptians united with the Syrians. In May 1967, the threat of war seemed to be imminent when Nasser broke the good-faith agreement brokered by the United Nations a decade earlier and demanded that peacekeepers leave the contested territories between his country and Israel. Nasser boasted that the conquest of Palestine was soon to be realized. Though the United States, under the Johnson administration, advised and cautioned against a preemptive strike, Israel felt that its very existence was threatened and on June 5, 1967, struck against Egyptian airfields and army encampments. The Six Day War had begun. Though the Eshkol government warned the Jordanians against joining the conflict, when King Hussein’s forces—encouraged by the Egyptians—joined the battle, Israel moved into Arab-controlled East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The IDF captured the Jewish holy sites in Jerusalem, setting off a wave of joy in the Jewish world, both among the religious and secular. In addition, Israel overcame Syrian forces to conquer the Golan Heights, protecting its northern reaches, particularly the Galilee, from future Arab attacks.

In the critical weeks before the Six Day War, American Jews feared greatly for the survival of the Jewish state. The term “Never Again” became the byword of community conversation and, more significant, activity. In 1967, more than any time since the end of World War II, American Jews evoked the memory of the murder of the six million as a clarion call for action: to prevent a new catastrophic calamity from befalling their people. Many Jews, previously estranged from community life, found themselves attending mass rallies and opening up their wallets and pocketbooks to support Jerusalem. The sale of Israel Bonds spiked and contributions to the United Jewish Appeal peaked. Many lined up to donate blood to the Israeli Red Cross.

The quickness and decisiveness of the IDF victory caused no negative stir in Washington, even though the Johnson administration had cautioned Israel about proactive measures. The questions that eventually would be raised dealt with the circumstances under which these captured territories might be returned to the Arabs, as well as the status of Jerusalem, a city holy to three faiths. As of 2015, these issues have yet to be resolved.

For American Jews, the Israel victory intensified their connections to the Jewish state, even if very few of them would migrate away from the United States. While they remained loyal Americans, these triumphant days created a strong sense of pride in their heritage, providing linkages to the Jewish past, present, and future.

Conclusion

Alternate History and the Realities of American Jewish Life

This dark, counterfactual vision of American Jewry has shone a bright light on actual history. The somber hues in this portrayal depict a community that from the 1930s through the mid-1960s was far from fully at home in contemporary America, distant from other Jews, disconnected with its past, and uncertain whether it had a future. In my alternate history, the long-term processes of disintegration of Jewish identity among men and women who were generations removed from their parents' immigrant roots intensified. Dissociation was encouraged in an America that withheld full acceptance while strongly suggesting that strict conformity to its way of life was required for achieving social equality. Unyielding feelings that their neighbors could not be fully trusted persisted, and the feeling was mutual. Weighted down with anxieties and uncertainties, American Jews habitually found themselves looking over their shoulders at the Christians around them, worried that their own political allegiances would be questioned. Such dilemmas—arising from unfavorable domestic governmental policies and social circumstances—precluded them from making statements or acting in ways that might have indicated loyalty to any country other than their adopted American land. Their endemic reticence in a largely intolerant society also deterred them from championing the causes of others, most notably African Americans, who were much further away from full equality than were Jews. Only a minority of the ideologically committed stood apart, at their own substantial risk, in a community where a cadre of leaders made sure that American Jews always

were seen as unquestionably patriotic. Frequently, those in charge mounted public demonstrations of how patriotic and acculturated American Jews were. The list of speakers at these “unity gatherings” was monitored carefully to silence those who might articulate any alternate vision of what it meant to be an American and a Jew. When telling the history of American Jews, a standardized, sanitized narrative was the order of the day. The lionized cast of characters included those who made contributions to the growth of the nation. Emphasizing with great defensiveness the inexorable ties between Jews and the United States, every effort was made to avoid mentioning any discouraging words about three hundred years of Jewish life in America.

Even at moments when there was a stand-down from imminent crisis modes, support from American Jewry for the cause of their Palestinian and then Israeli brethren was tepid. Officials in Jerusalem and their Zionist sympathizers in America faced a continual losing battle to galvanize the largely unconnected masses. Advocates for the Jewish national movement often differed with each other over ways and means of promoting the Jewish nationalist agenda. But they were united in their unhappy understanding that the turnabout in Munich had stanching concerns over the refugee crisis, which temporarily had focused a considerable constituency on Zionist aspirations. From 1938 on, the complicated quest for a Jewish commonwealth did not capture widespread and enduring American Jewish interests. Whatever concerns brought this disintegrating group together were decidedly local. They might open their hearts and pocket-books to fund old-age homes, hospitals, or orphan asylums or to build their own country clubs, especially since often they were barred from gentile establishments. Such a narrow-minded, when not intimidated, Diaspora community failed to accord full-hearted support for Israel’s rise in 1948. Over the twenty years that followed, American Jews largely were not contributors to the miracle of the Jewish state’s survival against its enemies amid its wars. In 1956, those with longstanding anti-Zionist pedigrees lined up solidly with an antagonistic State Department. On the question of quick withdrawal from Suez, the Israelis were told to heed American governmental admonitions. By 1967, due to twists in American foreign policy objectives and priorities, fears of dual loyalty declined. Still, during the Six Day War, Israel’s staunchest backers in Washington’s political

circles were more demonstrative in their support of Jerusalem than most preternaturally cautious American Jews. When the two Jewish communities—Israeli and American—were not at political loggerheads, tensions arose when Israeli leaders proclaimed that without the power of Zionist identification and influence, there was no future for American Jews. Antagonistic intra-Jewish contretemps were exacerbated when it was asserted from Jerusalem that the saving remnant of a culturally doomed American Jewry would only include those who sought out a new home in their reborn ancient land in Zion.

In my alternate history, until the 1950s, the urban neighborhood was the temporary salvation of Jewish connectedness. There, where they predominated, informal, substantial relationships lived on. This form of group survival continued to some degree in new suburban settings even if in these areas there were fewer sidewalks and almost no apartment hallways for linking up easily with those with whom they were most comfortable. The continuation of social antisemitism in the partially opened doors to suburbia played a large role in directing Jews to one another. Residual feelings of simply not belonging also continued to haunt Jews. As far as religious life was concerned, although America pushed strongly for attendance at one's own house of worship, synagogues that were half-empty in the 1930s and 1940s continued to be unattractive, except on the High Holidays. Then the younger generation showed seasonal respect for their elders and spent a few moments in the sanctuary. Or they were sure to be in their seats when Jews reverently extolled the greatness of America during interfaith gatherings coinciding with central national observances.

The early 1960s marked the beginning of a new era of acceptance for American Jews. Most notable, its younger generation was the beneficiary of a new governmental and societal outlook rooted in the quest to defeat the Soviets in the Cold War. To defeat their totalitarian system, it was said, our free society had to train its best minds in scholarship, science, and technology regardless of religious background. Under this mandate, high-achieving Jewish youngsters were defined as part of the American majority. They took their seats at the nation's most prestigious educational institutions. These were schools that had been off-limits to their parents. But greater integration into the gentile world came at a very high price. Campus life hastened the dissociation of Jewish students from

their religious and ethnic roots. Most of them came to schools with little positive inclination toward their heritages. Such was a direct result of their flaccidly Jewish suburban upbringings. Everywhere they turned as undergraduates, they were told that Judaism was a burden that should be unloaded. University officials did not rhapsodize about the beauties of diversity in their midst. Most Jewish faculty members agreed and positioned themselves as role models of those who had successfully broken away from unwanted pasts. While Hillel and Jewish fraternities and sororities were available for those who sought Jewish cultural activities or simply social conviviality, they attracted meager numbers of members or pledges. Zionist groups that made yeoman efforts to connect young people to Jewishness through Israeli cultural activities and travel opportunities largely failed. The opportunity to mix in among the Christian majority on campus was all too compelling. They wanted to show that they were not just great students, but all-around “Big Men on Campus.” Most Jewish women students felt the same way. As for linkage to Israel, its advocates were unable to overcome the legacy of dual-allegiance accusations and the students’ lack of exposure to the significance of the Jewish state. Campuses were, in the end, hubs of unbridled assimilation.

The continuing decline of my mid-century American Jewry was not altered substantially through the influx of new immigration. Close to nine million Jews remained behind a Soviet Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe. Some 50,000 “foreign Orthodox” Jews, as they were dubbed, who hailed from Polish Hasidic enclaves or devout Lithuanian communities, were among the most noticeable fortunate ones who escaped Soviet domination and made it to American shores. While its first generation demonstrated an acute fidelity to the old ways, the children of these immigrants began to fall away from the intensity of their parents’ commitment. Intergeneration tensions roiled families. They lacked the numbers of adherents and the leadership of uncommonly charismatic leaders to build fully insulated enclaves. While their Orthodox communities had not reached proverbial dead ends in the 1960s, their future—comfortably isolated from American ways—was seriously in doubt.

Additional “foreign Orthodox” Jews would have entered the United States had discriminatory national origins ordinances been removed. But in an America where nativism was still powerful, Congress showed little

interest in changing the laws. The entrenched leadership of American Jewry was not anxious to push against closed doors on behalf of these Jews whose presence embarrassed and worried them. There was also no momentum in the community for protesting on behalf of the Jews who were billeted under Soviet domination in Russia and Poland. Cautious American Jews passed on the problems of their brethren, even if their fellow citizens would have hardly raised an eyebrow if Jews spoke out against communist oppression. Basic to their silence was the loss of kinship with other Jews a half-century or more after their ancestors migrated from these same Eastern European lands. There even was some fear expressed in private circles that a new wave of indigent, unacculturated Jews would tax local philanthropies. And would these newcomers remind Americans of what Jews looked like generations earlier? This is my sad story of a community in steep decline.

How does this presumed saga help us understand and appreciate the real course of the postwar years for American Jews? Overlaying this dystopian counterfactual vision resides a series of provocative messages about the community's actual history and ultimately its destiny. Through our foggy mirror of fiction, the legacy of real events is visible. First and foremost, while one-third of world Jewry was destroyed in the Holocaust, during the Second World War a new world of opportunity and responsibility opened for Jews in the United States, along with a chance confidently to affirm their identities. Rising to their obligations to take on important leadership roles, inspired and often intrepid American Jews became fully immersed in the Jewish international issues of their times. For the record, Jacob Rader Marcus and Salo Baron were among the first to foresee and demand this role for their community. Having been just a few years earlier so sanguine about the survival of German Jewry, they surely recognized the error of their predictions and, in 1941–42, during the depths of the Holocaust, called upon rabbis and lay leaders to carry “gallantly” the new leadership roles that had been thrust upon them. For Marcus, the five million Jews in the United States were “the vanguard, the main body and the rear guard of free Diaspora Jewry.” Baron asserted explicitly that “the Second World War has placed in [American Jewry’s] hands undisputed leadership of world Jewry with all the challenges and responsibilities which it entails.”¹

But even without that call to arms, the horrific events that Jews in America were unable to mitigate galvanized concern for the fate of the Jews in Palestine in the critical years 1945–1948. Though the byword underlying Jewish communal activism of our times, “Never Again,” was not yet readily expressed, in 1948 American Jews took to the streets or rallied in arenas, raised money, and in some cases fought for the Jewish homeland. The memory of the Holocaust surely was with them as they stood with Israel throughout its troubled history—especially during the Six Day War. Meanwhile, whether or not David Ben-Gurion believed in his heart of hearts that the ultimate future of the Jewish people lay only in the Land of Israel, Israeli governments—given the enduring close relationship between Israeli and American Jews, and despite occasional disagreements between brethren—have never asserted that there is no future for American Jewry. Indeed, very often, Israeli officials speak of two primary centers of free Jewish life, Israel and the United States.

Though American Jewry surely has performed gallantly as a leader of world Jewry, its advocacy has taken place within a hospitable home environment. U.S. foreign policy has never stood in staunch opposition to Israel, even if Washington’s support has not always been everything Jerusalem has wanted. My very different alternate history underscores this second, positive reality that has favored America’s Jews. The counterfactual narrative identifies Robert Taft as initially optimistic that, in the short term, Israel would become a reality, and he was willing to expend American efforts as peacekeepers until that day. But when the going got tough in 1947, Taft worried that strong advocacy for a Jewish state would drive the Arabs into the Soviet camp and that the United States would therefore lose access to Middle Eastern oil. As a result, his administration backed away from its pro-Jewish position. Taft also heard from voters who were highly critical of “Zionist methods” in Palestine, which they said would come at the expense of American lives. The White House—to the delight of the State Department—characterized American policy as “even-handed” in defense of his country’s “vital interests.” In utter dismay at this shift in policy, Taft’s Jewish friends spoke with sadness of this “immoral retreat.”

Under his successor George Marshall—as my story goes—support for the Jewish state waned according to the new president’s vision of the world.

He was explicit in his concern that Arab oil was necessary to protect Europe from communism. He also contended that Israel was not an important military ally of the United States. At the Jewish state's founding, he publicly chafed that it had accepted aid from the Soviet Union. That position deeply troubled American Jews, as did his aside that the root of America's prior support for Zionism could be found in the quest for "votes from New York," a poorly veiled reference to Jews. When Marshall assumed the nation's highest office, it was the first time in American history that the commander-in-chief harbored overt suspicions of Jewish loyalties to America.

According to my account, Richard Nixon was spared having come to grips with the Middle East during his term in the White House. After Marshall forced Israel and its European allies out of Suez—just before Nixon took office in 1957—a decade-long stalemate ensued between unreconciled antagonists. But this president, so adept at obfuscation and making allusions to secret plans to end the conflict, was no friend of Israel. Nixon was especially obtuse when he listened to the advice of Arabists in the State Department. As Israeli analysts waded through Nixon's double-talk, at no point did they feel that their survival was all that important to Washington policy makers. The prime minister's office was often deeply concerned when the United States tilted or bowed toward its enemies.

It was not until the presidency of Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. that an administration viewed support of the Jewish state as an integral part of American foreign policy. For Kennedy, championing this position on behalf of the Jewish state was his final and grandest step away from his father's—and his own youthful—prejudices against Jews. The turning point took place when JPK spoke warmly to Golda Meir of "a special relationship with Israel, comparable only to our relationship with Great Britain." It was redoubled when the president told Levi Eshkol in 1965 that the United States was "four-square" behind his country. Only then, when American Jews witnessed this full embrace of Israel, did they relax from their generation-long worry that their support for Israel might be construed as anti-American. America and Israel had become fully aligned. Although this new linkage resulted from turns in events in Vietnam, a geographical region far removed from the Middle East, Israel's survival was now an administration priority. The policy advisers at the State Department were less than enthusiastic about JPK's decision, but ultimately they too fell into line.

When the stories of these alternate presidents (except for Nixon, who actually was inaugurated in 1969) are mirrored against what actually occurred, another positive element of postwar American Jewish status is evidenced. The fortunate reality has been that U.S. policies have never tested the allegiances of the vast majority of American Jews. The exceptions were Jews on the left in the 1950s, whose fealty to radical ideas and, for some, foreign communist powers damned them as un-American. Most other American Jews evinced little interest in defending them and were pleased that their own reputations were not thus besmirched.

The low point in American-Israel relations occurred in 1956 when the Eisenhower administration successfully pressured the Israelis and their allies of the time, the British and French—to withdraw from Suez. But American Jews were not forced to choose sides. While Secretary of State John Foster Dulles intimated that if Israel did exit the battlefield quickly the United States might support sanctions, Congress vigorously opposed that provocative idea. The vast majority of Americans supported the Jewish state's right to defend itself. No questions were raised about American Jewish leaders politicking to influence national policy. More often than not, it has been Jewish opponents of Israel who have leveled the canard of dual loyalty at their brethren. Most gentile neighbors, on the other hand, have been strongly supportive of the Zionist endeavor. To some extent, in the few years immediately after 1945, the stigma of displaced persons camps, a daily humanitarian reminder of what had occurred to the Jews of Europe, created a cushion of support for the Jewish state. It was unquestionably a factor in President Harry S. Truman's support for the creation of Israel. Within my fictionalized version of history, a very different Truman plays but a cameo role as a Missouri senator during the Taft and Marshall administrations. Here he was one of many elected officials who were not swayed to support Jewish issues. In actuality, both during Truman's tenure and over the long term, the strategic importance of the Jewish state and the shared democratic values connecting the two countries have kept the Israeli-American alliance strong. Thus, when American Jews have spoken up in support of Israel, they have done so with the imprimatur of the White House and the American public.

American Jews also garnered widespread approbation from their government and fellow citizens for their other foreign policy commitments,

most notably the fight that began in the mid-1960s on behalf of Soviet Jewry. As in the case of their consistent support for Israel, activism of all sorts in this heartfelt struggle was rooted in a pledge not to witness once again the destruction of their people. However attenuated the personal linkage of millions of American Jews to their East European roots, their self-confident outcry had its roots in their assumption of leadership roles in response to the horrors of the mid-1940s. At the same time, in mounting their protests, they correctly intuited that they had the go-ahead from general society. Almost no one in the American government raised reservations against criticizing the USSR over its blatant, long-existing human rights violations as they applied to Jews. Consequently and critically, at no time during the twenty-five year movement to free Soviet Jewry did the American Jewish community, now empowered and secure compared to the 1930s and 1940s, feel alone.

The wartime experience of American Jews—so conspicuously absent in my alternate account—also aided them mightily in a crucial second arena of activism. They possessed the self-confidence to stand up as advocates for their own needs and desires. Though they had fought patriotically in all prior American wars, never before had these men and some women come out of a military experience feeling so much a part of this country. They were unabashedly proud of their courage under fire. At least they could say that they did their level best to defeat Hitler. As important, they were contributors to the great democratic cause and would not sit still for the persistence of the widespread prewar social antisemitism that had posed barriers to their integration and to that of their parents. But here again, the approbation of the government and of the Jews' gentile neighbors aided American Jewish assertiveness. Earlier, many Jews who had fought in the trenches in France came back from that first Great War proud of their participation and possessed of an elevated sense of belonging. But the xenophobia of the 1920s, stoked by the Soviet victory in the Russian Civil War, which led antisemites to see Jewish conspiracy in the communist takeover, enabled the passage of anti-immigration laws. Jews were put very much on the defensive. Now, however, a fundamental trope of internal World War II American propaganda heartened Jews and contributed to their equanimity. The message inculcated within the armed forces and which was imbued in the general public was that this country's three great faith communities—Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—were in

this struggle together against the threat of fascist tyranny. Next to the picture of the five American soldiers who raised Old Glory on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, there was perhaps no more iconic image from the war that united Americans than the four heroic chaplains—two Protestants, one Catholic, and Rabbi Alexander Goode—who gave up their lifejackets to sailors on the sinking *Dorchester* and went down with the ship reciting Psalms, holy verses common to their faiths. Jews were counted as an integral part of a national consensus dedicated to winning the war.

Ironically, the same callous rhetoric of wartime officials who passed on the chance to save European Jews engendered a new positive attitude toward American Jews. The State and War Departments' cynical mantra was that "special treatment for Jews would retard our efforts to win this war *together*." But that assertion—when told and retold affirmatively and respectfully on U.S. streets—came to mean that Jews of this country, no different from those of other faiths, shared the desire for quick victory. Jews in the armed forces showed how they had indeed helped win the war, shoulder to shoulder with their fellow citizens. Although there were still those who hated Jews, it was not long before a majority of Christians responded affirmatively when asked if they would accept Jews working, studying, and living with them. Christian GIs had positive views of the more than a million Jews who had shared their barracks, rations, and, above all, their fears as they defeated the enemy. Thus, when Jews resolutely pushed on previously closed doors—whether at universities, in the workplace, or in suburbia—they found the portals more ajar than ever before.

A slowly rising tide of tolerance, fostered in part by the nation's war-time experiences, also lifted up many American Jews to look beyond their own community and address the racial issues that were roiling America. Although African Americans were understandably frustrated with the snail's pace of redress following centuries of discrimination, often taking to the streets in protest, notable progress was made. Under Truman, the Fair Employment Practices Acts were passed. *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided and the Eisenhower administration fulfilled its constitutional obligation to enforce that ruling even if it did so reluctantly, overruling the protest of the governor of Arkansas. Kennedy's thousand days in the White House witnessed a sincere attempt to have meaningful civil rights legislation passed. Lyndon Johnson fulfilled that pledge after the assassination of JFK.

Unlike the alternate story that I have told, no American president of the postwar era cynically sided with segregationists, though minority group leaders consistently favored a quicker pace and stronger protections under the law. If these national leaders harbored personal racist feelings, they kept those attitudes to themselves. Throughout this difficult road, most Jews north of the Mason-Dixon Line and some courageously in the South supported racial equality. To some degree, Jewish advocacy for African Americans in critical court proceedings, as well as in lobbying Congress, joining picket lines, and boycotting lunch counters, was a continuation of a tradition that dated back more than fifty years. But the increased vitality of postwar activism was also rooted in a Jewish sense that their work was consonant with the values of their fellow citizens in an increasingly open America. As with all issues, many Jews sat on the sidelines, tending to their personal needs and mundane concerns. It was a disposition that troubled rabbis who wanted a greater social justice commitment out of their congregants. Only in the Deep South would Jews who favored civil rights fear castigation for harboring locally unpopular views. Jewish disillusionment with the tone and direction of the civil rights–Black Power movements belonged to the post-1967 period.

Still, for all the positive outcomes, as Jews asserted themselves on these several fronts, a challenging question remains about the legacy of the wartime experience and the effect of the subsequent opening of American society upon the destiny of American Jews. Did these changed conditions, so favorable to the individual Jew, ultimately foster or ironically undermine the survival of Jewish identification? In my alternate scenario, so replete with negativism, most American Jews in the 1940s through the 1960s did not relate positively to their ancestral heritage. But their lack of acceptance and their never-ending suspicions of the world that did not like their company nonetheless forced them together on a Jewish street even in their new suburban locales. Thus, there was a time lag in their eventual disconnect. It was only when the younger generation arrived on elite college campuses, in their concerted quest to make good on the promise of full integration, that whatever positive feelings remained about their Jewishness rapidly evaporated.

In actual history, the challenges to Jewish identification in a welcoming society actually began earlier and were, in their own right, exceedingly

robust. When Jews found their way into suburbia—with their GI Bill of Rights in hand and nary a whiff of restrictions to navigate—the edge of unfriendliness that they and their neighbors brought with them from a prior era and urban locales quickly rounded into circles of companionship. Their patriotism was unquestioned because, with the exception of politically radical Jews who were largely unwanted both in the Jewish community and general society, Jews had done their share. Jews became equal constituents within “one nation under God.” Jewish religious leaders of all stripes did their utmost to parlay this American religious ethos into greater commitment to Jewish values. Jewish parents, in their heart of hearts, wanted their children to remain in the fold. Nonetheless, the possibilities for their youngsters to drift happily away increased exponentially. Often it began so naturally when Jewish boys and girls were Little League teammates with their Christian teammates or co-stars in school dramatic clubs. Their parents sat proudly next to each other in the bleachers or in the auditorium. As maturing adults, so many of these children of suburbia—despite the yeoman efforts of Jewish organizations to tie those in school to Jewish ideas and identities—drifted away carelessly from other Jews. Some parents may have been chagrined, but even more accepted that such was the lot of those who were raised in a get-along environment. Subsequently, inexorable processes that started with circles of companionship led to intermarriage between Jews and gentiles.

However, the real and alternate storylines differ crucially when close consideration is given to what America required of Jews for full equality. For my benighted Jews, when opportunities eventually opened, the ransom for successful advancement was the abrogation of their Jewish past. In real history, from the 1950s on, the possibility of dissociation was certainly present and inviting. However, Jews also could ride the crest of cultural pluralism as it flowed through the national body politic. The concept that the greatness of America lay in the heterogeneity of its people gave license to its Jews—along with other groups—to hold on tight to their ancestral past and to affirm their future. This multicultural understanding of Americanism had been vigorously debated since the Jewish social philosopher Horace Kallen championed it at the beginning of the twentieth century. This position was the courageous counterpose to pre-World War I nativist and racist sentiments that wanted only the “right

kind” of people admitted to America and accorded full participation in a homogenized society. But cultural pluralism’s ascendancy as America’s dominant ethos did not reach its apogee until after World War II. Today, the opposing spirits of restriction and discrimination still have their advocates. This ire, however, is rarely focused against Jews.

Under a mandate of increasing tolerance of diversity, it has become possible for the children and grandchildren of the postwar era to find their places on campus and later in a profession and community while choosing to stay positively connected with their people’s history and destiny. If anything, universities, as key exemplars, came to believe that being different was good. Jewish students also found, ironically, that these institutions might also be places where, as young adults, they could decide to imbibe Jewish culture within a secular academic environment. Scholars such as Baron or Marcus or Sklare eventually chaired conferences with hundreds of colleagues who taught Judaism on campus. Their offices were often next door to colleagues who did likewise in a myriad of ethnic and racial studies program, all under the imprimatur of college presidents and their boards. And while the postwar and contemporary generations of American Jews have never been fully aligned with Israeli political or religious policies, for those who are interested, inviting aspects of Israeli culture have informed Jewish life within college years and well beyond. The key to continuity has been personal investment in identification.

Thus, American Jews in the postwar era have been blessed and confronted with choices underlying the consummate question of America Jewish survival of our times. How well can those who live integrated and uncommonly free lives under conditions of unqualified acceptance uphold their heritage? Our contemplations about what might have been and comparing the plausible with what actually occurred puts these dilemmas and possibilities in high relief.

Finally, how may we position the life stories of those who made it to the shores of the United States before and after the Holocaust within the crucible of choices tendered to America’s Jews? In my story, there were only 50,000 so-called “foreign Orthodox” Jews in America in the 1950s and 1960s. Beyond this first generation, their continuity of strict belief and practice was also in question. Their children, influenced to begin making accommodations to American life, certainly did not look back to Europe

as their parents did. While their Jewish identities remained clear and present, there was danger in the future.

In real history, exponentially more refugees and survivors arrived from communities and sects that were destroyed or religiously subjugated. For them, there were no Old World locales to visit reverently, except for memorial pilgrimages to place stones on the graves of the murdered. While not all of the newcomers were Orthodox, those who began their American experience predominantly in urban enclaves were the most visible both to fellow Jews and to the general public. They became widely noticed when some began to amass considerable fortunes, as they took full advantage of the openness of the society that greeted them. Their children, raised in an American way, immediately faced the challenge of identity choices and would confront the dilemmas of that critical crucible.

While significant elements within the Orthodox refugee and survivor communities have also prospered economically, the greatest success of the Lithuanian yeshiva and Hasidic transplants in America has been in maintaining the allegiance of most of its succeeding generations. Certainly, their unrelenting posture has brought over to their mindset indigenous Orthodox groups that once had swung toward accommodations. Their influence far exceeds their initial areas of congregation. Part of their achievement is rooted in their dedication to rebuild a world that was burned before their eyes. Thus, even as World War II empowered American Jews to assume world Jewish leadership and to ameliorate their status and the condition of others, the calamity of the 1940s demanded that these newcomers re-create an old civilization on the soil of the United States. Such was their legacy and destiny. And they have had the strength of numbers and the charismatic leadership to constantly reiterate their deep commitments.

Ironically, while these self-isolating groups rarely acknowledge its power, they—like all American Jews—also have benefitted from the efflorescence of cultural pluralism in their new country of residence. Their distinctiveness in dress, language, and overall demeanor are often either ignored or deemed a curiosity in a tolerant society. They, too, ride the crest of a mood in society quite different from that of prewar America. It remains to be seen if, when, and how they may also deal with the crucible of choices that challenge all other contemporary American Jews.

NOTES

PROLOGUE: GHOSTS IN THE RESTORED JEWISH QUARTER IN KRAKOW

1. "Jewish Quarter in the Kazimierz District in Krakow," http://www/krakow-info.com/Jewish_Q.htm.
2. Craig S. Smith, "In Poland, a Jewish Revival Thrives Minus Jews," *New York Times*, July 12, 2007, A3.
3. Daniel Soyer, "Transnationalism and Americanization in East European Jewish Immigrant Public Life," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 56–62; Daniel Soyer, "Revisiting The Old World: American Jewish Tourists in Interwar Eastern Europe," in *Forging Modern Jewish Identities*, ed. Michael Berkowitz, Susan Tananbaum and Sam W. Bloom (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2003), 16–35; Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 141. On Jews who returned because they did not succeed in America, see Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Myth of No Return, Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe," *American Jewish History* (December 1981): 256–268. For an account of an American Orthodox family that sent their son to Lithuania to study in a yeshiva in the early 1930s, see Devora Glickman, *A Tale of Two Worlds: Rabbi Dovid and Rebbetzin Basya Bender, the Bridge Between the Yeshivah and Bais Yaakov Worlds of Pre-War Europe and Post-War America* (New York: Mesorah Publishers, 2009), 49, 57–59, 60.
4. Robert Cowley, ed., *The Collected What If?: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (New York: Putnam, 1999), xv, 263, 265; Martin Bunzl, "Counterfactual History: A User's Guide," <http://history.cooperative.org>.
5. The notes to this study contain explanations as well as references to important works on real historical circumstances that provide the indirect evidence that undergird my analysis. Quotations that are not cited are fictional statements that I believe my historical actors might have said given their known attitudes.
6. On the possibility that Jews under the Reich would have suffered but there would have been fewer deaths and no Holocaust, see Williamson Murray, "The War of 1938," in Cowley, *What If?*, 655–678.

7. Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1934), 300; Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 362, 378, 403, 415, 428–429, 431.

CHAPTER 1 A WORLD AT WAR, 1938

1. Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 615, 617–618, 625–627, 628, 632, 635.
2. Ibid., 646–651. On Nazi mobs in the Streets of Vienna, see William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934–1941* (New York: Knopf, 1941), 80–85, quoted in Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 651. On von Schuschnigg's attitudes toward Jews, see *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 39 (1937–38): 354–355.
3. Karl A. Schleneus, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy towards German Jews, 1933–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 185–187, 193–194, 199. See also Harry Schneiderman's summary of the year's Jewish events in the *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 39 (1937–38): 205.
4. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 659–671; Schleneus, *The Twisted Road*, 201–205.
5. Schneiderman, "Review of the Year 5698 (July, 1937–June 30, 1938)," *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 40 (1938–39): 87.
6. Shaul Esh, "Between Destruction and Extermination (The Fateful Year 1938)," *Yad Vashem Studies* (1957): 107–110.
7. For the Hitler quotation, see Stephen Smith, "Nobody Wants Them," *Perspective* 1:1 (1998).
8. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 664–668.
9. On the deliberations that actually took place in Munich and the projected balance of military forces as of January 1939, see Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 360–368.
10. For Chamberlain's fearful remarks to the British people, see Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 672. Churchill's fictitious speech is the obverse of his actual attack on Chamberlain's policies. See Williamson Murray, "The War of 1938: Chamberlain Fails to Sway Hitler," in *The Collected What If?: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, ed. Robert Cowley (New York: Putnam, 1999), 660.
11. This account is my fictional reinterpretation of Murray's own projections of the possible dilemmas for the Nazis of an early start to World War II. For his account, see "The War of 1938," 655–680.
12. Hitler's fears were remembered by General Wilhelm Keitel when he was tried in Nuremberg in 1946. On this, see Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 22. Keitel's and other quotations are actual statements made by the German military and general population in the months before Munich. In this alternate history, with

- a less than compelling win in Czechoslovakia, this apprehension, arguably, would have continued. See Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 674–675, and Murray, “The War of 1938,” 670–671. For more on the fears of the German people that war would quickly lead to defeat, see Ferguson, *The War of the World*, 565–566.
13. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 343, 347, 358, 360, 370, 384–385; Schleneus, *The Twisted Road*, 137–138, 145–146, 151–152.
 14. For insights specifically into Schacht’s role, see Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: The Untold Story of the Secret Agreement between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 113, 115, 373; see also Schleneus, *The Twisted Road*, 197–198.
 15. For Eichmann’s reference to a “Jewish Vatican,” see Black, *The Transfer Agreement*, 375.
 16. On the British policies including the negotiations of the Peel Commission and the subsequent White Paper of 1939 (which in my version of history did not take place), see Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel, 1917–1948* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), especially 153–200.
 17. What I have called the “Churchill Compromise” is a recasting of what he actually proposed in 1937. In my iteration the plan is adopted by the British. See Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews: A Lifelong Friendship* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), 144–145, 151–153.
 18. Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 196–197; Walter Z. Lacquer, *A History of Zionism: The First General History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1972), 180–181. See also Melvin Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis: A Life* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 518–520, 737; Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010), 154–155, 340–341, 343–344.
 19. On Weizmann’s support for the Peel Commission and Ben-Gurion’s remarks, see Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, 164–166, 173, 174.
 20. *Ibid.*, 177.
 21. On the Grand Mufti’s relations with the Nazis and his anti-Jewish statements and plans, see Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*; and Barry Rubin, ed., *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 79–84; Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Mufti and the Fuehrer* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965), 15, 76–85, and elsewhere; Klaus Geniescke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis: The Berlin Years* (London: Valentine-Mitchell, 2011), 20, 32–34.
 22. Selig Adler, *The Uncertain Giant, 1921–1941: American Foreign Policy between the Wars* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 186–261.
 23. See Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 307, for his attitudes toward the French and British delegations and his discussions with Molotov. See also Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 200.

CHAPTER 2 AMERICAN JEWRY IN THE LATE 1930S:
A RESPIRE FOR AN INSECURE COMMUNITY

1. Charles J. Tull, *Father Coughlin and the New Deal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965), cover.
2. Robert L. Fleegler, "Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism, 1938–1947," *Journal of Mississippi History* (March 2006): 10; David Brody, "American Jewry: The Refugees and Immigration Restriction (1932–1942)," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (June 1956): 220–223.
3. Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938–1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 17, 30, 35.
4. *American Jewish Year Book* 33 (1931–32): 292; 43 (1941–42): 684.
5. *American Jewish Year Book* 41 (1939–40): 596–597. On Polish Jews being worse off than Jews under Hitler before World War II, see Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974), 180.
6. Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 180–185.
7. Beth Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), chap. 5; Steven M. Lowenstein, *Frankfurt on the Hudson: The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933–1983: Its Structure and Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 45, 46, 50; see also 45 on chain migration as applied to this community's growth.
8. Stephen Steinberg, *The Academic Melting Pot: Catholics and Jews in American Higher Education* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974), 20–21; Marcia Graham Synott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton, 1900–1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 158, 195. See also Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 143–151.
9. Heywood Broun and George Britt, *Christians Only: A Study in Prejudice* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1931), 256.
10. On problems of exclusion from small town society, see Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 273–279.
11. Nettie Pauline McGill, "Some Characteristics of Jewish Youth in New York City," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* 14 (1938): 266.
12. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression*, 173–175.
13. Israel Herbert Levinthal, "The Value of the Center to the Synagogue," *United Synagogue Recorder* (June 1926): 19; Harry Weiss, "The Synagogue Center," *Problems of the Jewish Ministry* (New York: United Synagogue, 1927), 131–133.
14. For reports on the Council's activities, see *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 44 (1934): 48–50. See also on the special Sabbath *Orthodox Union* (August 1935): 1, 7.

15. Samuel M. Markowitz, "Discussion," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* (hereinafter CCARYB) 41 (1931): 336–337; David de Sola Pool, "Judaism and the Synagogue," in *The American Jew: A Composite Portrait*, ed. Oscar Janowsky (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), 50–54.
16. For an overview of early Zionist history in America, see Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1975), 43–152.
17. Naomi W. Cohen, *American Jews and the Zionist Idea* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 31–32, 43.
18. The figure quoted of a decline within the ZOA to 10,000 members is predicated upon the assumption that with the decline of the refugee crisis, American Jewish interest in Palestine—now to be more open to Jews—would have dropped.
19. On critics of Stalinism from within radical circles and their sense of identity as radicals and not as parochially Jewish, see Gerald Sorin, *Irving Howe: A Life of Passionate Dissent* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 19, 23, 25. See also Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 191–192.
20. Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 152.
21. Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 387–388.

CHAPTER 3 CONFLICTING CHALLENGES FOR AN AMERICA AT PEACE, 1938–1944

1. Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 109.
2. Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 8, 30, 37–38.
3. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 282, 287. These areas were among the territories that Stalin actually occupied when he and Hitler invaded Poland in 1939.
4. Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011); Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 289.
5. "Khalkhin-Gol: The Forgotten Battle that Shaped WW2," <http://siberianlight/khalkhin-gol>, 7, 15.
6. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 308.
7. *Ibid.*, 201–233, 308–309. Under Soviet pressure, Chinese antagonists did fight against the Japanese, albeit never together. In April 1941, a non-aggression pact was signed, which protected Russia as it would subsequently have to deal with the Nazi threat.
8. On Japanese atrocities in China, see Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

9. These scenarios (articulated by military people in both the United States and Japan, many of which point to Japan focusing its aggression on East Asia and not attacking Pearl Harbor) are derived and interpolated from Jim Bresnahan, ed., *Refighting the Pacific War: An Alternative History of World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 2–3, 12, 23, 25, 31, 33–35, 37, 39, 40.
10. The basic facts of German ill-preparedness in 1938 for a blitz-like conquest of Western Europe, unlike their success in spring 1940, are derived from Williamson Murray, “The War of 1938: Chamberlain Fails to Sway Hitler,” in *What If?: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, ed. Robert Cowley (New York: Putnam, 1999), 674–677.
11. On the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and what it told Hitler about British and French readiness to fight, see Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 632–633. For an analysis of the actual weakness of Italian forces and the possibility that Britain and France would have easily defeated Mussolini in the late 1930s, see Murray, “The War of 1938,” 677. See also Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 308–309, for the implications of the Japanese non-aggression treaty with Russia.
12. For the strategy and reasons offered for the 1933 boycott, see Karl Schleneus, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Towards German Jews, 1933–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 76–80.
13. On the functions of the RV and its defense of Jews, see Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974), 132–133, and Schleneus, *The Twisted Road*, 126.
14. Paul H. Appleby, “Roosevelt’s Third Term Decision,” *American Political Science Review* 46, no. 3 (September 1952): 754–765. See also I. George Blake, *Paul V. McNutt: Portrait of a Hoosier Politician* (Indianapolis: Central Publishing Co., 1966), 270.
15. Herbert S. Parmet and Marie B. Hecht, *Never Again: A President Runs for a Third Term* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), x, 10, 12, 17, 18.
16. *Ibid.*, 10, 11, 18.
17. *Ibid.*, 11. See also Charles Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 144.
18. Parmet and Hecht, *Never Again*, 18; Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia*, 15.
19. Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia*, 130–131.
20. Blake, *Paul V. McNutt*, 225, 229–230; Parmet and Hecht, *Never Again*, 10.
21. Blake, *Paul V. McNutt*, 233.
22. Alva Johnston, “I Intend to Be President,” *Saturday Evening Post* (March 16, 1940): 67.
23. Blake, *Paul V. McNutt*, 279; Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia*, 148; Appleby, “Roosevelt’s Third Term Decision,” 790. In real history, McNutt had his name

- put into nomination but withdrew it to the dismay of his closest supporters when FDR decided to run for a third term.
24. Blake, *Paul V. McNutt*, 240. On the proportionality of Americans who harbored the noted attitude toward war and peace, see Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia*, 16.
 25. Richard J. Whalen, *The Founding Father; The Story of Joseph P. Kennedy* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 223.
 26. Ronald Kessler, *The Sins of the Father: Joseph P. Kennedy and the Dynasty He Founded* (New York: Warner Books, 1996), 2, 144–145, 146–148.
 27. *Ibid.*, 157–158.
 28. *Ibid.*, 171–173, 175.
 29. *Ibid.*, 163, 167.
 30. Dean J. Kotlowski, “Breaching the Paper Walls: Paul V. McNutt and Jewish Refugees to the Philippines, 1938–1939,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 5 (December 2009): 866, 867–868, 873, 876, 881–882, 884, 887–888, 896.
 31. Kessler, *The Sins of the Father*, 91, 101, 162, 179.
 32. Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia*, 167, 177.
 33. *Ibid.*, 19, 21, 205.
 34. *Ibid.*, 90.
 35. Roberts, *The Storm of War*, 200–205.
 36. My rendering of Churchill’s remarks are interpolated from his cable to the commander of Allied forces in the Asian region of February 10, 1942. See Roberts, *The Storm of War*, 205.
 37. See Bresnahan, *Refighting the Pacific War*, 22, 37, 39. See also Conrad Black, “The Japanese Do Not Attack Pearl Harbor,” in *What Might Have Been: Leading Historians on Twelve “What Ifs” of History*, ed. Andrew Roberts (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2005), 158, for discussions of FDR’s activities in favor of British interests in the last days of his second term.
 38. For the exact wording of the bill, see *Lend Lease Bill, dated January 10, 1941, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives*.
 39. On the demands Churchill placed before FDR in August 1941, see Black, “The Japanese Do Not Attack Pearl Harbor,” 160.
 40. Russell Kirk, *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft* (New York: Fleet Corporation, 1967), 166–167; Clarence E. Wunderlin, *Robert A. Taft: Ideas, Tradition, and Party in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 33, 36; James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1972), 198–199, 251.
 41. The description of Mussolini’s humiliation is derived from the diary of his son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano, noted in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 740.

42. Roberts, *The Storm of War*, 121–123.
43. Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 402–405.

CHAPTER 4 WITHOUT THE “BOSS”: AMERICAN JEWRY’S CONCERNS, 1940–1944

1. On Jewish attitudes toward FDR in the period before 1941, see Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 129–130, 152–153; Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 212–217.
2. On the use of the term “the Boss” in Wise-FDR communications, see, for example, Dwight Young, ed., *Dear Mr. President: Letters to the Oval Office from the Files of the National Archives* (New York: Random House, 2007), 71.
3. Clarence E. Wunderlin, *Robert A. Taft: Ideas, Tradition and Party in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 16.
4. Charles Herbert Stember et al., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 54–55, 60–61, 121.
5. *Ibid.*, 92–94, 130, 198. My focus here is on questions that dealt with the “domestic” status of Jews and not with issues directly related to Jews and American foreign policy, most important the question of refugees. In my alternate version of the history, the very negative views of Americans about immigration would not have been so relevant in the post-Munich days.
6. Leo Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 158–159; Glen Jeansonne, *Gerald L.K. Smith: Minister of Hate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 152–156.
7. On Jabotinsky’s statements to the Peel Commission see “Evidence Submitted to the Palestine Peel Commission by Mr. V. Jabotinsky, 11 February, 1937,” noted in Walter Z. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 370. See also Laqueur, *History*, 371, for his views on other Zionist leaders.
8. Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews: A Lifelong Friendship* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), 124–127; Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story: Fighter and Prophet* (New York: T. Yosseloff, 1961), 323.
9. On British needs in the Middle East and residual perceptions of American Jewish influence, see Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews*, 144, 165.
10. Rafael Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America: The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1926–1948* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 79, 81, 137, 150–151. On the history of underworld figures fighting for Jewish causes, including the Bergson initiative, see Judd L. Teller, *Strangers and Natives: The Evolution of the American Jew from 1921 to the Present* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968), 183–184. See also Robert A. Rockaway, *But He Was Good to*

- His Mother: The Lives and Crimes of Jewish Gangsters*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2000), 230–231.
11. Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 50, 151.
 12. For the text of the Columbus Platform, which a majority of Reform rabbis agreed to in 1937, see www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Columbus_platform.html.
 13. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, *Reform Judaism in the Large Cities* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1931), 11–13, 18, 31.
 14. Irving Lehrman, “New Years’ Greeting, September 7, 1939,” quoted from Jessica Cooperman, “Gearing Up for a Fight: The JWB and Jewish preparation for WWII” (paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies conference, December 19, 2011).
 15. On statements of fear of dual loyalty expressed at the time, see Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 61.
 16. In actuality, the “Jewish Army Resolution” was passed in 1942 despite significant opposition and at a moment at the meeting when a majority of delegates were not in attendance. Those disaffected were the anti-Zionists who then formed the American Council for Judaism. See on these developments Lawrence Siegel, “Reflections on Neo-Reform in the Central Conference of American Rabbis,” *American Jewish Archives* (April 1968): 63–64.
 17. On the list of celebrities Bergson enlisted for his causes during and beyond World War II, see Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 148–150.
 18. *Sixty-seventh Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1941), 29–30, 188–202; Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodox Jews in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 160.
 19. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 7 (1941): 79; Gurock, *Orthodox Jews*, 161–162.
 20. On Senator Taft’s position on immigration, see Brian Kennedy, “The Surprising Zionist: Senator Robert A. Taft and the Creation of Israel,” *The Historian* (2011): 759.
 21. Marc Lee Raphael, *Abba Hillel Silver: A Profile in American Judaism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989), 103.
 22. Kennedy, “The Surprising Zionist,” 748, 750, 751–752.

CHAPTER 5 THE EASTERN EUROPEAN THREAT AND AN END TO U.S. ISOLATIONISM, 1944–1945

1. Ian Kershaw, “The Hitler Myth,” *History Today* 35, no. 11 (January 2012), www.historytoday.com.
2. Karl Schlensien, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy towards German Jews, 1933–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 64; Harold C. Deutsch,

- The Conspiracy against Hitler in the Twilight War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 354.
3. The depiction of Hitler's pathological outbursts is based upon Noah D. Fabricant, *Thirteen Famous Patients* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1960), 49–50.
 4. Leonard K. Heston and Renate Heston, *The Medical Case Book of Adolf Hitler* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 19, 138–139.
 5. Fabrikant, *Thirteen Famous Patients*, 52–53; see also “Goebbels: Nazi Propagandist,” www.freespace.virgin.net.
 6. On Stalin's feelings toward Mao at this juncture, see Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 471. On Stalin's attitudes toward Japan's continued control in East Asia, see Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1035. See also, on Russian designs on Manchuria, David M. Glantz, *August Storm: The Soviet 1945 Strategic Offensive in Manchuria* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983).
 7. Benes did travel to Moscow and reached an accord with the Soviets as plans were made to drive the Nazis out of Czechoslovakia. See Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 341–342.
 8. As part of the alliance with the British and Americans, Stalin dismantled the Comintern in 1943. The 1943 Eighth Meeting of the Comintern never took place.
 9. These plans were actually part of Stalin's postwar agenda; see Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 337.
 10. Theodore S. Hamerow, *On the Road to the Wolf's Lair: German Resistance to Hitler* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 239; Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 196, 581.
 11. On Canaris's relationship with Earle, see Ian Colvin, *Master Spy: The Incredible Story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris Who, While Hitler's Chief of Intelligence, Was a Secret Ally of the British* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 191.
 12. *Ibid.*, 214.
 13. Walter S. Dunn Jr., *Heroes or Traitors: The German Replacement Army, the July Plot, and Adolf Hitler* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 1–15.
 14. On Taft's views of Wilson's activities, see James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 76–78.
 15. *Ibid.*, 245–247; Clarence E. Wunderlin, *Robert A. Taft: Ideas, Tradition, and Party in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 170; Russell Kirk, *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft* (New York: Fleet Corporation, 1967), 166–167.
 16. Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 351–352.

17. Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 278–279, 443–444.
18. On the origins of the American bomb project, see Jeff Hughes, *The Manhattan Project: Big Science and the Atom Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 46, 53, 83.
19. The army officers mentioned here were involved in the failed plot to kill Hitler or had designs to assassinate the Fuehrer. See Joachim Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death: The Story of the German Resistance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996), 382, 385, 390, 397.
20. Schleneus, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, 65, 73, 75; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 26, 48, 52.
21. On tsarist and Soviet feelings about incursions into the Middle East, see Walter Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* (New York: Praeger, 1956), 261, 278.
22. On Jews around Stalin in the 1940s, see Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 14, 340.
23. On Hoover's post-World War I humanitarian activities, see William Leuchtenberg, *Herbert Hoover* (New York: Times Books, 2009), 57–58; David Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 118–136. See also Peter I. Rose, "Getting to Know Herbert Hoover, Enigmatic Humanitarian," *Society* (November 2010): 529–533.
24. On J. Edgar Hoover's long-term anticommunism, see R. Andrew Kiel, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Father of the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 61–72.
25. For biographical facts on Rosenberg, see William K. Klingaman, *Encyclopedia of the McCarthy Era* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 324–326.
26. On Taft's views of FDR's draft proposal, see Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 240–241.
27. On the deputations to President Roosevelt in 1941 by black leaders for increases in rights of blacks during the war, see Herbert Garfinkel, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (New York: Atheneum, 1969). For Taft's views on race, see Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 174–175, 191, 261–262, 277.
28. On the real comment that suggested that America in 1945 had the consummate weapon that could be used against a belligerent USSR, see Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 345.

CHAPTER 6 DIVIDED ALLEGIANCES: AMERICAN JEWS AND ISRAEL, 1944–1950

1. Amid World War II, Lookstein arranged an interdenominational Jewish prayer meeting at his congregation. But he had difficulties with various Orthodox groups who did not want to cooperate with Reform and Conservative rabbis. I am projecting here similar problems over an imagined 1944 post-Hitler rally.

See, on the actual gathering, Haskel Lookstein, “May 1943: The Prayer Service That Almost Wasn’t,” e-mail version of sermon delivered April 18, 2009, at Kehilath Jeshurun, distributed online to congregational members and friends of the synagogue.

2. On Wise’s and Silver’s attitudes toward Revisionists and Wise-versus-Silver disagreements, see Marc Lee Raphael, *Abba Hillel Silver: A Profile in American Judaism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989), 104, 118, 127.
3. On the actual travails and successes of British troops in Asia, see Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 269, 272, 275, 280, 282, 370–371.
4. On the actual timing of the reconquest of Burma, see Henri Michel, *The Second World War* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968), 740–741.
5. On Stalin’s attitudes toward Mideast politics in the pre-1948 period, see Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 584.
6. On the possibility of a negotiated settlement without surrender of the Japanese in World War II, see Michel, *The Second World War*, 764–768.
7. On Proskauer’s anti-Zionist statements and activities, see Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), 15, 127, 128; see also Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 41–42; and Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), 305–306.
8. On the various activities—legal and illegal—which American Jewish groups undertook to assist Israel, see Leonard Slater, *The Pledge* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).
9. See “What Really Happened” in this chapter and in chapter 4 for a discussion of the actual Biltmore Conference of 1942.
10. On Bevin’s position on the Palestine question, including a last attempt at partition, see Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel, 1917–1948* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 310–311.
11. This account of a pre-May 1948 battle over Palestine was derived from Benny Morris’s analysis of the actual “civil war” in the future Israel of those months. See Benny Morris, *1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), especially 394–402.
12. This account of a post-May 14 War of Independence was likewise interpolated from Morris’s study; see *ibid.*, especially 400–404.
13. The geopolitical positions ascribed to candidate Marshall were derived from an examination of his statements and those of other anti-Zionists in the State Department and the military on Zionism, Israel, and American policies. See Joseph W. Bendersky, *The “Jewish Threat”: Anti-Semitic Politics of the U.S. Army*

- (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 378–380; and Ed Cray, *General of the Army: George C. Marshall Soldier and Statesman* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 656–658.
14. On Marshall's racial views while a general, see Bendersky, *The "Jewish Threat,"* 309–310.
 15. On Thurmond's pro-Zionism stance throughout his career, see Jack Bass and Marilyn W. Thompson, *Strom: The Complicated Personal and Political Life of Strom Thurmond* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 308.
 16. For Dewey's actions on racial discrimination while New York's governor, see Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 472–473, 523–524.
 17. On Wallace's foreign policy positions, see Zachary Karabell, *The Last Campaign: How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 13–14.
 18. See Henry A. Wallace, "The Conquerors of the Negev," *New Republic* (November 10, 1947), referenced in J. Samuel Walker, *Henry A. Wallace and American Foreign Policy on Palestine* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 186, 195.
 19. For a sense of anti-Wallace-style rhetoric from the American right that approximates what Marshall would have said, see Nathaniel Weyl, *The Jew in American Politics* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1968), 161–162.
 20. Bendersky, *The "Jewish Threat,"* 249–250, 253, 309. See also David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 21.
 21. Although the B'nai B'rith came late to support the Zionist cause, some of its leaders independently supported the Haganah. During the McCarthy era, the ADL did clean house, ridding itself of some professionals who had leftist backgrounds or presumed leanings, and files were turned over to the government. The AJC, but not the ADL, joined the All-American Committee, and the American Jewish Congress expelled the People's Fraternal Order. See Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 197, 226.
 22. Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 344.
 23. In actuality, in 1949 Ben-Gurion publicly stressed the value of large-scale immigration of American Jewish youth to Israel even over parental objections and projected Israel as spokesman for world Jewry. After heated exchanges between Ben-Gurion, Blaustein, and Proskauer, the prime minister backed down, declaring reports on his position to have been "unauthorized." See Charles S. Liebman, "Diaspora Influence on Israel: The Ben-Gurion-Blaustein Exchange and Its Aftermath," *Jewish Social Studies* (July–October 1974).

CHAPTER 7 SUBURBAN JEWISH CUL DE SACS, 1950–1960

1. During World War II, Ruby Loftus's counterpart was Rosie the Riveter, who left her home for factory work to help the United States win the war, and in many ways began changing American gender roles and relationships. See

- Bernard A. Cook, ed., *Women and War: A Historical Encyclopedia from Antiquity to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clío, 2006), 2:500.
2. On the history of federal aid in the growth of suburbs, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 194, 203.
 3. For Marshall's plan for Europe as Truman's secretary of state, see Norman A. Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy, 1945–1960* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1962), 152–154.
 4. These viewpoints that are ascribed to candidate Marshall are extrapolated from the massive literature on "Who Lost China," much of which deals with Marshall as secretary of state. See, for example, Brian Crozier, *The Man Who Lost China* (New York: Scribner, 1976); Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall, Statesman, 1945–1959* (New York: Viking Press, 1987); Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1963).
 5. For many of the diplomatic and political assumptions that lay beneath Russian, North Korean, and American activities in 1950, see Andre Fontaine, *History of the Cold War: From the Korean War to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1970), 3–17.
 6. On the history of federal legislation that contained some of the same proclivities used in this narrative, see Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 197–198, 216, 241. On the actual growth of Sun Belt regions, see also Carl Abbott, *The New Urban America: Growth and Politics in Sunbelt Cities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 99.
 7. Bronxville was a prime example of the limited number of communities that explicitly excluded Jews. See Harry Gersh, *Minority Report* (New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1962), 128–133. See also Alan Wood, "I Sell My House," *Commentary* (November 26, 1958): 384. In actuality within Pelham, after first turning down a Jewish request for permission to build a synagogue, the town council relented.
 8. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 234–238.
 9. For an analysis of the many surveys of American attitudes toward Jews over time, see Charles Herbert Stember, ed., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), esp. 95–99 for attitudes toward living next to Jews.
 10. On Jews joining service organizations to keep up with their gentile neighbors, see "The Urban Jew Goes Suburban," *Reconstructionist* (March 6, 1953): 23.
 11. On Jewish attitudes toward living among Christians in suburban locales that form the backdrop for my alternate version, see Simon Glustrom, "Some Aspects of a Suburban Jewish Community," *Conservative Judaism* (Winter 1957): 28; Harry Gersh, "The New Suburbanites of the 1950s," *Commentary* (March 1954): 220–221. On the psychological dimension, see David Bernstein, "Jewish Insecurity and American Realities: A Prescription against Mental Escapism," *Commentary* (February 5, 1948): 120.

12. Gans did, in fact, study Park Forest in the early 1950s. His observations formed the basis of my alternate understanding of life in my far less cooperative community. See Herbert J. Gans, "The Origin and Growth of a Jewish Community in the Suburbs: A Study of the Jews of Park Forest," in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 205–214. Gans did not conduct a subsequent study of athletic friendship patterns.
13. On the linkage of religion to anticommunism in the mid-1950s, see Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 60–61. On the history of the insertion in the Pledge of Allegiance, see Larry Witham, "If It Says 'God,' So Be It," *Washington Times* (June 28, 2002).
14. For a discussion of the Committee of 300 and its actual activities, which involved many of the people noted in this description, albeit with a different tone from my alternative history description, see Arthur A. Goren, "A 'Golden Age' for American Jews: 1945–1955," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 8 (1992): 10–14.
15. On the movement of society away from defensiveness and the role Marcus, Baron, and Handlin played in its transformation, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, "From *Publications* to *American Jewish History*: The Journal of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Writing of American Jewish History," *American Jewish History* (Winter 1993–94): 205–255. In actuality, Roth's piece was published in 1948. See Cecil Roth, "Some Jewish Loyalists in the War of American Independence," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (December 1948): 81–107.
16. For a perspective on the divergences of opinion within the Jewish community over the Rosenbergs, see Deborah Dash Moore, "Reconsidering the Rosenbergs: Symbol and Substance in Second-Generation American Jewish Consciousness," *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Fall 1988): 26–29.
17. Marshall Sklare did, in fact, write the most important sociological study of Jewish denominational life in the 1950s, as he began his career as one of the most important early Jewish sociologists. See his *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1955). At the start of his career, Sklare also taught in Yeshiva University's school of social work. For a contemporary 1950s account of suburban community leadership's disinterest in other than local concerns, see Evelyn Rossman, "The Community and I," *Commentary* (November 1954): 393–397.
18. The American Jewish Committee sponsored the so-called "Lakeville Studies," a pseudonym for the Highland Park study. While published in the 1960s, the fieldwork was conducted largely in the prior decade. The American Council for Judaism was still operating in Highland Park with its devoted followers, and Zionism was not particularly powerful in that suburb. However, the question about dual loyalty is fictional. See Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in an Open Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).

19. For the unrealized plan to establish a college for this devout Orthodox community, see William B. Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 46–48.

CHAPTER 8 THE 1960s AND THE TRIALS OF ACCEPTANCE FOR AMERICAN JEWS

1. Arthur Schlesinger was a close associate and “court historian” of the JFK administration. Subsequent to the assassination of Kennedy, he wrote *A Thousand Days*, chronicling in the strongest positive terms the work of the lamented president. See Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: JFK in the White House* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).
2. For McCarthy’s infamous attack, particularly against Marshall and Acheson, see *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 82nd Congress, First Session*, vol. 97, part 5 (May 28, 1951–June 27, 1951), 6556–6603, reprinted in *Modern History Sourcebook: Senator Joseph McCarthy*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1951mccarthy.html>.
3. For McCarthy’s statement on opposing communism, see Norman A. Graebner, *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy since 1950* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956), 227.
4. On Stevenson’s and Nixon’s differing views on communism when the Democrat ran against Eisenhower in 1956 and Nixon was the vice president, see Herbert J. Muller, *Adlai Stevenson: A Study in Values* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 55, 107, 155.
5. On the cases and circumstances leading up to *Brown* and Justice Black’s evolution as a supporter of civil rights, see James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48, 52, 54, 55–57. See also Howard Ball, *Hugo L. Black: Cold Steel Warrior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 74.
6. As president, Eisenhower appointed Earl Warren to head the Supreme Court that would overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Ike followed a pattern of stating publicly that he would uphold the decision of the court, but privately he spoke of his fear of an all-white southern public school system. Of course, Eisenhower would have to deal with race relations in his second term.
7. On Stevenson’s positions on civil rights, see Muller, *Adlai Stevenson*, 177, 181–182.
8. On the views of the two Joseph Kennedys—father and son—of Jews and of Feldman’s role in the campaign, see Laurence Leamer, *The Kennedy Men, 1901–1963: The Laws of the Father* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 82–83, 114–115, 222, 390–391.
9. For Hopkins’s statement see Dan W. Dodson, “College Quotas and American Democracy,” *American Scholar* 15 (July 1946): 269.
10. On the Droob Report and the perception of the quality of Yale’s students, see Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 203, 375–376,

11. On Hillel's history and growth of influence on campuses, see Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 142–147. See also Abram L. Sachar, *A Host at Last* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976).
12. As late as 1969, a Carnegie Commission on Higher Education that studied the religious values of faculty reported statistics comparable to what Sachar might have said in 1963. See Stephen Steinberg, *The Academic Melting Pot* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 135–146.
13. On Jewish fraternity and sorority life on campus after 1945, see the epilogue to Marianne Sanua, *Going Greek: Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1895–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 273–275.
14. For an analysis of the activities of the American Jewish Congress to promote Judaism on campuses, see Stuart Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 187–188.
15. For a history of both altruistic and self-serving American Jewish activism on behalf of black civil rights, see Hasia Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915–1935* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977).

CHAPTER 9 UNENDING DILEMMAS: ISRAELIS, ARABS, THE WORLD POWERS, AND AMERICAN JEWS

1. For an overview of Israeli defense policies and political issues in the first years of its existence, see Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 6–10.
2. On Stevenson's attitudes toward Israel during the era of the Suez Crisis, see Leo W. Graff, "Adlai Stevenson and the Suez Crisis of 1956," *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (March 1982): 22–24.
3. On the processes that led to the Suez Crisis and a discussion of the sequence of events in this quick victory for Israel, see Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 353–357.
4. Graff, "Adlai Stevenson and the Suez Crisis of 1956," 28.
5. For a discussion of the moves by Egypt, Syria, and to some extent Jordan in the years 1964–1966, as well as Israeli preparedness, see Oren, *Six Days of War*, 22–25, 43, 51.
6. See Arthur Hertzberg, *Jewish Polemics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 33, for recollections of the response generally of American Jewish leaders who suggested that the Israelis follow White House demands. See also Michael Reiner, "The Reaction of U.S. Organizations to the Sinai Campaign and Its Aftermath," *Forum on the Jewish People, Zionism, and Israel* (Winter 1980–81): 31.
7. Reiner, "The Reaction of U.S. Organizations," 34.
8. On Proskauer and Silver's actual involvement with Israel and the State Department in 1956, see Ariel L. Feldstein, *Ben-Gurion, Zionism, and American Jewry* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 88–98.

9. Sklare's remarks about his actual study, which ultimately became known as the Riverton Study, is noted in Will Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 205.
10. See Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 114–115, for his remarks about the status of Zionism in 1957.
11. On Bundy's advice to Johnson on how to proceed in Vietnam, see Gordon M. Goldstein, *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 2008), 128–130. For Goldstein's view that John F. Kennedy would not have escalated the war had he not been assassinated, see his article "JFK and Vietnam," *Los Angeles Times* (November 22, 2008). On LBJ's pre-1964 view on Vietnam, and the Kennedy family's feelings about dumping Johnson, see Robert A. Caro, *The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 244–245, 265–266.
12. On the historiography of Spellman's influence over U.S. policy toward defense of South Vietnam, see Wilson D. Miscamble, "Francis Cardinal Spellman and 'Spellman's War,'" in *The Human Tradition in Vietnam*, ed. David L. Anderson (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 3–5.
13. On Israel's actual difficulties with Rusk, Rostow, and the State Department in May 1967, see Oren, *Six Days of War*, 77, 106–107, 116.
14. On the rise of anti-Zionism and antisemitism in the USSR in the aftermath of the Six Day War, see Henry L. Feingold, "Silent No More": *Saving the Jews of Russia, The American Jewish Effort, 1967–1989* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 63–69.

CONCLUSION: ALTERNATE HISTORY AND THE REALITIES OF AMERICAN JEWISH LIFE

- I. On Marcus's and Baron's visions of postwar American Jewry, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Jacob Rader Marcus, Salo W. Baron, and the Public's Need to Know American Jewish History," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 50, no. 1 and 2 (1998): 22–27.

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