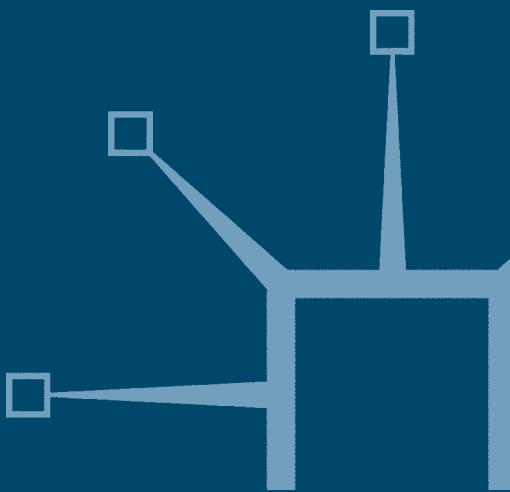


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The Historiography of the Holocaust

Edited by
Dan Stone



The Historiography of the Holocaust

Also by Dan Stone

BREEDING SUPERMAN: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain

CONSTRUCTING THE HOLOCAUST: A Study in Historiography

RESPONSES TO NAZISM IN BRITAIN, 1933–1939: Before War and Holocaust

THEORETICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST (*editor*)

The Historiography of the Holocaust

Edited by

Dan Stone

*Royal Holloway,
University of London*

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Contents

<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>	vii
Introduction	1
<i>Dan Stone</i>	
1. German or Nazi Antisemitism? <i>Oded Heilbronner</i>	9
2. Hitler and the Third Reich <i>Jeremy Noakes</i>	24
3. Expropriation and Expulsion <i>Frank Bajohr</i>	52
4. Ghettoization <i>Tim Cole</i>	65
5. War, Occupation and the Holocaust in Poland <i>Dieter Pohl</i>	88
6. Local Collaboration in the Holocaust in Eastern Europe <i>Martin Dean</i>	120
7. Big Business and the Third Reich: An Appraisal of the Historical Arguments <i>Christopher Kобрak and Andrea H. Schneider</i>	141
8. The Decision-Making Process <i>Christopher R. Browning</i>	173
9. Historiography and the Perpetrators of the Holocaust <i>Jürgen Matthäus</i>	197
10. The Topography of Genocide <i>Andrew Charlesworth</i>	216
11. Britain, the United States and the Holocaust: In Search of a Historiography <i>Tony Kushner</i>	253
12. The Holocaust and the Soviet Union <i>John Klier</i>	276

13.	The German Churches and the Holocaust <i>Robert P. Erickson and Susannah Heschel</i>	296
14.	Jewish Leadership in Extremis <i>Dan Michman</i>	319
15.	Jewish Resistance <i>Robert Rozett</i>	341
16.	Gender and the Family <i>Lisa Pine</i>	364
17.	Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview <i>Ian Hancock</i>	383
18.	From Streicher to Sawoniuk: the Holocaust in the Courtroom <i>Donald Bloxham</i>	397
19.	The Holocaust under Communism <i>Thomas C. Fox</i>	420
20.	Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial in Post-Communist Eastern Europe <i>Florin Lobont</i>	440
21.	Post-Holocaust Philosophy <i>Josh Cohen</i>	469
22.	Testimony and Representation <i>Zoë Waxman</i>	487
23.	Memory, Memorials and Museums <i>Dan Stone</i>	508
24.	The Holocaust and Genocide <i>A. Dirk Moses</i>	533
	<i>Index</i>	556

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Introduction

Dan Stone

As an extreme case of genocide, the Holocaust – the murder of the Jews and Romanies of Europe by the Nazis during the Second World War – has become, in the West, the archetype of evil.¹ The reasons for this are many and varied, and are addressed in several essays in this volume. Whatever they are, there is no doubt that the literature on the Holocaust is now so enormous that no individual can have real mastery over all its aspects. The aim of this volume is to provide accessible and up-to-date essays on the major sub-fields of the historiography of the Holocaust, the largest part of the literature of what is now known as Holocaust studies. As such, it addresses the issues that have long exercised historians, such as the decision-making process of the 'Final Solution' (Browning), the role played by antisemitism (Heilbronner) and Hitler (Noakes) as well as fields of inquiry that have only in recent years become major areas of study in their own right, such as the topography of genocide (Charlesworth), the question of bystander nations (Kushner) and gender (Pine). Some essays deal with topics that used to be central to the historiography of Nazism and the Holocaust and, after a long absence, have once again, in modified form, become central to the debates (Kobrak and Schneider; Erickson and Heschel; Rozett). Some deal with the after-effects of the Holocaust on post-war western culture, with a major emphasis on eastern Europe (Pohl; Dean; Klier; Fox; Lobont).

In the aftermath of the Cold War, not only have historians had unprecedented access to documents housed in archives of the former Soviet Bloc, but there has been increasing awareness of the importance of eastern Europe in its own right, for a full understanding of European history in general and the Holocaust in particular. The end of the post-war consensus brought about by the collapse of 'real existing socialism' and the US-led 'new world order' have meant that suppressed questions concerning collaboration, resistance and the true impact of Nazism and the Second World War are now being addressed. Although this is a potentially dangerous development, breeding resentment and reopening old wounds, it also permits a more thoroughgoing, critical treatment

of the past than has hitherto been possible.² Finally, the way in which the Holocaust has been memorialized and scrutinized, increasingly so, it seems, as time passes, is the subject of several contributions (Cohen; Stone; Waxman).

It is hard now to imagine a time when the Holocaust was not central to western consciousness or when there was a dearth of writing on the subject. One result of the extent to which the situation has so greatly changed is that even this survey cannot claim completeness. There are many more specialist topics within Holocaust historiography that have not been dealt with in detail, including the role of the Yishuv (the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine); the attempted rescue of Jews; more detailed studies of individual countries, especially major perpetrator countries such as Croatia, Romania and Hungary; the role of 'neutral' countries such as Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey; or the role of international bodies such as the Red Cross. Whole areas of Holocaust studies that deal with literature, psychology, music or philosophy have, with the exception of Zoë Waxman's and Josh Cohen's essays, been left out here, for no single volume can deal with all the responses to the Holocaust to which the various disciplines have given rise. Nevertheless, it is historiography that is the single largest body of literature, and within that literature the major topics of research, both old and new, are covered in this book.

One of the most obvious and yet, on closer inspection, most neglected topics is that of antisemitism. Most historians take it for granted that without the history of antisemitism the Holocaust would not have taken place. It is probably for that reason that comparatively few studies of German antisemitism before 1933 – especially during the years of the Weimar Republic – have been undertaken. There is an even more marked lack of regional and local studies and of German antisemitism in comparative national perspective. Oded Heilbronner's essay seeks to explain why this should be so, and draws out the conclusions that can be made from the existing literature. He shows that antisemitism was not all-pervasive in Germany before 1933; but neither was it something that especially worried the majority of the population, who accepted the Nazi Party's hatred of Jews as part of its broader appeal, which was bound up with the crisis of Weimar. By contrast with the study of antisemitism, there is no shortage of literature, both academic or otherwise, on its most famous exponent, Adolf Hitler. Over many years scholars have sought to understand Hitler's personality and political career; in particular, they have sought to clarify his role in the Holocaust. Since no single *Führerbefehl* (order from the Führer) has ever been found, or is ever likely to be found, historians have debated the centrality of Hitler to the development of Nazi Jewish policy. Jeremy Noakes here provides a full survey of the historiography that covers the literature since the immediate post-war period. He leaves us in no doubt that Hitler was key to the working of the Third Reich and to the radicalization of its policies towards the Jews.

Understanding the complexity of the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ means studying far more than antisemitism and Hitler, however. Since the debate – described in several places in this volume – between ‘intentionalists’ and ‘functionalists’ which dominated historiography in the 1980s has to a large extent been overcome, there is now a greater realization that the attack on the Jews took place at a different pace in different areas. Thus, while few historians doubt the importance of ideological factors for understanding the basic framework within which all Nazi policies operated, it is increasingly clear that these policies were not uniformly implemented.³

This ‘maturing’ of the historiography is particularly clear in seven essays in this volume. Frank Bajohr shows that while economic gain was not the primary motivating factor of Nazi Jewish policy, nevertheless no account of the Holocaust is complete without an understanding of the massive bureaucracy (and massive population complicity) of expropriation that accompanied it. Tim Cole shows how applying geographical as well as historical and sociological methods to the policy of ghettoization – which has not been subject to close scrutiny since the early post-war years – reveals not only that the ghettos were more than a staging post in the overall history of the Holocaust, but that they were social microcosms that merit study in their own right. Dieter Pohl, one of the most prolific and original of the German scholars who have worked in the eastern European archives, shows that it is not possible to understand what happened to the Jews in Poland, at three million the largest single group of Holocaust victims, without understanding the broader context of the German occupation of Poland and the population policies that were implemented there. Martin Dean shows the extent of local collaboration in the Holocaust in eastern Europe, noting that ‘without the German occupation there would have been no Holocaust, but without local assistance the loss of Jewish life would not have been so great’. However, he is careful to stress not only that the accusation of Jewish complicity in communist atrocities owed little to reality, but also that there were many people who helped to save Jews. The reality of collaboration and rescue is a complex one that cannot be explained by simple sociological or psychological formulae. The same is true of the role of big business, as Christopher Kобрak and Andrea H. Schneider show. While the accusation that big business supported Hitler’s rise to power is true in part, nevertheless the extent of cooperation with the regime varied enormously from firm to firm. The economic reality of the Third Reich also means that there is more to the role of big business than the use of slave labour or other forms of involvement in genocide; after all, much of the Nazi regime’s economic policy was antithetical to the interests of big business. How and why businessmen accepted or supported the Third Reich is not a simple matter that can be dealt with by talking of ‘fascism’ as a kind of capitalist crisis-management. The accessibility of company archives has meant that the writing of official and

non-official company histories has mushroomed in recent years, and Kobrak and Schneider provide a much-needed guide through this complex and hotly debated old-new topic. Likewise, Christopher R. Browning, one of the doyens of the subject, offers a clear yet provocative assessment of the debate that has exercised historians for so long, and in which he has played a key role: the decision-making process. Browning, who has long positioned himself as a 'moderate functionalist', demonstrates the interplay of ideological and 'structural' or circumstantial factors (such as military realities), the inseparability of reality and fantasy in the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. Based on his recent research, Browning restates his thesis that the point at which the watershed was crossed from unsystematic genocidal policies to the 'Final Solution' – 'the attempt to murder every last Jew within the German grasp' – occurred at some point between 16 September and 25 October 1941. Finally, Jürgen Mattheus shows how the recent wave of *Täterforschung* ('perpetrator research') in Germany has enlarged and at the same time made more incisive and careful historians' understanding of who was a perpetrator and, though far more difficult to answer, why they took part.

The many approaches to the Holocaust are not exhausted by studying the perpetrators. A number of the essays in this book reveal the necessity of looking at events from the point of view of the victims or the 'bystanders', or of seeking ways of explaining the Holocaust through less traditional historical methods. Andrew Charlesworth's essay is exemplary in this regard, since he shows how the study of landscape can provide new perspectives even on sites and events that are believed to be familiar. His wide-ranging survey of sites of destruction is simultaneously an exercise in familiarization – showing how ordinary were the places where the extraordinary took place – and defamiliarization – treating well-known places in a way that is striking, sometimes shocking, to those who have only encountered more conventional ways of thinking about the past. Tony Kushner's essay on Britain and America similarly seeks to break down existing narratives, questioning not only the concept of 'bystander nation', but seeking to historicize and clarify the heated debates about the role played by the two major western allies. He calls for a more subtle historiography that does not simply engage in a bitter debate of blame and counter-blame where the fate of the Jews is concerned. This is also John Klier's project, for while the USSR was not a bystander nation, the Holocaust as it took place on Soviet territory remains one of the least understood and most under-researched aspects of the event. Klier rectifies a number of misconceptions and explains how the Holocaust was dealt with in the post-war Soviet Union.

Also by no means 'bystanders' but neither direct perpetrators, the German Churches have in the last decade received a great deal of attention, with much research driven by the emotional debate over the role of the Vatican. Robert P. Erickson and Susannah Heschel show the extent to which the Churches – *contra*

secularization theorists – played a major role in German life, and assess how the influence of churchmen and theologians could justify persecution, but also (if far less often) counter it. As with collaboration in eastern Europe, it is clear that while institutionally there is much to criticize where the Churches are concerned, at the same time there were many Protestants and Catholics who, as individuals, saved Jews. Erickson and Heschel calmly discuss the evidence of church collaboration with Nazism, and explain how post-war Christian theology has sought to deal with that terrible legacy.

Within the literature on Jewish responses to the Holocaust – which is not as large as one might imagine – two debates have for many years dominated the scene: Jewish leadership and resistance. Dan Michman, whose writings, in many languages, have dealt with all aspects of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, here addresses the former issue. Perhaps the most acrimonious debate (often, one could hardly dignify the state of affairs with such a scholarly term) has been that concerning the *Judenräte*, or Jewish Councils set up by the Nazis in eastern Europe. Distinguishing between ‘leadership’ and ‘headship’, Michman explains why, in the post-war years, so much criticism of the *Judenräte* arose, and guides us through the literature to arrive at a far more balanced and sophisticated response to the problem than has hitherto been possible. Without understanding the Nazis’ policies, it is not possible to understand the response of the Jews, especially those made by their appointed ‘leaders’. The same is true of resistance which, as Robert Rozett shows, must be seen in relation to Nazi actions. In the post-war years, especially in Israel, as the *Judenräte* were vilified, so the resistors were eulogized. Rozett shows how the historiography of resistance has not only developed over time more subtle definitions of what the term means, but has gradually become more balanced, placing armed resistance in its proper context, that is, one which allows it to be discussed without over-emphasizing its occurrence or, by implication, denigrating those who could not or would not take part in it.

Although leadership and resistance have long been the dominant concepts in discussions of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, others have come to the fore in the last two decades. Perhaps the most important is that of gender which, despite considerable resistance from many scholars, can no longer be ignored as a significant methodological tool. Lisa Pine here reviews the now considerable literature on the subject and shows that a gendered approach to the Holocaust has important empirical and theoretical implications for a broader understanding of Nazi ideology and policies, and what it meant to experience the Holocaust.

In his essay, Ian Hancock, the most prominent of Romani scholars on the Holocaust, shows that the experiences of Romanies was no less central to the Holocaust than that of Jews. That Romanies continue to be excluded from much Holocaust historiography is a reflection of their general exclusion from

post-war European society and culture. Hancock demonstrates the need for further research on Romani experience, in order that their experience be integrated into Holocaust historiography in general.

The remainder of the book deals with the legacy of the Holocaust, with the various political, social, cultural and intellectual trends that are usually described with the shorthand ‘after Auschwitz’. This is no less a part of the historiography of the Holocaust, since the effects of the Nazi genocide have been profound, and continue to impact on western society in many ways. Indeed, there is a sense in which with the passage of time these effects have become more, not less marked, as recent debates over trials of perpetrators, compensation for forced and slave labourers, Swiss gold, looted art and memorial days reveal.

In his analysis of Holocaust-related trials, Donald Bloxham reveals the extent to which these trials, from Nuremberg to Sawoniuk, have been influenced by political desiderata. He not only provides an introductory summary of the key trials, including the Auschwitz trials, the Eichmann trial and the recent spate of French trials, but also documents the extent to which the trials have been key moments in the development of ‘Holocaust consciousness’ and Holocaust memory.

Both Thomas Fox and Florin Lobont address the question of the treatment of the Holocaust in eastern Europe, before and after communism. Fox shows how historians in the Soviet Bloc were constrained by the official ‘Marxist-Leninist’ definition of fascism which prevented discussions of specifically Jewish suffering; and Lobont shows how this constraint has fed into the fraught atmosphere of post-communism, an atmosphere that has also been fuelled by ultra-nationalism and the rise of irrationalist ideologies in the post-1989 vacuum. Neither, however, sees the region in monolithic terms, and both are careful to address the differences in how the Holocaust has been treated – differences that relate to the nature of the communist regimes (some more Stalinist than others) and the nature of their collapse. Romania, Lobont shows, where the demise of the Ceauşescu dictatorship, with its ‘national communist’ formula, did not mean a sweeping away of the ruling class, retains more difficulties than most of the other states in the region.

The next three essays deal with what might loosely be called ‘post-Holocaust culture’. Josh Cohen discusses the attempts made by philosophers to address the implications of the Holocaust for thought. In the context of a book on Holocaust historiography, Cohen’s essay provides a salutary reminder that historians too use concepts and methods that are bound up with traditions of thought that have been called into question by the events of the Holocaust. His analyses of T.W. Adorno and Emmanuel Levinas suggest that it is possible to continue to think about Auschwitz. But his conclusion that one should ‘continue thinking without yielding to the temptations of false consolation’ is as relevant to historians as it is to philosophers. In her essay on testimony,

Zoë Waxman shows that Holocaust testimony has a long history dating back to the Holocaust period itself, when the ghetto diarists and archivists began the process. She also shows the way in which changes in testimony, as in Holocaust representation in general, have been influenced by social and cultural conditions, and discusses the different ways in which commentators have tried to derive meaning from testimonies. In my own essay on memory, memorials and museums I address a similar problematic to Cohen and Waxman: how is it possible to represent a past event that broke with all norms, that, as Jean-François Lyotard argues, was like an earthquake that 'destroys not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly'?⁴ The divide is between those who want to represent the past in such a way as to heal the wound, signalling a return to 'normality' (whether political, social, religious or national), and those who believe that representations of the Holocaust must be made in such a way as to maintain the gap as a form of continual questioning, as a reminder of Lyotard's 'seismic force'. In the context of Holocaust memory, which has been at the forefront of the general rise of 'memory culture' in the last decades, this divide is particularly notable, especially in the memorials and museums that are dedicated to it.

One of the outcomes of this memory culture has been an impetus to thinking about genocide in general, especially to thinking about post-1945 genocides, which have besmirched the earnest words 'never again'. The growing academic interest in genocide means that to some extent the future of Holocaust consciousness and of Holocaust studies lies in its incorporation into comparative genocide scholarship. A. Dirk Moses' essay paves the way for this future engagement, with a study of how the Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin's response to Nazism led to the creation of the UN Convention on Genocide, and how the Holocaust has been central to the development of understanding genocide as a concept. Moses argues that the Holocaust must be seen as part of a broader pattern of modern genocide, albeit an extreme case; and he argues in favour of retaining Lemkin's definition of genocide rather than seeing the Holocaust as the touchstone against which other cases of genocide should be judged. Although this book is devoted to the Holocaust, there is little doubt that in a few years there will be a need for such a historiographical survey of the burgeoning literature on genocide in general and on the sadly numerous examples of it that the modern age provides.

Notes

- 1 See R.J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), especially Part III: 'After Auschwitz', for a discussion.
- 2 See, for example, H. Arendt, 'Power Politics Triumphs', *Commentary*, 1 (1945–46), reprinted in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Uncollected and Unpublished Works by Hannah Arendt*, ed. J. Kohn (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), pp. 156–7;

- I. Deák, J.T. Gross and T. Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); P. Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); P. Ther and A. Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); S. G. Meštrović, *The Balkanization of the West: The Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism* (London: Routledge, 1994); S. Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- 3 A key text here is U. Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Problems* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).
- 4 J.-F. Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 56.

1

German or Nazi Antisemitism?

Oded Heilbronner

Until the 1960s most studies of the Nazi Party and National Socialism argued that antisemitism was an essential factor in explaining Nazi success before 1933.¹ But in recent decades, numerous studies have shown that antisemitism was probably somewhat underrepresented in Nazi Party activity and propaganda in the period before 1933, particularly in the last years before Hitler became Chancellor. Today, most studies agree that although a hardcore of radical antisemites existed within the party, most members avoided engaging in antisemitic activity. Millions of Nazi voters did not cast their vote for the party because they were antisemites. They were prepared to accept the Nazi Party's 1920 programme, including the antisemitic paragraph, only if the party offered them bread, jobs and hope for the future.

A discussion of this absence of antisemitic propaganda, activity and motives forms the core of this chapter. From an historiographical perspective I will address the following question: What was the relationship between Nazi ideological factors and rational motives, between hatred of Jews and economic distress, between the importance of race within the Nazi policy and political motives?

The chapter focuses on the historiography of Nazi antisemitism in the period from the late 1920s to the early 1930s for several reasons. First, most studies investigating the Nazis' rise to power deal with the period 1929–33 separately because of its importance in the history of the Weimar Republic, the Nazi Party and the history of German and Nazi antisemitism. Second, it was at this point that the Nazi Party became a mass political body. In those years, the party gained strength and popularity in Germany thanks to an unprecedented and innovative use of propaganda and ideology. So it is of interest to examine how antisemitism was incorporated into the party's propaganda and ideology, what part it played and, since this is the focus of this essay, how historians have studied this. Third, most studies dealing with the Nazis' consolidation of power after 1933 end with the years 1934–35. This reflects not only the foreign and internal

policies of the Third Reich, but also a fact that is relevant to our study: from the mid-1930s Nazi policy against the Jews can be understood as ‘a gradually radicalizing process’,² as a racist, antisemitic tone became a pivotal element of the Third Reich’s ideology and propaganda. From the mid-1930s German and Nazi antisemitism entered a new phase – ‘the road to extermination’ – which is discussed in this volume by other contributors.

I

When discussing German antisemitism, most scholars agree that before the First World War one can speak in terms of the rise and fall of political, organized antisemitism in Germany. Contrary to Daniel J. Goldhagen’s controversial thesis of an ‘eliminationist antisemitism’ prevalent in Germany in the nineteenth century,³ most researchers accept the oft-repeated argument that before the First World War Germany was not an antisemitic country, and that there was no such thing as a homogeneous, national German antisemitism. That does not mean that hatred of Jews did not exist, but it was local, lasted for relatively short periods and served the interests of particular social groups. The absence of any dominant cultural hegemony, any single political culture in Germany, largely explains the limitations on the spread of antisemitism.⁴ One should also consider the assumption that prior to the First World War a taboo, based on middle-class mores, existed against certain forms of antisemitism, and that only the war and post-1918 conditions undermined this, so that the taboo lost its potency.⁵ All this explains why widespread antisemitism did not exist as a dominant force in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The ‘restless Reich’, the ‘nervous Reich’⁶ was riddled with cultural and, especially, religious contradictions. These contradictions and differences in the socioeconomic traditions in the various parts of Germany played a decisive role in limiting the scope of German antisemitism.

During the First World War the first signs of a relocation of German antisemitism appeared. From being a strong, local (peripheral) phenomenon, which sometimes had a racial character, with limited objectives, and which benefited certain social groups in the provinces, it became a national phenomenon. The first step took place in the political arena. The German Fatherland Party (*Deutsche Vaterlandspartei*), a right-wing antisemitic party which came into being during the First World War, as a result of the union of the various conservative, antisemitic, racial forces in Germany, preached an antisemitic racial ideology in the latter part of the war.⁷ The party provided the conceptual and organizational model for all the antisemitic and nationalist movements that arose after the war, and was led by figures like Wolfgang Kapp and Heinrich Class, who made a decisive contribution to undermining the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic in its formative stages. Despite their dislike of Hitler, if we

wish to examine the sources of Weimar Nazi antisemitism and the question of continuity in German antisemitism, we have to begin with this party, its leaders, the First World War and the German revolution of 1918 when the party took a central role on the radical-right spectrum of the new political map.

II

This being the case before and during the First World War, before we turn to Nazi antisemitism, we need to ask the following questions: At what point can we say that antisemitism became a central pillar of Weimar society? When did German antisemitism change from being an undercurrent, a marginal or local phenomenon, to being central in German society? I will highlight a variety of processes and outline a number of arguments which prevail today among most historians who study German society and the role of antisemitism during the Weimar period, especially in its final years. These arguments serve as a starting-point for any discussion of Nazi antisemitism.

There are a number of points at which researchers begin their discussions of the rise of Nazi antisemitism. The first is the First World War and its social, political and economic consequences (1916–23). There is no doubt that the decisive turning point that saw antisemitism break out of its minority position occurred between the last years of the war and 1923. The second is German inflation and its legacy (1923–26). And the third – and the focus of this chapter – the final stage, which led to the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor (1929–33). I will examine these stages from an historiographical perspective.

1

From the 1880s onwards, sociopolitical peripheries developed in Germany, which were characterized by social protest actions and, in some regions, a desire for radical-democratic reform. These populist manifestations, most commonly expressed by artisans and peasants, but to some extent by other social groups, were a hotbed of local antisemitism in the 1890s.

As we have noted, the formation of the Fatherland Party can be seen as an indication of the rise of a national, sometimes homogeneous, antisemitic political culture. Immediately after the First World War, some of the pre-war antisemitic peripheries provided fertile soil for the growth of radical antisemitic mass movements, such as the German-Nationalist Protection and Defence Association (*Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutz-Bund*), whose members were mainly professional salaried workers, teachers and civil servants.⁸ The period 1916–24 with its difficult political, psychological, social and especially economic conditions, was of particular significance for the rise of German mass antisemitism.⁹ The frequent crises of the Weimar Republic contributed more than anything else to the dehumanization of German society and its elites.¹⁰

Here, some researchers' main concern is with antisemitism in political language and discourse.¹¹ They show how the post-1918 period saw the widespread infiltration of antisemitic language and arguments into political discourse. In the political culture, with the exceptions of the German Democratic Party and the German Social Democrat Party, which were opposed to antisemitism, all groups (including the German Communist Party) employed antisemitic rhetoric, whether moderate or radical, to mobilize existing and new supporters and to undermine political rivals.¹² In religious life, the Protestant and Catholic Churches played an important role in this process. It was mainly the Protestant Church which remained firmly in the *völkisch* camp, although it rejected extreme antisemitism. Many pastors and vicars of the Church belonged to the Nazi Party. The Catholic Church, by contrast, rejected radical and *völkisch* antisemitism, but articulated time and again its sympathy for the nationalist camp. There is no doubt that the Catholic Church was ambivalent about Nazi antisemitism. On the one hand, priests continued to employ antisemitic images and express prejudices in their sermons and festive rituals and services. Violent Nazi anti-communist activity impressed many Church leaders in Germany and Rome and led in some Catholic regions to massive support for the Nazi Party. On the other hand, the Church could not support the pagan aspects of Nazi Party ideology. The bishops of Mainz clearly expressed this dissatisfaction in their declaration of 1930.¹³

It was above all the so-called 'golden twenties' which witnessed the gradual assimilation of antisemitic discourse.¹⁴ Jacob Borut, who has studied Jewish vacations and the antisemitism encountered by Jews in tourist facilities during the Weimar period, shows many cases of antisemitic occurrences, proving that Jews could not escape antisemitism even on holiday. According to Borut, although there were hundreds of antisemitic hotels and guesthouses which refused to accept Jewish holidaymakers, this did not stop Jews visiting antisemitic resorts.¹⁵ Recently, a number of studies have explained this phenomenon by saying that the German notion of the *Volk* underwent a gradual change after 1918, and especially after 1923. In the course of this transformation, the significance and importance of antisemitism were modified.¹⁶ More importantly, those for whom antisemitism had never been a way of life started to adopt antisemitic jargon or joined the antisemitic camp. What happened, in short, was that an alliance was formed between racism and respectability.¹⁷

It is important to stress that Jews were not the only victims of the German moral collapse. The communists, workers affiliated to the organizations of the left and the French were among the groups for whom the German right manifested a deep hatred.¹⁸ Recent studies remind us that the 'Jewish Question' was not the main concern of the majority of people in rural or urban Germany. Other concerns, such as inflation, the social upheavals of the 1930s, street violence and the horrific stories coming out of the Soviet Union (to note but

a few) were also important, perhaps more so than hatred of the Jews. By concentrating disproportionately on antisemitism we overlook the collective preoccupations of Germans after the First World War. The atmosphere of violence on the streets of the Weimar Republic overshadowed antisemitism.¹⁹

2

Many scholars today agree that the hyper-inflation of the years 1922–23 resulted not only in money losing its value, but also in a devaluation of human life.²⁰ The national humiliation, the defeat of Germany, the astronomical sums the Germans were forced to pay in reparations, the sense of insecurity and the massive unemployment which overtook Germany towards the end of the 1920s, the great fear of the extreme left and the almost continual atmosphere of civil war undermined the civil foundations, bourgeois values (*Tugend*) and Christian morality that had hitherto characterized various strata of German society. The unremitting atmosphere of violence and civil war under Weimar (mainly until 1924) was also, as Dirk Walter and Richard Bessel remind us, starting to produce public expressions of antisemitism.²¹ In Berlin and Munich, street fighting between right-wing organizations and the radical left was common in the early 1920s. Many Jews, mainly *Ostjuden* (Jews from eastern Europe who fled to Germany during or after the war), were a popular target for the paramilitary organizations of the radical right. Here, perhaps, is a partial explanation of the origins of the cruelty described by Goldhagen of the mass killings in eastern Europe after 1940.²²

3

Even in the late Weimar period it is hard to discover a direct line leading to the changed attitude towards the Jews expressed in the Nazi Party, German elites and society some years later. After 1924 the aggressive antisemitism of the radical right declined in popularity.²³ True, many Germans were now more amenable to manipulation from above, to the attraction of a false magician or to being drawn into violent activities. Small businessmen, doctors, intellectuals, students and university teachers are cited in recent studies as playing a decisive role in this regard.²⁴

Geoffrey Giles, who focuses on the Nazi student organization in Hamburg, reminds us that antisemitism appears to have been one of the students' main preoccupations. In Marburg, argues Rudy Koshar, where traditions of political antisemitism were strong, the local Nazi student organization devoted most of its energy to fighting Judaism and 'Jewish finance capital'.²⁵ Ulrich Herbert, in his important study on the young, right-wing intellectual and SS officer Werner Best, argued that radical 'Folkism' was dominant among the academic youth of the bourgeoisie. Best, a university-trained lawyer, joined the Nazi Party in 1930 and the SS in 1931. For Herbert, Best is an example of a young intellectual

whose worldview had been fixed during the early Weimar years when the threat from communism and the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty had their impact on a whole generation of intellectuals. Their anti-republican ideology, antisemitism and anti-Marxism were expressed in their activities in right-wing antisemitic university circles. Those circles provided the soil from which grew the Nazi terror and genocide of the 1930s and 1940s.²⁶ Finally, Michael Kater reminds us that after 1929, when competition with Jewish doctors became more intense, the Nazi organization of doctors, the *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztebund*, which represented the interests of several groups of German physicians, radicalized its antisemitism.²⁷

On the other hand, many historians remind us that the Nazi Party did not especially hate the Jews. Its members and sympathizers had many enemies and many objects of attack, of whom the Jews were only one. It was undoubtedly an antisemitic party, but the antisemitism of its members before 1933 is insufficient to account for what happened from the mid-1930s onwards. It was still largely a 'written antisemitism' rather than a violent one.²⁸

The classic studies on the history of the Nazi Party written during the 1950s and the 1960s which analyse the stages of the party's rise to power disregard almost completely Nazi antisemitism during the decisive period, even though they emphasize that antisemitic propaganda was used by the Nazi Party until 1924, and of course from 1933 onwards. These historians, mostly Jews who lived through the period under discussion (1950s and 1960s), focused their research efforts on the study of German Jews before and after 1933, and on Nazi ideology and the state. However, having recognized the importance of Nazi antisemitism, they failed to examine the varieties of its articulation in pre-1933 Nazi propaganda, apparently in the belief that the issue was beyond doubt. Even the serious scholarly controversy at that time over the question of whether the Nazi regime should be regarded as fascist or totalitarian did not attempt to touch on the character of Nazi antisemitism before or after 1933.²⁹

During the 1970s and the 1980s a shift took place in the historiography of the Nazi Party which was reflected in studies of Nazi antisemitism. Several historiographical trends should be mentioned here. From the late 1970s more and more studies concentrated on aspects of regional, local and everyday life during the rise of the Nazi Party. These studies received a tremendous impetus from various school competitions on the topic of 'The Third Reich in my Home Town', and from the events marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power). Both German and non-German researchers worked on this regional aspect. The regional aspect was part of an extremely popular trend at that time, known as 'history from below' (*Geschichte von unten*), which found its most extreme expression in the trend known as 'history of everyday life' (*Alltagsgeschichte*). Here too antisemitism before 1933 is treated as a marginal issue by both German and Anglo-American researchers or does not figure in their

work at all. Many German researchers were natives of the places they studied and it may be that they feared their neighbours' reactions. Others – many of whom were 'historians of everyday life' during the 1980s – were Marxists or at least held a worldview that was close to Marxism, an ideology that traditionally rejects antisemitism as an explanatory analytical tool because it was, supposedly, a factor diverting the attention of the masses from their real problems.³⁰

The main historical trend that emerged in Germany as well as in Britain and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s was social history or, in Germany, the 'social history of politics'. This trend sought to explain historical processes and events in terms of social structures, social groups and socio-economic processes. This too might explain the relegation of antisemitism to the periphery of Nazi activity. Many historians argued that the reason why antisemitic propaganda was not often used by the Nazi Party was a tactical change in emphasis in party activity (the post-1929 wooing of social groups who were not traditionally known as antisemitic); the influence of local traditions on the party's methods (e.g. the size of the Protestant, Catholic or Jewish communities in the region under investigation); and finally the elevation of Marxism-Bolshevism to the position of enemy number 1 of the Nazi Party.³¹

During the 1980s, analysis of voting patterns for the Nazi Party, its members and organizations also became popular. However, here too none of the studies dwelt at any length on how antisemitism affected the considerations of party activists, members or voters. The most common view was that until 1933 the struggle against communism and Marxism was the principal preoccupation of the party voters. Thomas Childers argued that, on comparing the period up to 1925 with the phase beginning with the end of the 1920s, a downward trend in antisemitic activity and propaganda is evident. Richard Hamilton and Jürgen Falter, who, like Childers, studied voting patterns for the Nazi Party, very briefly supported Childers' arguments. They argued that antisemitism would emerge as an issue only when questions of capitalism and Bolshevism were raised. Racism played no role in voters' considerations or in the party's appeals to them. All these studies argued that the resort to antisemitism was grounded in regional factors.³²

Two scholarly controversies that characterized the period should be mentioned here. The debate about Nazism and the Third Reich as 'Hitlerism' (the 'intentionalist' approach) or as 'polycracy' (the 'structuralist' approach) concentrated mainly on structures and the intentions of the Nazi leaders, elites and agencies. The role of antisemitism was one of the main issues here. It was again the period after 1933 that stood at the centre of the debate while pre-1933 Nazi antisemitism was again overlooked.³³ The German historian Ulrich Herbert, who represents the structuralist approach, still argues in favour of this approach, which seeks to 'set the causes and effect of the National Socialist policy of mass destruction in a different, sharper and simultaneously broader

focus' from that of the 'intentionalists'. On the other hand, Herbert accepts that this approach lacks any consideration of crucial ideological elements which influenced Nazi policy towards the Jews.³⁴

Another debate among West German historians took place in the 1980s. This was the *Historikerstreit* (historians' debate) and revolved, among other things, around the issue of antisemitism and the Holocaust. Ernst Nolte's irresponsible argument about the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinist Russia on the German middle classes, the Nazi Party and its leadership drew attention to the place of antisemitism and the Jews in Nazi ideology and activity prior to 1933. But here too, the debate focused on the period after 1933, while important questions such as whether before 1933 the party drew any distinction between Marxism and Judaism in its propaganda were left unanswered or, under the influence of Nolte's arguments, communism and Marxism were described as the arch-enemies of Nazism before 1933.³⁵

The historiographical approach to the Nazi Party's antisemitism did not change much until the Goldhagen debate of the mid-1990s. In Germany, as well as in the US, public debate over National Socialist antisemitism has changed significantly since then. Goldhagen understands the mass murder of European Jews as the culmination of a centuries-long German obsession with Judaism. In his study, Nazi antisemitism was a German project that began long before the 1920s. He shows how rabid Nazi antisemitism, which developed during the 1920s, had deeper roots in German society. He pointed out that before 1933 any Jew in Germany could expect the worst from Hitler's party. Goldhagen's thesis about the Nazi Party's antisemitism was in fact a return to 1960s' arguments about the importance of antisemitism to the success of the Nazi Party, but he stresses this fact more than any other scholar, including those who wrote about Nazi ideology and propaganda during the 1960s. As in the case with the 'Hitlerism' versus 'Polycracy' debate or the *Historikerstreit*, the public discussion arising from Goldhagen's arguments totally ignored his thesis about pre-1933 antisemitism. Apart from minor remarks such as 'after 1930, the election propaganda of the rising National-Socialists mentioned antisemitism only peripherally',³⁶ no serious discussion developed around Goldhagen's argument about pre-1933 antisemitism in the way that debates developed around his argument concerning post-1933 Nazi antisemitism.³⁷

III

The reason for the marginal role assigned to antisemitism in the Nazi Party in the studies and controversies surveyed above must also be sought in the methods used by historians, in the positions taken by various scholars and, so it appears, in the conditions in various regions of Germany. It is clear that notwithstanding the different methods employed by various historical approaches to this

issue, they all reach roughly the same conclusion: antisemitism did not play a major role in the rise of Nazism before 1933.

We can see several trends within this historiographical consensus which enable us to raise questions and arguments with regard to any future research on this topic. First, we should pay more attention to the distinction made by many historians between Nazi opposition to Marxism and the hatred of and opposition to the Jews. According to this view (which was not only represented by Nolte and his disciples),³⁸ the Nazis are claimed to have regarded Marxism as a 'political enemy'. Here the communists were seen as the arch-enemy of the Nazi Party, while the Jews did not constitute any threat to party members and leaders, and were treated as an 'ideological enemy'. Before the Nolte controversy of the 1980s, the 'communists as arch-enemy' approach was a domain of many Marxist or proto-Marxist historians, such as the late British historian Tim Mason, the German historian Reinhart Kühnl and many East German historians. Against this view, many conservative and liberal scholars argue that these two concepts ('Judaism' and 'communism') are coextensive, and that hatred of Marxism even derives from hatred of the Jewish worldview and morality.³⁹ In any research on this topic in the future, the meaning of the concepts 'communism' and 'Jewry' for the Nazi Party rank and file, and not only for the Nazi elite (Goebbels, Rosenberg, Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich) must be clarified, not just for the post-1933 period but also for the earlier period.

Second, the 'modified structuralism' approach to Nazism, which is currently the dominant approach in research on the Third Reich,⁴⁰ should expand the scope of its research to the period before 1933 by bringing under its scrutiny Nazi activity vis-à-vis the Jews in the Weimar period. Ulrich Herbert, who advocates this approach, suggests that the 1970s' structuralist approach was not aware of how important racist ideology and antisemitism were in determining the thoughts and actions of many sections of the German population and the Nazi Party. Herbert (in his study of Werner Best) and his colleagues take for granted a certain ideological framework in their analysis, but here too they do not take the Weimar period into consideration in their assessment of Nazi policy.⁴¹

Third, lack of attention to Nazi antisemitism prior to 1933 often stems from a preconception that since it is well known that the party was antisemitic and very often resorted to antisemitism, there is no need to dwell on this question for the period before 1933. Here one must raise the question why so many historians place such emphasis on the antisemitic trends of the party before 1924, while devoting only scant attention to this issue in the years that followed.

IV

Certainly, before 1933 neither the German people nor any group within the Nazi Party or its voters wanted what happened to the Jews after 1938. No doubt,

many sections within German society would have been satisfied with a visible restriction of Jewish influence. Only a minority within the Nazi Party itself (concentrated mainly around Julius Streicher and the *völkish* group in Bavaria), whom we can call rabidly anti-Jewish, contemplated a sweeping deprivation of civil rights, implemented, if necessary, by physical force. The vast majority of the Nazi Party's members and voters were indifferent and sometimes even rejected this rabid antisemitism.

But this broad attitude towards the Jews among Weimar society also enabled the minority of rabid antisemites in the Nazi Party to argue, after 1933, for racial discrimination and to act accordingly. Unlike the rank and file of the Nazi Party, however, a few of its leaders were imbued with a depraved antisemitism of the racial kind to be found in certain intellectual circles of the early Weimar period. But the difference here was that these were precisely the people who, as a result of human error, were put in charge of the German state on 30 January 1933.

This point has to be borne in mind. Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Josef Goebbels, Julius Streicher and their associates came to power as the result of a political manoeuvre of the traditional German right which, we may recall, was before the war already imbued with antisemitism. Unlike previous machinations of the German right, which had generally succeeded, that of 1933 failed and the golem turned on its maker.⁴² The rise to power of the Nazis was not a foregone conclusion; it was not a case of historical necessity. There was no German 'special path' (*Sonderweg*) which began in the nineteenth century and led directly to 1933. On the contrary: some months before 'black January', the party had begun to break up, but the German elites who brought Hitler to power were corrupted, exhausted and unable to read the realities of the situation in Germany at the end of 1932 correctly.

The origins of Nazism, and hence Nazi antisemitism, lie in the crisis of Weimar society, which was reflected in a profound radicalization and politicization of that society. The radical populism which so typified the antisemitic peripheries in the period of the Second Reich gained a central position in the Weimar period as a result of the war, the revolution and the events of the early 1920s. Nazism was a general mart for all the social movements that had existed on the fringes of Wilhelmine society, had risen to prominence during the war and had become influential during the 1920s. But what was even more significant was that, in addition to the extremist currents that had infiltrated the party, Nazism in the period before 1933 also represented central streams of Wilhelmine society: national liberals, social Conservatism, Catholics and the socialist left. Democratic, conservative, liberal and Marxist ideas could be found within the party, together with calls for social and political reform under an authoritarian or populist democratic regime. And side by side with the racial antisemitism that had existed on the fringes of imperial society, the populist kind that was

prominent in the periphery and that found a home in the populist-radical-conservative parties of the Second Reich was also represented in the Nazi Party.⁴³

This political department store made the Nazi regime popular, enabling it to carry out a social revolution. Unlike the German elites of the Second Reich and the Weimar Republic, National Socialism was able to exploit the great popularity it had gained in order to realize, among other things, its programme with regard to the Jews. The Nazi Party leadership was at the helm of a weary and enfeebled society which had lost much of its human face. Even more important, it had at its disposal intellectual and political elites which suffered from the same sickness. All were products of the Weimar crisis. The Nazi leaders, in collaboration with these elites, were able to mislead German society and mould it as a baker kneads and moulds his bread. This, of course, took time.

Most historians agree today that during the early years of the Third Reich 'the war against the Jews' was not the main goal of the new regime. Saul Friedländer argues that boycotts, 'spontaneous' grassroots action and legal actions were undertaken, but no more than that. The main task was to remove Jews from their positions in the state and the economy, but Jews could continue to live in Germany.⁴⁴ As late as 1936, a Jewish funeral in a village in the southern Rhine region in western Germany could be accompanied by the heads of the local Nazi Party who had come to pay their last respects to an anonymous Jew.⁴⁵ As Ulrich Herbert has recently claimed, the German people did not fanatically support anti-Jewish policy until the late 1930s.⁴⁶ As late as 1938, the heads of the SS could oppose *Kristallnacht* on the grounds that the disturbances might be too violent. But, as the Second World War reached its climax and the Germans were mired in the mud and snow of Russia, and the reverses of 1942 showed the Nazi leadership that victory was turning into defeat, the heads of the Nazi state took it on themselves to order the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' as well as cruel and vindictive actions against other social and ethnic groups.

Notes

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- 2 U. Herbert, 'Extermination Policy: New Answers and Questions about the History of the "Holocaust" in German Historiography', in *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, ed. U. Herbert (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), p. 27.
- 3 D.J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).
- 4 O. Heilbronner, 'From Antisemitic Peripheries to Antisemitic Centres: The Place of Antisemitism in German History', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35 (2000), 559–76;

- H. Poetzscher, *Anti-Semitismus in der Region. Antisemitische Erscheinungsformen in Sachsen, Hessen, Hessen-Nassau und Braunschweig 1870–1914* (Darmstadt, 2000).
- 5 A. Kauders, *German Politics and the Jews: Düsseldorf and Nuremberg 1910–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
 - 6 The terms come from M. Stürmer, *Das ruhelose Reich. Deutschland 1866–1918* (Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1983); J. Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität. Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich: Hanser, 1998).
 - 7 H. Hagenlücke, *Deutsche Vaterlandspartei. Die nationale Rechte am Ende des Kaiserreiches* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1997); H.P. Müller, ‘Die Deutsche Vaterlandspartei in Württemberg 1917/18 und ihr Erbe. Besorgte Patrioten oder rechte Ideologen?’ *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Geschichte*, 59 (2000), 217–24.
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 - 10 J. Bergmann and K. Megerle, ‘Protest und Aufruhr der Landwirtschaft in der Weimarer Republik (1924–1933). Formen und Typen der politischen Agrarbewegung im regionalen Vergleich’, in *Regionen im historischen Vergleich. Studien zu Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. J. Bergmann and K. Megerle (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), pp. 200–67.
 - 11 D. Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt: Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachfolger, 2000); Kauders, *German Politics and the Jews*; J. Borut, ‘Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany’, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 28 (2000), 7–50; M. Wildt, ‘Der muss hinaus! Antisemitismus in deutschen Nord- und Ostseebädern 1925–1935’, *Mittelweg*, 36, 10 (2001), 2–25.
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- 35 E. Nolte, 'Between Myth and Revisionism? The Third Reich in the Perspective of the 1980s', in *Aspects of the Third Reich*, ed. H.W. Koch (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 17–38; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, pp. 248–51.
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- 37 For the debate around the Goldhagen thesis in the US, see G. Eley, ed., *The Goldhagen Effect* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); for Germany, see Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies*; for Israel, see *German Anti-Semitism*, ed. Borut and Heilbronner. All the books above and many others argue against Goldhagen and some provide new evidence which reveals the weakness of his thesis. But none touches on Goldhagen's arguments about Nazi and German antisemitism during Weimar.
- 38 See, for example, E. Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945. Nationalsozialismus und Bolshevismus* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1987); Striefler, *Kampf um die Macht*; Richard Bessel, in his study on the SA in eastern Germany, argues that 'the lion's share of Nazi violence was aimed against the Left'. R. Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, p. 80.
- 39 T.W. Mason, *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich. Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977), chapter 2; R. Kühnl, 'The Rise of Fascism in Germany and its Causes', in *Towards the Holocaust. The Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, ed. I. Wallmann and M. N. Dobkowski (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 101–10.
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- 46 Herbert, 'Extermination Policy', p. 42.

2

Hitler and the Third Reich

Jeremy Noakes

Hitler and the rise to power

Adolf Hitler had a greater impact on the history of the world in the twentieth century than any other political figure.¹ Yet his background was unimpressive. The son of a minor Austrian customs official, with a limited education, no qualifications or experience of government, and a foreigner, he nevertheless achieved the position of *Führer*, or leader, of Germany, one of the most economically developed and culturally sophisticated nations in the world. So how did he manage it? Was his success primarily the product of personal qualities? Was it the message he was preaching? Were the Germans peculiarly predisposed towards him or his message, and if so why? Was his success dependent more on the historical context in which he was operating? Or was it rather precisely due to a favourable conjuncture of the man, the message and the moment? These are the questions that have preoccupied historians since the 1930s.

The most important personal qualities in Hitler's rise to power were his sense of mission to convert the German people to his cause, his ability to convince others of that sense of mission through his oratorical skills, and his strength of will to see that mission through come what may. Historians have endeavoured to trace the source of his sense of mission and the ideas and values underlying his message to his youth in Austria.² His autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, provides some evidence, but as a source it suffers from the serious disadvantage of having been designed to project an image of him as a political leader and, in fact, some of the material on his early life is unreliable.³ The most important original source on his youth is the account by his friend, August Kubizek, from whom we gather that even while still a teenager living in Linz, Hitler believed that he was destined for greatness, though at the time he imagined that his future lay in art or architecture.⁴ However, according to Kubizek, by the time he was living in Vienna, Hitler had developed an 'immense interest in politics'

and it is clear that a number of his fundamental political views were formed during his early life in Austria.⁵

According to Kubizek – whose comments are supported by statements in *Mein Kampf* – at this time, Hitler's political thinking was dominated by his sympathy for the Pan-German form of nationalism which was prevalent among the German-speaking population of the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They felt under increasing threat from the rise of the Slavs. He had also developed an intense dislike of the Socialist Party for its class-based, anti-nationalist views. However, the most thorough examination of Hitler's life in Vienna has shown that Kubizek's claim that Hitler was already a strong antisemite is wrong. In her important study of Hitler in Vienna, Brigitte Hamann has shown, to the contrary, that Hitler had a number of Jewish acquaintances and used them to sell his pictures.⁶ Nevertheless, it is clear from *Mein Kampf* that Hitler was by this stage a great admirer of the Pan-German leader Georg von Schönerer, for whom racist antisemitism was a central element of his world-view. He also admired the Christian Social Party leader and mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, for whom antisemitism was an important propaganda weapon.⁷ Pre-war Vienna was saturated with antisemitism and Hitler devoured newspapers and pamphlets and regularly attended political meetings. Thus, it would be surprising if he had not acquired a general antisemitic outlook. However, it is clear that, before the war, his antisemitism had not yet acquired pathological intensity or become the key explanatory tool in his system of ideas that it did after 1918. Finally, according to one of the most detailed studies of his early years, it is also probable that in Vienna he had acquired his Social Darwinist view of life as a struggle for survival between the different races for the earth's resources.⁸

However, although his Vienna years had a formative influence, historians now agree that it was his wartime experience and, above all, the shock of defeat and the revolution of November 1918, that proved the turning point in his life. Hitler's sense of identification with Germany was greatly reinforced by his service in a Bavarian regiment during the war and helps to explain his extreme response to Germany's defeat and the revolution. The significance of the defeat, which Hitler experienced in a military hospital while recovering from a gas attack, was well brought out by Rudolf Binion in the best of the attempts by psycho-historians to explain Hitler's personality.⁹ However, Binion's analysis was seriously flawed by his misreading of Hitler's response to the Jewish doctor who had treated his mother's terminal cancer. Nevertheless, he brought out the extent to which the defeat and subsequent revolution represented an existential crisis for Hitler personally as much as for Germany itself. Hitler responded with a fierce hatred for those he blamed for the defeat and a strong desire for vengeance against those he regarded as Germany's enemies, both internal and external.

Hitler entered politics by joining the German Workers Party, a small group with extreme right-wing views, in September 1919. The first important work on his early political career is Konrad Heiden's *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus: Die Karriere einer Idee*, first published in 1932.¹⁰ Heiden was a journalist who had very good contacts in the Munich political scene and, while not always reliable, provided valuable insights into the early history of the Nazi movement. Indeed, the first section of Alan Bullock's biography of Hitler is heavily indebted to Heiden.

After 1945, following pioneering work by the American historian Reginald Phelps and the German Ernst Deuerlein, one publication in particular transformed our view of Hitler's early political career.¹¹ Albrecht Tyrell showed in his *Vom 'Trommler' zum 'Führer'* that when Hitler joined the DAP he had no ambition to be the future leader of Germany; rather, this sense of his future destiny developed gradually during the period 1919–24 in response to his own experiences.¹² Thus, far from pursuing a consistent and determined strategy to take over the leadership of the NSDAP, in the summer of 1921 Hitler found himself forced to act by the actions of others. Even then, the role Hitler envisaged for himself was not as the future leader of Germany but rather as the 'drummer' who would convert the German masses to the cause of Germany's rebirth, preparing the way for Germany's return to greatness under a national leader as yet unknown. Tyrell shows that Hitler's transformation from 'drummer' to 'Führer' came about through his response to two developments: the growing adoration of his followers and their projection of him as 'Germany's Mussolini', and his experience of the pusillanimity of the established Conservative and *völkisch* nationalist leadership in Bavaria during 1923, and particularly their behaviour during and after his abortive beer hall 'putsch' of November 1923. It was these two experiences that persuaded Hitler, during 1923–4, that he could and should become the future dictator. Tyrell's account of Hitler's development between 1919 and 1924 has important implications for our understanding of his behaviour in later periods.

If his deep sense of outrage and humiliation in 1918–19 had intensified his already existing sense of destiny, his self-confidence was reinforced further by the worldview he had acquired in the meantime and which fuelled his sense of mission. For he believed that he was following the 'laws of nature', a belief that acquired quasi-religious significance for him and from which, until the very last year of the war, he derived continuing reassurance that he was on the right track, working in accordance with 'Providence' and therefore bound eventually to succeed. Two historians in particular have drawn attention to this important aspect of Hitler's 'worldview': Peter Stern in his illuminating study of the relationship between Hitler and the German people; and Robert Pois, who interpreted Nazism as a 'religion of nature'.¹³

Although by 1918 Hitler had already developed strong nationalist beliefs and had almost certainly adopted some of the antisemitic prejudices so prevalent

in pre-war Vienna, it was during the years 1919–20 that he constructed the basic principles of his ‘worldview’, including its antisemitic core, with only the details subsequently being modified.¹⁴ The components of this worldview were not original; they were shaped by the mass of *völkisch* nationalist and antisemitic literature which saturated Germany in general and Munich in particular during the immediate postwar period, and which Hitler evidently absorbed, and also by lectures from and conversations with leading local *völkisch* figures, such as Gottfried Feder¹⁵ and Dietrich Eckart,¹⁶ and Baltic German exiles such as Alfred Rosenberg,¹⁷ whom Hitler came to know during 1919.¹⁸ It represented an amalgam of Pan-German nationalism, popular versions of Social Darwinism and vitalist philosophy, racism and antisemitism, all of which were current at the time. However, his worldview was given a particular edge by Hitler’s personal experience, above all the defeat and revolution of November 1918.

Central to Hitler’s worldview was his belief in the power of the human will, its ability to shape the world. Thus, at the core of his mission was a determination to restore and mobilize the will to power of the German people, infusing them with his self-belief, so that they would throw off the shackles of the Peace Treaty of Versailles and restore Germany to a position of power in the world. However, in order to do so, it would be necessary to eliminate the intellectual poison that for decades the Jews had been injecting into the German body politic and that was ultimately responsible for its recent defeat. Only then could ‘heroic’ values more in accordance with ‘nature’ be injected. Hitler found notions such as liberalism, democracy, internationalism, pacifism, humanitarianism and even Christianity ‘unnatural’; they favoured the weak and untalented, and were encouraged by the Jews in order to undermine nations and make them vulnerable to Jewish control, in their drive towards world domination. The revolutions of 1918 and 1919 in central and eastern Europe had demonstrated that it was now ‘Marxism’, the product of the Jew, Marx, and ‘Jewish Bolshevism’, allegedly the product of Russian Jews, with their doctrines of class war, the dictatorship of the proletariat and internationalism that posed the biggest threat of all to Germany’s recovery. These ideas and their supporters had been able to win over the German masses and so now became Hitler’s main target. His message, therefore, preached first in the Munich beer halls and then to audiences throughout Germany, was the need to lure the masses away from ‘Jewish Marxism’ and substitute a national socialism, which would unite the nation and restore its will to power.¹⁹

However, just as or even more important than the message was the medium and the context in which the message was received. For not only was Hitler exceptionally gifted at communicating his message, whether as a speaker or increasingly as the orchestrator and choreographer of the occasions on which he spoke, but also his audiences were exceptionally receptive. Thus, a central

issue for historians has been the receptivity of Hitler in Germany, and the connection between him and his message and the German people's traditional beliefs and values, which was to form the 'Hitler myth'.²⁰

Historians have sometimes sought to explain Germans' receptivity to Hitler and the fact that, of all the advanced states of 'the West', Germany proved uniquely vulnerable to such a figure and his movement, in terms of alleged continuities or alleged 'peculiarities'²¹ in its history, the notion that Germany had pursued a *Sonderweg* or 'special path'.²² There is an Anglo-Saxon and French historical tradition, which sees Nazism as rooted in a deeply problematic German history.²³ A.J.P. Taylor, for example, writing at the end of the Second World War, considered that 'the political traditions of Germany' had been 'in a state of decay since the time of Luther'.²⁴ The Germans' 'national character' had been shaped by their geographical position as 'the people of the middle'; furthermore, 'no other people' had 'pursued extermination as a permanent policy from generation to generation for a thousand years'. This perspective was shared to some extent by the most widely read book on the Third Reich published in English, William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.²⁵

However, there have also been more sophisticated German studies employing a continuity perspective. They began with the work of Fritz Fischer and his followers in the 1960s, which claimed that both before and during the First World War the German establishment was seeking European hegemony.²⁶ According to Fischer, the German elites continued to harbour these ambitions during the Weimar Republic and into the Third Reich, where they provided the basis for an alliance of convenience with the Nazi leadership until the late 1930s, when the Conservatives became disillusioned by what they considered irresponsible Nazi foreign policy, which threatened war with Britain and France. These foreign policy ambitions were substantially related to internal problems, for which they provided a safety valve through the mechanism of social imperialism. These problems were the result of Germany's failure to achieve a 'bourgeois revolution' and the resultant survival of 'quasi-feudal' and authoritarian political and social structures and values coinciding with rapid economic development. The result was a sharply divided society and the survival of reactionary elites, whose influence helped to undermine the democratic experiment of the Weimar Republic. Moreover, democratic development was allegedly weakened by a population of 'unpolitical' Germans frightened of conflict.²⁷

However, it has now been convincingly demonstrated that in most respects Germany had undergone the transition to a bourgeois society by 1900, that Germans had a vigorous participatory political culture²⁸ and even that they were 'practising democracy',²⁹ albeit under a system with limited democratic control of the government.³⁰ The dominant view among historians now is that the explanation for the Nazis' success should be sought more in the exceptional burdens placed on the political system by the defeat and revolutionary events

of November 1918 and the economic crises, first of hyper-inflation in 1922–23 and then of depression in 1929–33.

Although this is broadly convincing, it is clear that there was a degree of continuity in terms of the interests and aspirations of certain elites, notably the Prussian *Junker* landed nobility and the military, whose role in undermining the Weimar Republic cannot be denied. Moreover, it has been argued that, while Germany did not follow a 'special path' before 1933, nevertheless, in many respects Hitler was 'representative'³¹ of his time and place, or at least of substantial elements within it. This representativeness was in part a product of his reflection of values and mentalities that were, if not exclusively, then peculiarly German and particularly prevalent among the Protestant middle class.³² They were rooted partly in nineteenth-century Romanticism – the emphasis on authenticity, commitment, living experience (*Erlebnis*), the cults of Nature and of the will – and partly in Germany's political history – the worship of the 'power state' and admiration of *realpolitik*,³³ an extreme nationalism encouraged by the pride but also the sense of vulnerability of a new nation-state; a militarism deriving originally from Prussia but reinforced and made ubiquitous by a process of national unification involving three successful wars led by Prussia; and a liberal tradition that was flawed by its ambivalent relationship with the state and the people, and a contempt for Enlightenment values and their application to politics as 'western' and 'sentimental' (*Humanitätsdüselei*). Moreover, Hitler was the heir to a long German tradition of 'heroic' leader worship.³⁴

In his recent stimulating study *Germans into Nazis*, Peter Fritzsche emphasizes how Hitler's promise of national regeneration, restoring a united, ethnically based 'national community', and social reform had a wide appeal in a nation whose deep social and religious divisions had recently been overcome in the euphoria of August 1914, only to be reopened even more sharply by the defeat and revolution of November 1918.³⁵ In this view Hitler was a populist articulating widespread frustration with the established order and a yearning for national unity and revival.

Fritzsche's emphasis on Nazism as a 'program of cultural and social regeneration premised on the superordination of the nation and the Volk' accords with recent work on fascism by Roger Griffin.³⁶ Griffin has shifted the focus away from the emphasis in the Marxist definitions of fascism as the product of a crisis of capitalism for which ideology functions merely as propaganda to stress the importance of fascist ideology, the core of which he sees as a myth of national rebirth.

Finally, historians' concern with the relationship between Hitler and the German people, coupled with the new emphasis on the role of ideas and mentalities as historical forces in recent years, has encouraged a revival of the notion of Nazism as a 'secular religion', a notion that was first put forward in the late 1930s by the German Catholic philosopher Eric Voegelin and the

French intellectual Raymond Aron.³⁷ However, what was perhaps crucial above all in explaining Hitler's success was the fact that at critical junctures the political situation was highly favourable to him and his movement. Hitler and the Nazi movement's success was restricted to two discrete periods of the Weimar Republic – 1919–23, when it was limited very largely to the state of Bavaria in general and its capital Munich in particular, and 1929–33.

In its early years the NSDAP benefited enormously from the fact that, during most of this period, Bavaria had an extreme right-wing government which tolerated, if not encouraged, its activities and a population embittered by the revolutionary events of 1918–19, among whom antisemitism was virulent.³⁸ This period came to an end with Hitler's unsuccessful *putsch* of 8–9 November 1923 and the period 1924–28 saw only slow progress with the 1928 Reichstag election producing an NSDAP vote of only 2.8 per cent. However, an invaluable collection of documents with commentary by Albrecht Tyrell and an important monograph on the Nazi Party by Wolfgang Horn have illuminated how, nevertheless, these years saw the development of Hitler's charismatic form of leadership and the consolidation of the community of *völkisch* activists behind it.³⁹ Hitler's authority as Führer and his success in conveying his sense of mission were indispensable for maintaining the cohesion and commitment of a party composed of such disparate and aggressive elements during a period in the political wilderness. It meant that if a crisis occurred, the party had a cadre of dedicated followers and activists ready to take advantage of it.

It was indeed the economic crisis of 1929–33, and the breakdown of the democratic system under its centrifugal political pressures, which created the opportunity for Hitler successfully to project his message of national revival under his leadership that proved so attractive no longer just to *völkisch* activists but to a desperate people.⁴⁰ Even so, with 37 per cent of the vote in the Reichstag election of July 1932 Hitler's popular support had peaked. Analysis of who voted for Hitler was transformed by Jürgen Falter in *Hitlers Wähler*, who, having processed a mass of electoral statistics, concluded that Nazi support was broad-based but had 'a middle class stomach'.⁴¹

Hitler's failure to secure power after the July election produced a serious crisis in the party during the autumn and winter of 1932, putting its future in doubt. In this instance, Hitler's uncompromising belief in his destiny and refusal to accept the compromises urged on him by some of his subordinates worked to his advantage. For he was saved by the intervention of members of the traditional German elites, who were determined to avoid a return to democratic politics and looked to Hitler to provide a public relations operation for their authoritarian regime.⁴² In his important detailed study of these events, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*, Henry Turner assigned degrees of responsibility for Hitler's appointment as Chancellor to the handful of individuals involved and argued that it was by no means inevitable.⁴³

Hitler and his regime⁴⁴

The regime that Hitler established in Germany after his takeover of power in 1933, the so-called 'Third Reich', was primarily responsible for a war that killed over 50 million people and entirely responsible for genocidal campaigns which involved the deaths of millions of Slav civilians, some six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of Romanies. So how can one explain the regime's extraordinarily destructive quality? Were its lethal actions the more or less direct result of the policies, initiatives and decisions of its leader Adolf Hitler? Or did they derive from the nature of the regime itself? And, if so, how far was the particular character of that regime related to Hitler himself and his role within it? These are some of the questions which have preoccupied historians since Hitler's first appearance on the political stage in the 1920s, and they have adopted a variety of perspectives on him and his regime, reflecting their different historical approaches, methodologies and interests.⁴⁵ More generally, the problem for historians has been the need to avoid the twin pitfalls of either following the 'great man' school of history and placing too much emphasis on Hitler's role, thereby ignoring the pressures and constraints imposed by the political, economic and social contexts in which he was obliged to operate, or, alternatively, of portraying him as the puppet of anonymous political structures or economic and social forces, and thereby underestimating his power and his ability to exercise it independently and decisively on important issues.

For Marxist historians Hitler and the Third Reich tended to be subsumed under the concept of 'fascism', which before the war became increasingly narrow and reductionist, culminating in the notorious definition of Georgi Dimitrov, approved by the 1935 Comintern congress, namely that fascism constituted 'the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital'. This definition, which reduced Hitler to a mere tool of capitalism, largely determined the approach of historians in the post-war Soviet Bloc until its demise in 1989. Thus, two of the leading historians of the former German Democratic Republic saw Hitler as the 'star agent' of 'the most extreme monopolists' of big business, while they saw his *Mein Kampf* as performing the role of a 'testimonial to the great captains of industry'.⁴⁶

While more sophisticated versions of the Marxist approach, notably the work of August Thalheimer and Otto Bauer,⁴⁷ influenced by Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, were prepared to concede that Hitler and the Nazi regime possessed a measure of autonomy, the latter were still seen as essentially a function of the crisis within the capitalist system. Indeed, even the two outstanding pre-1945 studies of the Third Reich, Ernst Fraenkel's *The Dual State* and Franz Neumann's *Behemoth*, both written by Marxist-influenced historians,

accord Hitler little significance.⁴⁸ Thus, while Neumann devotes a section to charismatic leadership, it is largely theoretical and historical and he devotes no space to Hitler's actual role as Führer. And, given his statement that 'the decisions of the leader are merely the result of the compromises among the four leaderships' – the army, the party, the bureaucracy and 'Monopolistic Industry', one can understand why.⁴⁹ Similarly, despite the subtitle of his work, 'Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship', Fraenkel not only fails to deal with Hitler's role, but does not even refer to him in the index!

In addition to the Marxist perspective on Nazism, the pre-war period also saw the development of another intellectual model of explanation in the shape of totalitarianism. The term was first used by liberal, democratic and socialist critics of Italian fascism in the 1920s, notably Giovanni Amendola and Lelio Basso, who were the first to assert the totalitarian character of both fascism and Bolshevism.⁵⁰ The creation of the new term was designed to reflect what was considered the radical novelty of the new Fascist, Nazi and Bolshevik movements and regimes that had emerged in the inter-war period. Two aspects appeared particularly striking: the extreme and dynamic quality of the violence they had unleashed and the fact that they had introduced a new kind of politics, no longer subject to constitutional, legal or traditional restraints, and not confined to the public sphere, but rather claiming the total domination of every aspect of human life.

Even before 1945, the totalitarian model was beginning to influence perspectives on Nazism and the Third Reich, for example, Fraenkel's distinction between the 'normative' and the totalitarian 'prerogative' state, both of which, existing side by side, made up the 'Dual State'. And in *Behemoth* Neumann defined a set of five 'principles of National Socialist organization' foreshadowing the totalitarian model of the 1950s: a) the replacement of the pluralistic principle characteristic of democracy by 'a monistic, total, authoritarian organization'; b) 'the atomization of the individual'; c) 'differentiation and elite formation' in various party organizations; d) the 'transformation of culture into propaganda'; and e) violence, which was 'the very basis upon which society rests'.⁵¹ But significantly he did not include the leader figure.

However, it was during the 1950s that the totalitarian model came to provide the main intellectual framework for the analysis of Nazism and produced some outstanding work by a number of German scholars, notably Karl Dietrich Bracher's magisterial analysis of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*,⁵² the superb study of the Nazi takeover of power by Bracher, Wolfgang Sauer and Gerhard Schulz, *Die Nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung*,⁵³ Hans Buchheim's work on the SS⁵⁴ and Bracher's excellent *The Nazi Dictatorship*.⁵⁵ Unlike the political scientists, who were formulating more or less static models, a Procrustean bed of specific characteristics,⁵⁶ the work of these German historians was grounded in solid research and they

were using the totalitarian model flexibly to emphasize features that marked out the Third Reich from other political systems. Thus, for Bracher, 'in contrast to the Communist dictatorship, Nazi totalitarianism lived and died with the Leader and the Leader principle'.⁵⁷

However, during the 1960s, the totalitarian approach came to be challenged on two fronts. First, the publication of Ernst Nolte's *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*⁵⁸ in 1963 marked the beginning of a return to the concept of fascism, which was then enthusiastically adopted by historians associated with the strong left-wing movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, who revived various Marxist formulations from the inter-war years.⁵⁹ The totalitarian model was now contemptuously dismissed as a propaganda product of the Cold War. But, with the notable exception of the contributions of Tim Mason,⁶⁰ this work tended to operate at a very abstract level, be dominated by more or less crude Marxist dogma, and so provided few new insights into the Third Reich. In particular, it had nothing new to say about Hitler and his role.⁶¹

This gap was only partly filled by the appearance in 1973 of the first serious biography of Hitler to appear since Alan Bullock's of 1952, Joachim Fest's *Hitler*.⁶² It was brilliantly written and full of perceptive comments about Hitler's personality and his relationship with German society, but despite its assertion that 'the eruption he unleashed was stamped throughout almost every one of its stages, down to the weeks of final collapse, by his guiding will', it had very little to say about Hitler's role within the power structure of the regime.⁶³ Fest's book initiated a so-called 'Hitler Wave' in the shape of a flood of biographical-type publications of generally inferior quality. These included a number of 'psycho-historical' studies endeavouring to explain Hitler's personality in terms of various alleged traumas induced by such events as the circumstances of his mother's death or his alleged monorchism and then to use these theories to explain his policies and actions.⁶⁴ However, apart from the fact that the evidence on which these theories were based was sometimes erroneous, such theories invariably suffer from the impossibility of verification and, in any case, provide very inadequate explanations of major policies and decisions, such as his decision to go to war or the Holocaust, which can only be properly understood within the political context in which they occurred. Thus, while it is clear that Hitler's personality played a significant part in his career, it is questionable how far psycho-history can help us to understand it and its actual role except in terms of more or less plausible speculation.

The second major challenge to the totalitarian model came from a slightly younger generation of German scholars, who, from the middle of the 1960s, began publishing major studies of various organizations and institutions within the Third Reich.⁶⁵ The challenge was particularly evident in the appearance of Martin Broszat's important study of the workings of the Third Reich, *Der Staat*

Hitlers in 1969,⁶⁶ the same year as Bracher's *Die Deutsche Diktatur*. For, while Bracher had emphasized the centrality of Hitler, Broszat, despite the title of his book, placed the emphasis away from Hitler's personal role and concentrated more on the extent to which his position was both determined and limited by the 'chaotic' nature of his rule.

In fact, by the mid-1970s, some members of this younger generation of German scholars were dividing into two rival schools and becoming engaged in an increasingly acrimonious academic dispute, focusing on the role of Hitler within the regime. On the one side, there was a group who came to be called 'intentionalists', or 'traditionalists', who, like Bracher, emphasized the importance of Hitler in determining the policies and actions of the regime.⁶⁷ For them Nazism could be described as 'Hitlerism'. On the other, there were the 'structuralists', 'functionalists' or 'revisionists', who emphasized the 'polycratic'⁶⁸ structure of the regime, in which Hitler's role was no doubt very important but by no means always decisive. They considered Hitler as essentially a propagandist who became effectively a prisoner of the amorphous political system he had established, of the social forces he had unleashed, and the goals in the form of slogans he had proclaimed.

As far as the issue of 'totalitarianism' was concerned, the polarization was to some extent artificial, produced by the caricaturing of the position of those who used a totalitarian model. Thus, they had never in fact regarded the Third Reich as 'a monolith'. Indeed, since the Nuremberg trials and the publication of fragments of the Goebbels Diaries in 1948, and since the appearance of memoirs such as those of the former civil servant Walter Petwaidic, entitled *The Authoritarian Anarchy*,⁶⁹ and of the former governor of German-occupied Poland, Hans Frank, who referred to 'the chaos of leadership and responsibilities in every sphere', nobody could seriously regard the Third Reich as being in any sense monolithic. Indeed, from Fraenkel and Neumann in the 1940s to Arendt and Friedrich in the 1950s, historians and political scientists were well aware of the 'polycratic' features of the Third Reich. Indeed, as Dieter Rebentisch has pointed out, the term 'polycratic' as a description of the Third Reich was first used not by one of the 'structuralist/functionalist' historians but by Gerhard Schulz, who disapproved of the way in which his term was being applied or interpreted. Moreover, Martin Broszat himself used the term 'totalitarian' to describe the dynamic Nazi elements within the Third Reich in contradistinction to the traditional 'authoritarian' elements.

Thus, by the 1970s there was in fact broad agreement among historians about the 'chaotic' way in which the regime operated, and where the two schools differed was in their interpretations of the reasons why and its impact on the development of the regime and specifically of Hitler's role within it. Bracher, Schulz and the 'intentionalists' considered that the 'chaos' strengthened Hitler's position. For

the Leader was the sole figure standing above the confusion of jurisdictions and command chains; on him rested the hopes of almost all concerned, National Socialists and non-National Socialists alike, and this tied them to the regime. He was the supreme arbiter whose omnipotent position was for ever reaffirmed, through all the rivalries of party officials, all conflicts between state and party, Army and SA, economy and administration; by playing up one against the other and apparently supporting each, he was able to preserve and strengthen his position of power.⁷⁰

In other words, the regime's polycratic structure was the prerequisite for Hitler's monocratic power. Moreover, according to Bracher – and in this he followed a number of participants in these events – this system was 'a largely conscious technique of rule',⁷¹ a policy of '*divide et impera*'. Others who share the view that the antagonisms built into the system were intentional attribute this to Hitler's 'Social Darwinist' views, his belief that the toughest and most effective individuals and organizations will emerge through struggle.

Broszat, on the other hand, argued that, while the 'chaos' of the system permitted Hitler to acquire a wide measure of autonomy,

because of the multiplicity of conflicting forces the Führer's will (even when Hitler had something different in mind) was ultimately only able to influence events in this or that direction in an uncoordinated and abrupt fashion, and it was certainly not in a position to watch over and curb the new organisations, authorities and ambitions which developed as a result.⁷²

Mommsen went even further by claiming that Hitler 'was unwilling to take decisions, frequently uncertain, exclusively concerned with upholding his prestige and personal authority, influenced in the strongest fashion by his current entourage, in some respects a weak dictator'.⁷³

To some extent, this division of opinion reflected the different aspects of the regime with which these various historians were engaged. Thus, in the sphere of foreign affairs, research appeared to demonstrate the crucial significance of Hitler's role in policy- and decision-making, whereas the structuralists/functionalists tended to work on domestic affairs, where the responsibility for policy and decisions was much more opaque and where actions and decisions appeared to be strongly influenced by the 'chaotic' way in which the system operated and where Hitler was often only marginally involved, if at all.

Hitler's most recent major biographer, Ian Kershaw, has tried to overcome the problem of relating Hitler to his regime by placing the emphasis on the 'character of his power – the power of the Führer'.⁷⁴ This power derived not only from his personal characteristics and was not only exercised by him personally; it sprang above all from the relationship between him and his

followers. Kershaw explains this relationship in terms of Hitler's charisma, that is to say on the willingness of his followers to regard him as exceptionally gifted, possessed of a calling and imbued with a mission to save Germany from the crisis in which it was embroiled. This charismatic relationship encouraged his followers to fulfil what they believed to be his will. In other words, given this situation, it was unnecessary for Hitler to involve himself in many matters; once he had set the general direction of policy in any given area, he could then rely on his subordinates to carry it out by 'working towards the Führer'.⁷⁵ This emphasis on the relationship between the regime and the German population operating through the process of charisma had earlier encouraged Kershaw to focus attention on Hitler's image as the crucial factor in underpinning popular support for the regime, specifically on the nature and construction of that image.⁷⁶

Ideology and practice

Apart from trying to assess Hitler's role in the regime, historians have also considered, first, how far Hitler himself and the regime in general were ideologically driven, committed to pursuing a political programme derived from a more or less coherent ideology, or how far he was merely interested in power for its own sake. Second, they have examined how far the lethal character of Nazism derived from the conscious pursuit of its ideological aims or how far it was rather a consequence of the system itself, and also what the relationship between these two factors may have been.

Even the most sophisticated Marxist-influenced historians have tended to see Nazi ideology primarily in functional terms, as a means of preserving the capitalist system. Ernst Fraenkel, for example, differentiating between the notions of 'substantial rationality' or the rationality of ends and 'technical rationality' or the rationality of means, claimed that

German capitalism has preferred an irrational ideology, which maintains the existing conditions of technical rationality, but at the same time destroys all forms of substantial rationality. If such substantially irrational ideology is useful to capitalism, the latter is ready to accept the programmatic aims of this ideology.⁷⁷

Similarly, Franz Neumann argued that 'National Socialism has no political theory of its own' and that 'the ideologies it uses or discards are mere *arcana dominationis*, techniques of domination'. The German leadership was 'the only group in present German society that does not take its ideological pronouncements seriously and is well aware of their purely propagandist nature'.⁷⁸ In particular, Neumann saw racism and antisemitism as 'substitutes for the class

'struggle', as 'an integrating element' for the Nazis' proclaimed 'national community'. This view then led him to the assumption that 'the internal political value of Anti-Semitism' 'would never allow a complete extermination of the Jews'. For the enemy 'must always be held in readiness as a scapegoat for all the evils originating in the socio-political system'. Moreover, Neumann also explained the external aggression of the regime in terms of the contradictions within 'totalitarian monopoly capitalism'. Thus, according to him, it was 'the high productivity of the industrial apparatus, the pressure for foreign markets and the need for satisfying the vital material interests of her masses that have driven Germany into a policy of conquest and will continue to drive her to still further expansion'.⁷⁹

A functionalist view of Nazi ideology was shared by an influential pre-war commentator on Nazism from the other end of the political spectrum, Hermann Rauschning, a disillusioned former Nazi leader, who was basically a Prussian Conservative. Shocked by what he regarded as the destructive features of Nazism: its lack of principle, its 'hostility to the intellect, to individualism and personality, to pure science and art',⁸⁰ its contempt for all ethical values and traditions, he saw Nazism as 'action pure and simple, dynamics in vacuo, revolution at a variable tempo ready to be changed at any moment. One thing it is not – doctrine or philosophy'.⁸¹ The doctrine was merely an instrument for the control of the masses.⁸² Thus, racialism was 'its make-believe; the reality is the revolutionary extremism revealed not in its philosophy but in its tactics'.⁸³ Moreover, according to Rauschning, the revolutionary elite could 'maintain itself in power only by continually pushing on with the revolutionary process'.⁸⁴ Thus, motivated purely by opportunism and incapable of creative political action, Nazism was, in this perspective, a 'revolution of nihilism' carried out by a Machiavellian politician and his party cronies.⁸⁵ This view of Hitler as a modern form of tyrant was also shared by his first post-war biographer, Alan Bullock, who saw him as 'an opportunist entirely without principle', 'barren of all ideas save one – the further extension of his own power and that of the nation with which he had identified himself'.⁸⁶

In 1969, Karl Dietrich Bracher, while taking aspects of Hitler's ideology seriously as motives for action, nevertheless attributed some of the external dynamic of Nazism to pressures built into the system. Thus, according to him:

the absolute subjugation to the leader principle made possible the push beyond the borders. The forces pent up in the quasi-military Führer and coercive state found a surrogate for their urge to move, a reason for their subjugation, a chance of becoming themselves leaders and wielders of power in the promulgation of race policies, in imperial expansion, and in the exploitation of 'inferior' peoples. The oppressed became oppressors, the subjugated became the master race which, though unable to govern itself,

could govern others. The solution to the problem of freedom and control posed by the leader theory of National Socialism thus lay in the diversion to the outside of the natural need for political growth and freedom. Racial and political persecution and war became the psychological safety valves and tools of self-affirmation, expansion, and social imperialism, the substitutes for internal reform and self-fulfilment.⁸⁷

A decade later, however, confronted with the structuralist/functionalist challenge, Bracher insisted: 'it was indeed Hitler's *Weltanschauung* that mattered in the end'.⁸⁸

Despite the later conflict between Bracher and the structuralist/functionalist historians concerning the importance of Hitler's role, Bracher's earlier view of the significance of the relationship between the nature of the regime and the social forces within it for explaining the Third Reich's dynamic had certain parallels with the structuralist/functionalist position. For Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen, in particular, warn against explaining Nazi policies in terms of the systematic pursuit of Hitler's ideological goals. For this would reduce the reality of National Socialism to the arbitrary actions of a single man and his mania. Instead, they attribute the destructive force of Nazism primarily to the operation of the regime itself.

They argue that, as a charismatic ruler whose power was based on his successful mobilization of the aspirations, fears and resentments of a substantial section of the German people, Hitler was obliged to project a set of inspirational fixed ideas.⁸⁹ But such ideas needed to be vague in order to hold together so disparate a movement with such varied interests. In positive terms, Hitler promised national and social renewal and a return to great power status, negatively the elimination of internal enemies and external constraints. However, the regime proved incapable of constructing a new rational and enduring social order because of the conflict between its often contradictory, largely irrational and utopian visions and the reality of powerful and entrenched social and economic interests and cultural values. Instead, it was capable only of undermining existing structures through a process of parasitic absorption and dissolution.

In view of this, and in order to satisfy the Nazi activists and sustain the momentum essential to his form of regime and the social forces that underpinned it, Hitler was forced to focus on the negative aspects of his ideology, on eliminating 'enemies', all that was 'foreign', 'abnormal' or 'unnatural', points on which, broadly speaking, both activists and most 'ordinary Germans' could agree. For in Broszat's words, the Nazi regime could not halt the 'movement which was its law if it was not to lose the plebiscitary social dynamic which had been set in motion and thereby render itself superfluous. For only further action could ensure the integration of the antagonistic forces'.⁹⁰

Hans Mommsen introduced another concept to explain the internal dynamic within the regime, which produced an increasing radicalization of policy and action, namely 'cumulative radicalisation'.⁹¹ According to this argument, the polycratic nature of the Third Reich with its individual leaders, organizations and institutions competing for power, which in practice meant for the support of the Führer, ensured that the most extreme and radical option would tend to be adopted in order to prove its advocate's loyalty and commitment to what were regarded as his goals.

Thus, Hitler's policies and measures had 'nothing to do with planned action'. Indeed, the Nazi leadership was incapable of grasping the implications of its two central goals proclaimed by Hitler, namely the winning of 'living space' in the East and antisemitism; they were essentially 'symbols' for Nazism's internal and external dynamic, for 'a movement which was in reality geared to an endless progression and accumulation of power'. Broszat points out that before the war there had been no serious planning for the implementation of the 'living space' objective, while antisemitic policy had been a series of ad hoc and sometimes contradictory measures whose only common theme had been the need to remove the Jews from German society 'one way or another'; but there was no plan to exterminate them. Thus, for Broszat, while the 'Jewish Question' was primarily a 'symbol for the unremitting domestic struggle', 'until 1939/40 the aim of winning living space in the East largely had the function of an ideological metaphor, a symbol to justify ever-increasing diplomatic activity in order to achieve "the final destination" of total national freedom'. According to his view, Hitler found himself finally forced to implement these goals which 'objectively only had significance as ideological instruments for the mobilization of militancy and a belief in the future' and in doing so 'the movement literally brought itself to an end' through an unsuccessful war.⁹²

However, many historians have concluded that Hitler did possess a more or less coherent ideology on which he based a political programme, developed in the early 1920s, to which he remained committed, and which governed his major policies. The first to mount a serious challenge to the view that Hitler was simply an unprincipled opportunist bent on achieving maximum power was Hugh Trevor-Roper. Writing in 1953, he insisted that Hitler was neither a mere visionary nor a mere adventurer after power, but rather 'a systematic thinker' who had put together 'a consistent philosophy', however repugnant, and in his *Mein Kampf* had 'published in advance a complete blueprint of his intended achievement'.⁹³ In 1969, Trevor-Roper's ideas received support from the first systematic analysis of Hitler's ideology by Eberhard Jäckel, based largely on *Mein Kampf*, which emphasized its relative coherence.⁹⁴ However, unlike Trevor-Roper, who had focused mainly on its imperialist aspects with only brief references to the racial and specifically anti-Jewish elements, Jäckel

stressed the significance of the goal of acquiring 'living space' and a lethal antisemitism as the core components.

Meanwhile, in a major study of Hitler's strategy during the crucial years 1940–41, published in 1965, Andreas Hillgruber distinguished between, on the one hand, a *programme*, whose core was clearly outlined and which was directed at a *goal* that had been defined long before, and, on the other, a long-term *plan*.⁹⁵ In his definition a programme could be subject to modification in response to unforeseen situations and the moves of opponents, whereas, by implication, a plan was inflexible. He argued that Hitler had aimed to avoid the mistake made by pre-war Germany of pursuing a continental and a world (colonial) policy simultaneously, thereby provoking Germany's encirclement by Britain, France and Russia, by following a strategic programme divided into two main stages. In the first stage he had intended to establish German dominance over continental Europe on racial principles and then, in the future, exploiting Europe's resources, to challenge the United States for world hegemony.

Hillgruber's notion of Hitler's strategy being governed by a 'plan in stages' (*Stufenplan*) did not receive universal acceptance. In particular, there has been controversy over whether Hitler's aims were limited to securing hegemony over the European continent and establishing Germany as a world power or whether he was aiming for world dominance.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the idea that Hitler was following consistent foreign policy objectives was substantially reinforced by a series of works on other related topics such as Nazi colonial policy, naval policy and Hitler's megalomaniacal architectural projects.⁹⁷ Geoffrey Stoakes' most thorough study of the development of Hitler's foreign policy programme, published in 1985, stressed 'the remarkable degree of consistency between Hitler's declared aims in the 1920s and the course of Nazi foreign policy' and that, 'whilst by no means impervious to "structural" pressures from within Germany and from outside', it 'was largely determined by Hitler's convictions about Bolshevism and the pursuit of living space in the East'.⁹⁸

Hitler and the Holocaust

Whereas in the field of foreign policy 'intentionalist' historians have tended to have the field largely to themselves,⁹⁹ in explaining Hitler's role in the Holocaust the debate between intentionalists and structuralists/functionalists has been long and acrimonious.

During the first post-war years, there appeared to be a simple explanation for the Holocaust: Hitler was a rabid antisemite and he was dictator. However, the first major study of the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, placed it in a much broader context.¹⁰⁰ Hilberg saw the Holocaust as 'the culmination of a cyclical trend' in the historical experience of the Jews and its

implementation as essentially a bureaucratic process based partly on historical precedents and facilitated by the historically formed negative image of the Jews.¹⁰¹ Thus, the Nazis did not begin a development; they completed it. The bureaucracy waited only 'on the signal from above'; in fact, 'it needed no prodding'.¹⁰² After the SA pogrom of November 1938 the bureaucracy took over in order that the measures against the Jews could be taken *systematically*. And it was 'the bureaucratic destruction process which in its step by step manner led to the annihilation of five million victims'. Through a process of improvisation and innovation the bureaucrats created a system involving four key stages: definition, expropriation, concentration and destruction.¹⁰³ In this perspective Hitler's role in the process was essentially limited to having created the right climate. For 'in the right climate' the bureaucracy 'began to function almost by itself'.

A decade later, the American historian Karl Schleunes insisted that 'the road to Auschwitz' was not straight but 'twisted'.¹⁰⁴ During the period 1933–38, far from pursuing a systematic policy, Hitler's role was 'a shadowy one' and, as a result of his failure to give a clear direction, subordinates pursued rival policies producing 'a trial and error' approach to the 'Jewish problem'.¹⁰⁵ However, Schleunes considered that 'it was the Jew who helped hold Hitler's system together on the practical as well as on the ideological level'. For antisemitism provided a safety valve for the unfulfilled revolutionary aspirations of his followers. But:

this situation, which Adolf Hitler had created for himself, made the Jewish problem and the promise of its solution a functional necessity. When such a necessity was supported also by the convictions of a Hitler and a Himmler, there could be no retreat. The search had to continue whatever the obstacles. Out of these circumstances emerged the logic of the boycott and, finally, of the extermination camp.

This picture was confirmed by Uwe Adam, who insisted that:

one cannot speak of a planned and co-ordinated policy in this sphere, that an overall plan concerning the nature, content and scope of the persecution never existed, and that it is even highly probable that the mass killing and extermination was not an aim that Hitler had set *a priori* and that he had tried to achieve.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, according to Adam, Hitler avoided intervening directly in the Jewish Question as far as he could. It was only in the context of the growing internal disintegration of the regime and of the war against the Soviet Union that the Jewish Question increasingly acquired an integrating and legitimizing role

for the regime and that Hitler could take the decision to exterminate the Jews.

The issue of Hitler's role in the Holocaust was given a particular urgency for historians by the claim in 1977 by the amateur British historian, David Irving, that Hitler was not even aware of the extermination of the Jews, at least until 1943, and that it was implemented by Himmler and Heydrich without his knowledge.¹⁰⁷ While Irving appeared to be adopting elements of the functionalist approach, the two leading German functionalist historians determined to refute him, while at the same time setting out a more detailed functionalist explanation of the Holocaust.

Martin Broszat accepted that Hitler's ideological will was an essential component of the Holocaust, but insisted on the need to elucidate 'how this ideology became transformed into practice and the conditions and institutions through which it was mediated and possibly also distorted'.¹⁰⁸ Unlike Adam, he argued that the extermination was not the result of a single decision, but rather was implemented in stages and in parts. On the one hand, by encouraging his subordinates to rid their areas of Jews, Hitler initiated a competition among them to see who could render his territory 'free of Jews' the fastest. On the other hand, as a result of unexpected logistical problems caused by the war in the East, the Nazi leadership began to seek a way out of the cul-de-sac into which they had manoeuvred themselves by beginning to exterminate the Jews in Poland rather than, as originally planned, deporting them to the Soviet Union. Once these 'ad hoc' decisions to exterminate specific groups of Jews had been taken they soon became systematized and institutionalized by the SS. Within the context of a general climate of opinion in which Jews were being treated as 'sub-human' and as threats to the German war effort, this process ultimately developed into a comprehensive programme to exterminate all Jews. Thus, while agreeing with Irving that the extermination of the Jews was in part 'a makeshift solution', and, while believing that, given the lack of evidence of a specific order from Hitler, Hitler's responsibility for the Holocaust can be established indirectly only; nevertheless, Broszat insisted that the proofs of it are 'overwhelming'. They are based on Hitler's position of absolute power, the subservience to him of Himmler and other subordinates, and the enormous logistical and military implications of such a massive project, which could only have been authorized by Hitler. He speculated that whatever decisions Hitler took would have been made orally with Himmler.

For Hans Mommsen the real problem in explaining the Holocaust lay less with Hitler than with 'understanding the overall political and psychological structure that gave rise to it'.¹⁰⁹ He conceded that Hitler was 'decisively responsible for the escalation of persecution', but insisted that 'the initiative rarely came directly from him. He was not concerned with detailed moves to achieve the desired "solution of the Jewish question".' This was related to 'his

visionary concept of politics in which antisemitism was less a question of concrete political measures than of a fanatical ideological approach. Consequently, the regime failed to develop a coherent strategy until Heydrich took control of Jewish policy into his own hands'. Hitler 'felt bound to stand by the party and SS, institutions whose members took literally the "grand" historical perspective presented them by Hitler'. He became 'the slave of his own public prophecies'. Thus, while Mommsen conceded that Hitler was 'the ideological and political author of the Final Solution', he claimed that 'it was translated from an apparently utopian programme into a concrete strategy partly because of the ambitions of Heinrich Himmler and his SS to achieve the millennium in the Führer's own lifetime and thus to provide special proof of the indispensability of the SS within the national socialist power structure'. Himmler 'directed a large part of his energies towards a programme that, for Hitler, had a low priority in comparison with the conduct of the war'. Antisemitic initiatives acquired their own momentum through the process of 'cumulative radicalisation'. Thus, Mommsen rejected the idea that Hitler launched the Final Solution through a direct order, for 'the bureaucratic machinery created by Eichmann and Heydrich functioned more or less automatically.... There was no need for external ideological impulses to keep the process of extermination going.'

The British historian Gerald Fleming responded to Irving's denial of Hitler's responsibility for the Holocaust with an attempt to gather all the available evidence concerning Hitler's knowledge of and involvement in the Final Solution.¹¹⁰ While Fleming did not find 'the smoking gun' in the sense of a direct order from Hitler, he did find enough indirect evidence of Hitler's decisive role to be persuaded to adopt an extreme 'intentionalist' approach. For he concluded that Hitler was bent on exterminating the Jews from the beginning of his political career: 'the line that leads from these early manifestations to the liquidation orders that Hitler personally issued during the war... is a direct one.'¹¹¹ Hitler's 'unbroken continuity of explicit utterances was reflected in a more or less tacit continuity of deeds'.

While few historians have been prepared to accept such an extreme 'intentionalist' perspective, there has been a widespread assumption that, in view of Hitler's supreme power, a decision from him would have been necessary at some point in order to launch a project of such huge moral and material dimensions. However, opinions have differed on dates and on the factors that might have prompted the decision.¹¹² More recently, however, partly as a result of a large amount of detailed research on the extermination process in the East,¹¹³ a consensus is in the process of emerging.¹¹⁴ Now, many historians have come to accept that, while Hitler pursued from the start a consistent policy of trying to rid Germany of Jews 'one way or the other', Nazi policy developed in response to shifting priorities and changing conditions from social marginalization and economic deprivation to forced emigration and finally to extermination, without

following any clear or coherent plan of action. Nor did Hitler give a single order for the extermination. It is more likely that, through his public and private statements, he prepared the lethal climate for Jews within which the Holocaust became possible and also the legitimization for it. An important result of this research has been to emphasize the significance of ideology in the motivation of the leading SS personnel involved.¹¹⁵ At the same time, however, by giving instructions for particular actions and by encouraging subordinates to use their initiative, Hitler played a crucial role in sustaining the momentum of persecution. Moreover, the nature of the regime itself with its 'totalitarian dynamic', and the conditions in the East during the war, which proved so conducive to the development of the extermination process, were to a large extent the product of Hitler's own agenda and actions. Thus, while Martin Broszat was correct in insisting that Hitler's ideology alone cannot explain the Holocaust, and that one needs to examine the conditions within which and the institutional instruments through which it was transformed into reality, nevertheless, one needs only to attempt to write Hitler out of the script to appreciate that he was the essential actor in the tragedy.¹¹⁶

Notes

- 1 The most reliable and balanced, indeed outstanding, biography is now I. Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936. Hubris* (London: Allen Lane, 1998) and *Hitler 1936–1945. Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000). Three other biographies worth reading in English are K. Heiden, *Der Führer: Hitler's rise to power*, 2nd edition (London: Gollancz, 1967); A. Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, revised edition (London: Penguin Books, 1962); J. Fest, *Hitler* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974). Other particularly useful studies are W. Carr, *Hitler: A Study in Personality and Politics* (London: Arnold, 1978); S. Haffner, *The Meaning of Hitler* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979); R. Zitelmann, *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs*, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Klett Kotta Verlag, 1989); J. Lukacs, *The Hitler of History: Hitler's Biographers on Trial* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998); R. Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of his Evil* (London: Macmillan, 1998). The best survey of interpretations of Hitler is G. Schreiber, *Hitler: Interpretationen 1923–1983. Ergebnisse, Methoden und Probleme der Forschung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984).
- 2 See, for example, B.F. Smith, *Adolf Hitler: His Family, Childhood and Youth* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1967).
- 3 *Hitler's Mein Kampf* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp. 3–60.
- 4 See A. Kubizek, *Young Hitler* (Maidstone: George Mann, 1973), pp. 50ff.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 178ff.
- 6 See B. Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 7 *Hitler's Mein Kampf*, pp. 90ff.
- 8 See W. Maser, *Adolf Hitler: Legende, Mythos, Wirklichkeit* (Munich: Bechtle, 1972), p. 166.
- 9 See R. Binion, *Hitler Among the Germans* (New York/Oxford/Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1976), pp. 1–35.

- 10 K. Heiden, *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus: Die Karriere einer Idee* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1932), translated as *A History of National Socialism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1934). See also H. Auerbach, 'Hitlers politische Lehrjahre und die Münchener Gesellschaft 1919–1923', *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 25 (1977), 1–45; A. Joachimsthaler, *Korrektur einer Biographie: Adolf Hitler 1908–1920* (Munich: Herbig Verlag, 1989).
- 11 See E. Deuerlein, 'Hitlers Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr (Dokumentation)', *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 7 (1959), 177ff., and R.H. Phelps, 'Hitler and the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei', *American Historical Review*, 68 (1962/63), 974ff.
- 12 A. Tyrell, *Vom 'Trommler' zum 'Führer': Der Wandel von Hitlers Selbstverständnis zwischen 1919 und 1925 und die Entwicklung der NSDAP* (Munich: Wilhelm Link Verlag, 1975).
- 13 J.P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1975) and R.A. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
- 14 On the origins of Hitler's ideology, see the judicious assessment in Kershaw, *Hitler*, pp. 60ff. For the period in Vienna, see also Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*.
- 15 On Feder, see A. Tyrell, 'Gottfried Feder and the NSDAP', in *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, ed. P.D. Stachura (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 48–87.
- 16 On Eckart, see M. Plewina, *Auf dem Weg zu Hitler: Der völkische Publizist Dietrich Eckart* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1970).
- 17 On Rosenberg, see R. Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (London: Batsford, 1972).
- 18 It is impossible to be certain what Hitler read during these years, but apart from the 'classic' works of German *völkisch* nationalism such as Houston Stuart Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Theodor Fritsch's *Handbuch der Judenfrage*, and Heinrich Class's *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär*, one or more of which he may even have read before the war, Munich was saturated with *völkisch* and antisemitic literature (books, pamphlets and newspapers) published by, among others, the J.F. Lehmann Verlag (*Deutschlands Erneuerung*), the Thule Society (*Münchener Beobachter*), the *Deutschvölkischer Schutz-und Trutzbund*, and Dietrich Eckart (*Auf gut Deutsch*), all of which regurgitated in various forms the basic *topoi* of German *völkisch* and anti-semitic thought. Hitler seems to have been particularly impressed by Gottfried Feder's linking of antisemitism with his economic theory of the need 'to break the slavery of interest' and his distinction between 'productive' and 'parasitic' capital. Hitler heard Feder lecture in his Munich University indoctrination course.
- 19 A good example of Hitler's message is his speech of 19 November 1920 in the Hofbräuhaus in Munich entitled 'The Worker in the Germany of the Future'; see E. Jäckel and A. Kuhn, eds., *Hitler: Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1980), pp. 259–64.
- 20 On the 'Hitler Myth', see above all I. Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 21 See D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
- 22 See J.C.G. Röhl, ed., *From Bismarck to Hitler: The Problem of Continuity in German History* (London: Longman, 1970). There is also a good bibliographical discussion of the continuity question in Schreiber, *Hitler*, pp. 223ff. The classic application of the 'Sonderweg' perspective to modern German history is H.-U. Wehler, *The German Empire 1871–1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1985). See also J. Kocka, 'Ursachen des Nationalsozialismus', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte: Beilage zur Wochenzeitung das Parlament* (B 25/80. 21 June 1980), pp. 3–15.
- 23 See, for example, R.D.O. Butler, *Roots of National Socialism 1783–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); W.M. McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler: The History of*

- Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy* (London: Harrap, 1946); E. Vermeil, *L'Allemagne contemporaine sociale, politique, culturelle, Vol. 2: La République de Weimar et le Troisième Reich. 1918–1950* (Paris: Aubier, 1953).
- 24 A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945), pp. 9, 14–16.
 - 25 W.L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), pp. 90ff.
 - 26 See F. Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967); idem, *War of Illusions 1911–1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975); idem, 'Zum Problem der Kontinuität in der deutschen Geschichte von Bismarck zu Hitler', in idem, *Der erste Weltkrieg und das deutsche Geschichtsbild: Beiträge zur Bewältigung eines historischen Tabus* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1977). See also A. Hillgruber, *Deutschlands Rolle in der Vorgeschichte der beiden Weltkriege*, 2nd edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979). For a discussion of the 'Fischer controversy', see J.A. Moses, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography* (London: George Prior, 1975). See more recently W.D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
 - 27 See R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).
 - 28 See S. Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); B. Fairbairn, *Democracy in the Undemocratic State: The German Reichstag Elections of 1898 and 1903* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); J. Sperber, *The Kaiser's Voters: Electors and Elections in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
 - 29 See M. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
 - 30 The most powerful critique was mounted by Blackbourn and Eley in *The Peculiarities of German History*. See also Thomas Nipperdey, '1933 und die Kontinuität der deutschen Geschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 227 (1978), 86–111, translated in *Aspects of the Third Reich*, ed. H.W. Koch (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 489–508.
 - 31 See Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People*.
 - 32 See Stern, *Hitler*, passim, and K. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik: Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagsanstalt, 1962); G.L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); F. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965); J. Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich: Völkish Utopias and National Socialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); and, most recently, U. Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache, Rasse, Religion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001).
 - 33 According to the historian Friedrich Meinecke, 'Specifically German... was the frankness and nakedness of the German power state and Machiavellism, its hard and deliberate formation as a principle of conduct and the pleasure taken in its reckless consequences'; F. Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 14–15.
 - 34 See Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'*, pp. 13ff.
 - 35 See P. Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
 - 36 See R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993).
 - 37 See E. Voegelin, *Die politischen Religionen* (Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer, 1938), new edition edited by P.J. Opitz (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996); R. Aron, 'Les religions

seculaires', in *Une histoire du XXe siècle: Anthologie* (Paris: Plon, 1996), pp. 139–222. For recent research on political religions, see H. Maier, ed., *Totalitarismus und politische Religionen*, Vol. 1 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996); H. Maier and M. Schäfer, eds., *Politische Religionen*, Vol. 2 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997); H. Maier, ed., *Wege in die Gewalt: Die modernen politischen Religionen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000); H. Maier, “Totalitarismus” and “politische Religionen”, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 43 (1995), 387–405. There is an extensive literature examining pseudo-religious aspects of Nazi practice and ritual. M. Burleigh's recent major study of Nazism, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London: Macmillan, 2000) employs the concept. For a brief discussion of it, see pp. 3ff.

- 38 For Nazism in Munich and Bavaria, see H.J. Gordon Jr, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); H. Wilhelm, *Dichter, Denker, Fremder: Rechtsradikalismus in München von der Jahrhundertwende bis 1921* (Berlin: Transit, 1989); D.C. Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).
- 39 A. Tyrell, *Führer befiehl... Selbstzeugnisse aus der 'Kampfzeit' der NSDAP* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1969) and W. Horn, *Führerideologie und Parteiorganisation in der NSDAP (1919–1933)* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972). See also J. Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967) and D. Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party Vol. 1: 1919–1933* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969).
- 40 The classic work remains K.D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie* (Stuttgart: Ring Verlag, 1955). The most outstanding recent studies are G. Schulz, *Zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur: Verfassungspolitik und Reichsreform in der Weimarer Republik. Vol. 3: Von Brüning zu Hitler. Der Wandel des politischen Systems in Deutschland* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992); H.A. Winkler, *Weimar 1918–1933: Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1993); H. Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
- 41 J. Falter, *Hitlers Wähler* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1991).
- 42 On this period see, in addition to those works mentioned in note 40 above, H.A. Winkler, ed., *Die deutsche Staatskrise 1930–1933: Handlungsspielräume und Alternativen* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992).
- 43 H.A. Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power: January 1933* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).
- 44 Among the most useful general works on the Third Reich are K.D. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (London: Penguin Books, 1973); M. Broszat, *The Hitler State: the Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure* (London: Longman, 1981); K. Hildebrand, *The Third Reich* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984); H.-U. Thamer, *Verführung und Gewalt: Deutschland 1933–1945* (Berlin: Siedler, 1986); N. Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State 1933–1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); L. Herbst, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996); Burleigh, *The Third Reich*; I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 4th edition (London: Edward Arnold, 2001).
- 45 The best survey is Schreiber, *Hitler: Interpretationen 1923–1983*. A more recent and perceptive analysis is Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*. See also the valuable assessment by Kershaw in *The Nazi Dictatorship*, chapters 2–4.
- 46 See D. Eichholtz and K. Gossweiler, eds., *Faschismusforschung: Positionen, Probleme, Polemik* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1980), pp. 144, 141.
- 47 On Thalheimer, Bauer and ‘Bonapartism’, see G. Botz, ‘Austro-Marxist interpretations of Fascism’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11, 4 (1976), 131–47.

- 48 E. Fraenkel, *The Dual State: A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941) and F. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1942).
- 49 Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 383.
- 50 See Maier, “Totalitarismus”, 391ff.
- 51 Neumann, *Behemoth*, pp. 327–8.
- 52 Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*.
- 53 K.D. Bracher, W. Sauer and G. Schulz, *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung. Studien zur Errichtung des totalitären Herrschaftssystems in Deutschland 1933/34* (Cologne and Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1960).
- 54 H. Buchheim, ‘Die SS – Das Herrschaftsinstrument’, in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, vol.1, eds. H. Buchheim, M. Broszat and H.-A. Jacobsen (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuchverlag, 1979).
- 55 K.D. Bracher, *Die Deutsche Diktatur: Entstehung, Struktur, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), translated as *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).
- 56 See above all C.J. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).
- 57 Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 426.
- 58 E. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Munich: Piper, 1963), translated as *Three Faces of Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965).
- 59 See W. Wippermann, *Faschismustheorien: Zum Stand der gegenwärtigen Diskussion*, 2nd edition (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975); R. Saage, *Faschismustheorien: Eine Einführung* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1976).
- 60 See T. Mason, *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft: Dokumente und Materialien zur deutschen Arbeiterpolitik 1936–1939* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1975) and idem, *Social Policy in the Third Reich* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993).
- 61 See H.A. Winkler, ‘Die “neue Linke” und der Faschismus: Zur Kritik neomarxistischer Theorien über den Nationalsozialismus’, in idem, *Revolution, Staat, Faschismus: Zur Revision des Historischen Materialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 65–117.
- 62 J. Fest, *Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen Verlag, 1973), translated with the same title and published in London in 1974 by Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- 63 Ibid., p. 3.
- 64 See Binion, *Hitler*; W.C. Langer, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1973); R.G.L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God Adolf Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
- 65 The first example was H. Mommsen, *Beamtentum im Dritten Reich: Mit ausgewählten Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Beamtenpolitik* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1966). Others are P. Diehl-Thiele, *Partei und Staat im Dritten Reich: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von NSDAP und allgemeiner innerer Staatsverwaltung* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1969); P. Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter: Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1969); R. Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner: Zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970). See also E.N. Peterson, *The Limits of Hitler's Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
- 66 Broszat, *The Hitler State*.
- 67 The terms ‘intentionalist’ and ‘structuralist/functionalist’ were defined by Tim Mason in his essay ‘Intention and Explanation: A Current Controversy about the

Interpretation of National Socialism', in *Der 'Führerstaat': Mythos und Realität. Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches*, ed. G. Hirschfeld and L. Kettenacker (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), pp. 23–42. This volume contains the proceedings of a symposium held in May 1979 and attended by major protagonists in the debate. It includes key texts from each side of the argument: H. Mommsen, 'Hitlers Stellung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem', pp. 43–72, translated as 'Hitler's Position in the Nazi System', in H. Mommsen, *From Weimar to Auschwitz* (London: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 163–88; and K. Hildebrand, 'Monokratie oder Polykratie? Hitlers Herrschaft und das Dritte Reich', pp. 73–97. Other important texts include: Broszat, *The Hitler State*, idem, 'Soziale Motivation und Führerbindung des Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 18 (1970), 407ff; K. Hildebrand, *The Third Reich* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984). For two good discussions of the debate, see Schreiber, *Interpretationen*, pp. 284ff, and Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, pp. 59–79.

- 68 For the 'polycratic' thesis, see P. Hüttenberger, 'Nationalsozialistische Polykratie', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 2 (1976), 417–42.
- 69 W. Petwaidic, *Die autoritäre Anarchie: Streiflichter des deutschen Zusammenbruchs* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1946).
- 70 Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 269.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Broszat, *The Hitler State*, p. 358.
- 73 See H. Mommsen, 'Nationalsozialismus', in *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft: Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, vol. 4 (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1971), col. 702.
- 74 Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936*, pp. xxvifff.
- 75 See I. Kershaw, "Working towards the Führer": Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship', *Contemporary European History*, 2, 2 (1993), 103–18.
- 76 See Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'*.
- 77 Fraenkel, *The Dual State*, pp. 206ff.
- 78 Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 381.
- 79 Ibid., p. 276.
- 80 H. Rauschning, *Revolution of Nihilism: Warning to the West* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1939), p. 28.
- 81 Ibid., p. 31.
- 82 Ibid., p. 19.
- 83 Ibid., p. 15.
- 84 Ibid., p. 32.
- 85 In fact, Rauschning was subsequently to revise this view and take Hitler's ideology more seriously. See Schreiber, *Hitler Interpretationen*, pp. 144–8.
- 86 See A. Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (London: Odhams Press, 1952), p. 804. Bullock later completely revised his views in the revised edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962). See pp. 397ff. See also A. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin. Parallel Lives* (London: HarperCollins, 1991).
- 87 Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, pp. 425–6.
- 88 K.D. Bracher, 'The Role of Hitler: Perspectives of Interpretation', in *Fascism. A Reader's Guide*, ed. W. Laqueur (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 201.
- 89 For the following, see Mommsen, 'Nationalsozialismus'; idem, *Adolf Hitler als 'Führer' der Nation* (Tübingen: Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien an der Universität Tübingen, 1984), and Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation'.
- 90 Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation', p. 408.
- 91 H. Mommsen, 'Kumulative Radikalisierung und Selbstzersetzung des Regimes', in *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon*, vol. 16 (Mannheim, 1976) and idem, 'Cumulative

- Radicalisation and Progressive Self-Destruction as Structural Determinants of the Nazi Dictatorship', in *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. I. Kershaw and M. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 75–87.
- 92 See Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation', pp. 407ff.
- 93 H. Trevor-Roper, 'The Mind of Adolf Hitler', in *Hitler's Table Talk: Hitler's Conversations Recorded by Martin Bormann* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953), pp. viiiif. However, it was not until 1959, when Trevor-Roper expressed these views in a lecture to an international conference that they received scholarly attention through the published version entitled 'Hitler's War Aims'. Significantly, once more the focus was on Hitler's imperialism; indeed, this time there was no mention of the Jews. See H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Hitlers Kriegsziele', *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), 121–33, translated in *Aspects*, ed. Koch, pp. 235–50.
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- 96 See the discussion in G. Stoakes, *Hitler and the Quest for World Dominion: Nazi Ideology and Foreign Policy in the 1920s* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985), pp. 234–6; M. Hauner, 'Did Hitler want a World Dominion?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 15–32; J. Aigner, 'Hitler's Ultimate Aims – a Programme of World Dominion?', in *Aspects*, ed. Koch, pp. 285ff.
- 97 See K. Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich: NSDAP und Kolonialfrage 1919–1945* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1969); idem, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1973); A. Kuhn, *Hitlers aussenpolitischen Programm: Entstehung und Entwicklung 1919–1939* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970); N. Rich, *Hitler's War Aims: Ideology, the Nazi State and the Course of Expansion* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973); J. Thies, *Architekt der Weltherrschaft: Die 'Endziele' Hitlers* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1979). Subsequently, Zitelmann in *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs*, has argued that Hitler had a coherent programme for domestic policy as well, namely a social revolution.
- 98 Stoakes, *Hitler*, p. 239.
- 99 The only significant attempts to put forward a structuralist/functionalist analysis of Nazi foreign policy were: a) Tim Mason's explanation of the outbreak of war partly in terms of domestic pressures created by contradictions within the regime. See Mason, *Sozialpolitik*, pp. 208ff., and b) Wolfgang Schieder's analysis of Germany's intervention in the Spanish Civil War, in 'Spanischer Bürgerkrieg und Vierjahresplan. Zur Struktur nationalsozialistischer Außenpolitik', in *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik*, ed. W. Michalka (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), pp. 325–59. However, Mason's thesis has been substantially refuted, notably by Richard Overy in 'Germany, "Domestic Crisis" and War in 1939', *Past and Present*, 116 (1987), 138–68.
- 100 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).
- 101 Ibid., pp. 1ff.
- 102 Ibid., pp. 18ff.
- 103 Ibid., pp. 31ff.
- 104 K. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews 1933–39* (London: André Deutsch, 1972).
- 105 For the following, see Schleunes, *Twisted Road*, pp. 258ff.
- 106 U.D. Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972), p. 357.

- 107 D. Irving, *Hitler's War* (London: Viking Press, 1977). Irving has since – following his failed libel case against Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books – been shown to be a Holocaust denier and Nazi sympathizer. See The Hon. Mr Justice Gray, *The Irving Judgment: Mr. David Irving v. Penguin Books and Professor Deborah Lipstadt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000); D.D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial: History, Justice and the David Irving Case* (London: Granta, 2001); R.J. Evans, *Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust and the David Irving Trial* (London: Verso, 2002).
- 108 See M. Broszat, 'Hitler and the Genesis of the Final Solution: An Assessment of David Irving's Theses', in *Aspects*, ed. Koch, pp. 390–429.
- 109 See H. Mommsen, 'The Realization of the Unthinkable: The "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" in the Third Reich', in Mommsen, *From Weimar to Auschwitz*, pp. 224–53.
- 110 G. Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985).
- 111 Ibid., p. 2.
- 112 Among the most important works to focus on the question of a Hitler decision are D. Bankier, 'Hitler and the Policy-making Process on the Jewish Question', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (1988), 1–20; R. Breitling, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); C.R. Browning, 'From "Ethnic Cleansing" to Genocide to the "Final Solution": The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, 1939–1941', and 'Nazi Policy: Decisions for the Final Solution', in Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–57; P. Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews. The Genesis of the Holocaust* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989); C. Gerlach, 'The Wansee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All German Jews', *Journal of Modern History*, 70 (1998), 758–812.
- 113 Among the most important works are G. Aly, *'Final Solution': Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1999); C. Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998); idem, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941–1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); U. Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000); D. Pohl, *Von der 'Judenpolitik' zum Judenmord: Der Distrikt Lublin des Generalgouvernements 1939–1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993); idem, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997); T. Sandkühler, *'Endlösung' in Galizien: Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996).
- 114 The best recent synthesis of work on the Nazi persecution of the Jews is P. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung: Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1998). See also the essays by Browning and Pohl in this volume.
- 115 See in particular M. Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten: Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002), following on from the biography of Werner Best, a department head of the Security Police under Heydrich; U. Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903–1989* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996).
- 116 For a recent detailed analysis of Hitler's role in the Holocaust, see P. Longerich, *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001).

3

Expropriation and Expulsion

Frank Bajohr

The destruction of the economic existence of the Jews and the step-by-step expropriation of their assets stand as one of the largest transfers of wealth in recent European history, comparable in scope to the gradual elimination of private property in communist eastern Europe after 1945. None the less, over many years, expropriation and expulsion sparked little interest among historians; even though inextricably intertwined with the mass murder, it remained eclipsed by its thematic dominance. Raul Hilberg, the Nestor of Holocaust research, explicitly stressed the nexus between economic expropriation and destruction. In his monumental work *The Destruction of the European Jews*, he conceived definition, expropriation, concentration and annihilation as integral components of a complex 'destruction process'.¹

This notwithstanding, the expropriation was long viewed as an insignificant secondary by-product of the Holocaust. Yehuda Bauer, with Hilberg probably the most eminent in the ranks of Holocaust scholars, was recently emphatic in stressing this consensus in the older research literature. He placed expropriation under the rubric of 'pragmatic considerations', which in contrast with 'abstract ideological motivations' were of comparatively minor importance as a reason for the Holocaust: 'Yes, a tremendous effort was exerted to rob the Jews of their property or to take it after they were murdered. But no serious historian has ever claimed that robbery was the basic reason for the murder. Robbery was the outcome of the Holocaust, not its cause.'²

We can certainly agree with this assessment in so far as the Holocaust was not motivated *primarily* by material aims. Nevertheless, in Germany and numerous other European countries, an economic antisemitism existed which helped provide a certain soil for the ideological underpinnings of the Holocaust. Can Bauer's claim be maintained in its apodictic formulation and in the light of the total body of recent research? Though not the 'basic reason', were material motives none the less '*a reason*' among others, especially since expropriation and expulsion were generally not the product of the Holocaust but its

antecedent?³ And if so, what role did these dimensions play in the implementation of the Holocaust and the motivation of the perpetrators? The present chapter explores these questions, looking initially at the most important lines of development in research.

Scholarly investigation of expropriation and expulsion began in the 1960s with the pioneering study by the German historian Helmut Genschel on the 'expulsion of the Jews from the economy in the Third Reich'.⁴ Genschel's work made clear that the expulsion and expropriation of the Jews was not sudden but gradual, a creeping process that went through several phases, radicalizing in spurts, until it culminated in November 1938 in the 'legal exclusion' of the Jews from economic life. Genschel argued that until that critical juncture, the process was not always consistent in its forward movement, but was marked by contradictions, retarding elements and phases of tactical reserve. Genschel was one of the first historians to provide a concise overview of the huge losses of property and its massive transfer associated with the 'Aryanization' and confiscation of Jewish wealth. Yet the weaknesses of his presentation were quite evident. Thus, his description concentrated primarily on the activities of the government and central agencies, privileging a perspective 'from above'; this vantage was inadequate for encompassing the role of the large number of regional and local institutions involved and the array of participants, both institutional and individual. His canvas provided no indication whatsoever of the international dimensions assumed by robbery, plunder and 'Aryanization' after 1938–39. Moreover, almost totally excluded from analysis were the actual experiences of the expropriated Jews themselves.

By contrast, in his 1987 study published in English translation in 1989, the Israeli historian Avraham Barkai highlighted the perspective of the Jewish victims.⁵ Barkai was the first historian to describe the collective measures of relief and defensive strategies employed by Jews in Germany in efforts to resist their gradual exclusion. In addition, in contrast with Genschel, Barkai stressed the continuity and intentionality of economic exclusion, which had reached an advanced stage by the autumn of 1937. Moreover, with concepts such as 'the competition in personal enrichment', Barkai indicated that those involved in expropriation and expulsion were not limited solely to Nazi institutions, but extended to a host of beneficiaries in German society, though he did not highlight that aspect in his presentation. On the whole, then, the lack of interest among historians in the 'Aryanization' and confiscation of Jewish assets and property led to a dearth of serious work in the four decades after the war. Only two important monographs were published, themselves separated by a gap of almost twenty years.

All this was to change markedly in the 1990s as interest in questions of expropriation and expulsion surged, entering a veritable boom phase. For months on end, headlines in the media were dominated by topics such as the dormant,

nameless bank accounts of Holocaust victims in Switzerland, the gold pilfered by the Nazis throughout Europe or compensation for forced labourers in Germany and Austria.⁶ The upsurge in interest in these topics after the end of the Cold War was a telling expression of the subtle ‘affinity between property and memory’, as the German-Israeli historian Dan Diner put it.⁷ Unresolved questions of restitution, issues in which historians and the public had long shown no interest whatsoever, now began to drive a new global Holocaust culture of remembrance. This discourse paid greater attention to individual suffering, and thus to the personal loss of possessions and assets, manifesting more generally a growing transnational consensus in values regarding human rights and genocide.⁸

Studies published over the last decade have significantly expanded our knowledge on expropriation and expulsion. But this work has also raised new questions, pointing up lacunae and deficiencies which future research must explore. The advances and new insights can be summarized in four points.

1. The 1990s saw the publication of numerous regional and local studies in Germany dealing with expropriation and expulsion at new levels of concrete depth and detail.⁹ It became clear from this work that especially when it came to the ‘Aryanization’ of Jewish firms, the initiatives of local functionaries often carried greater weight than central directives handed down from Berlin. The regional NSDAP *Gau* Economic Advisors had a central hand in this process, along with local mayors, heads of administrative districts (*Landräte*) and municipal administrations. Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the Sectorial Groups in industry (the so-called *Fachgruppen der Wirtschaft*) also played a role. Legally binding procedural rules and regulations for the transfer of property were not issued until 1938, and even these accorded regional institutions important powers in implementing ‘Aryanization’.

Yet it was not only the number and influence of the regional institutions involved that proved far greater than previously assumed; the number of beneficiaries and profiteers also dwarfed earlier estimates. Thus, in Hamburg alone, more than 100,000 individuals acquired objects formerly in Jewish possession, hundreds of firms changed hands and thousands of pieces of real estate came under new ownership, along with the furnishings of 30,000 Jewish households. A large proportion of these items of furniture and household goods were pilfered from their owners throughout the whole of occupied Europe.

In contrast with widely held views, it was principally small business proprietors and the owners of small and medium-sized firms who profited from ‘Aryanization’, while the larger enterprises tended initially to keep their distance, holding a more conservative view of such transactions.¹⁰ As a rule, Jewish property, especially firms and real estate, was acquired at a price far below market value, even when the ‘purchasers’ had sufficient options for action that would have allowed them to provide the Jewish owner with full recompense.

Thus, the 'Aryanization' and confiscation of Jewish property were not only political but were also social processes, in which large sections of German society participated.¹¹ It became evident that expropriation of Jewish property had also developed such a powerful dynamism precisely because it provided numerous profiteers with a unique opportunity to combine and coordinate the ideological theses of the regime with their personal material interests. This yoking had a radicalizing impact on the persecution of the Jews: 'Aryanization' and the confiscation of property and wealth gave rise to an ever-growing number of beneficiaries with a pressing need to block any future liability claim for compensation by the former Jewish owners. In this way, they were bound ever more tightly in their allegiance to the National Socialist system. This binding effect, tethered to protecting personal material interests, was in keeping with the conscious design of the National Socialists pursued in Germany and in the annexed and conquered territories after 1938–39 as well. Thus, in his study on collaboration in Belorussia and the Ukraine, the British-American historian Martin Dean has pointed out that prospects for material gain encouraged collaboration with the German occupiers, motivating many local perpetrators in massacres and pogroms.¹²

2. In the analysis of expropriation and expulsion, the focus shifted to the foreground an array of institutions and actors barely in keeping with the previous image of the classic Nazi perpetrator. That was especially true when it came to finance officials and the finance bureaucracy, centrally involved from 1933 in the systematic organization of the financial plunder of the Jews.¹³ The principal instruments utilized were special levies and taxes imposed on the Jews and Jewish communities in Germany and later throughout occupied Europe. By dint of these levies, the finance bureaucracy became a key factor, alongside the Security Police and Security Service (SD), in Jewish expropriation and the 'utilization' (*Verwertung*) of the property of deported and murdered Jews.¹⁴ The German historian Kurt Schilde has correctly characterized this finance officialdom as a veritable 'bureaucracy of death'.¹⁵ Even before 1938–39, it had achieved a position of unlimited power over the Jews by means of a steady tightening of the screw in criminal legislation governing foreign currency. In so doing, the officials distanced themselves from the normative bases of bureaucratic procedure through a wilful and arbitrary extortive approach. The example of the finance bureaucracy, a classic institution of the 'normative state', made clear that it is impossible to account fully for the radicalization of Jewish persecution as an overpowering of the 'normative state' by the institutions of the 'prerogative state', such as the Security Police and the SS. Such an explanation, declaring this to have been a central driving force behind anti-Jewish policy,¹⁶ had been advanced by a number of authors in the 'functionalist' school, in line with Ernst Fraenkel's model of the National Socialist 'dual

state'.¹⁷ Instead, the instance of the extortive finance bureaucracy pointed to a radicalization of the 'normative state' itself: it increasingly distanced itself from and abandoned normative principles in the persecution of the Jews, even perceiving this as a 'liberation' from 'onerous' restrictions under the rule of law.

Along with a revamped focus on the finance bureaucracy, historians and the public developed a special new interest in the banks and insurance companies as institutions directly implicated in expropriation and expulsion. For a long time, banks and insurance firms had kept their archives tightly shut to historians. But as a result of the international discussion on stolen gold and dormant accounts and insurance policies, they were forced to accept a radical change in approach, granting historians (if initially only a select few) access to company files. As a whole, the findings of the various studies proved ambivalent.¹⁸ Yet banks and insurance companies were heavily implicated in the plunder and expropriation of the Jews in Germany and occupied Europe, and in the process had seriously discredited themselves morally. In 'Aryanization' transactions, the banks had functioned as brokers and intermediaries between the Jewish owner and 'Aryan' buyer, pocketing handsome commissions for their services; they sounded out the political terrain, applying their inside knowledge in the sector and bringing their networks of business relations to bear. In the confiscation of Jewish assets, banks and insurance firms had few reservations in working hand in glove with the institutions of the Nazi state, even when this cooperation acted against their own economic interests, because as a result banks and insurance companies lost Jewish clients and their money after Jewish assets were confiscated.

In contrast with previous assumptions, direct material gain resulting from Jewish persecution was not a salient factor, or at least not the sole crucial factor behind such cooperation. Nor was such material gain as huge as some authors have asserted.¹⁹ Far more influential here were political-strategic considerations: in a highly politicized economic landscape such as that of Nazi Germany, banks and insurance firms entered the fray, vying for political influence. The intention was to ensure for one's own firm the best possible conditions for profit and competition in the future by toeing the political line and conforming to an expansionist and seemingly successful regime. Of course, this motive did not reduce in any way the moral and ethical costs of the firm's policies; it even multiplied them.

3. Studies in the 1990s on expropriation and expulsion have provided a new perspective on the comprehensive picture of Nazi policies of plunder, extending to all conceivable spheres and objects. Even woollen stockings and cooking pots formerly owned by Jews were pilfered by staff working for the Rosenberg Task Force (*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, ERR*)²⁰ throughout occupied Europe, sent back to Germany and distributed there to the population, sold or

auctioned off.²¹ The ERR was simultaneously centrally involved in the plunder of art and cultural artefacts, a policy vigorously pursued by the Nazis and which extended to both private Jewish collections and artworks in state collections. The most recent research on the theft of art by the National Socialists has made clear that few cultural objects escaped the clutches of the confiscation policies of the National Socialists, who expropriated and pilfered millions of paintings, sculptures, carpets, books, manuscripts and musical instruments.²²

In this process, recent inquiry has shown that the actors were not motivated solely by crude greed. Thus, the American historian Jonathan Petropoulos has convincingly demonstrated the pivotal role works of art played in symbolic self-representation, especially when it came to leading National Socialists. With art as an accessory and the ambience it generated, these individuals sought to reproduce the lifestyle of the nobility, documenting their claim symbolically as a new elite while also accentuating their high-ranking status within the Nazi hierarchy. In addition, such plunder was inseparably linked with ideological tenets. Thus, the art thieves believed they had embarked on a crusade to eliminate 'Jewish culture', utilizing their loot if need be for purposes of 'research and education'. Such studies had a common aim: to demonstrate the purported 'higher quality' of 'German' or 'Germanic' art.

4. In the 1990s, commissions of historians were set up in many countries to investigate the plunder of Jewish property.²³ Still in its infancy is a comparative body of research that points beyond the perimeters of respective national analyses, making a key contribution to Holocaust studies. An important first step is the work by the French historian Jean-Marc Dreyfus, a comparative study of the plunder of Jewish property in France, Belgium and the Netherlands.²⁴ It has been demonstrated that pilfering from the Jews corresponded with the intensity of their persecution, the structures of German occupational rule in those countries and the status the German occupiers conferred on the country. Thus, the plundering of the Jews in the Netherlands, where the Nazis' policy was the 'Germanizing' of the country over the longer term, was driven forward in a far more systematic and intensive way than in Belgium or France, where there was an autonomous regime of collaboration, though that local regime participated proactively and on its own initiative, especially in 'Aryanization'. Using the example of the Netherlands, the Dutch historian Gerard Aalders has shown that the theft of Jewish property cannot be separated from other aspects of occupation policy as a whole, but should be seen as a more extensive policy of plunder, which also targeted the non-Jewish population.²⁵

But how was Jewish expropriation linked in concrete terms to the economic and financial needs of German occupation? The German historians Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach have recently developed the thesis, proceeding from the example of Hungary, that the seizure of Jewish property indirectly helped

finance the German occupation, while also contributing to the material privileges enjoyed by the German population during the war.²⁶ On the one hand, the German occupiers levied high ‘occupation costs’ on the occupied countries, as a rule 50 percent of their last peacetime budget. On the other, the proceeds from the sale of Jewish property remained as a rule in the occupied countries, thus constituting a quasi-compensation for the exorbitant sums which these countries were forced to pay to the German Reich.²⁷ This thesis for the first time forges a conclusive link between the expropriation of Jewish property and the total framework of finances in Nazi occupational rule. Of course, this thesis should not be overemphasized, because the value of Jewish property and assets in the countries of occupied Europe did not even begin to cover the total ‘costs’ of German occupation.

Historians are by no means of one mind when it comes to the form and function of expropriation and expulsion. Some emphasize the large numbers of participants and beneficiaries, stressing the extent of self-enrichment and corruption; they sketch the expropriation as a process characterized to a significant degree by violent anarchistic elements as well.²⁸ Others stress the systematic and bureaucratic character of the expropriation, regarding the German state as the principal beneficiary. Undoubtedly, in some cases a lack of conceptual clarity contributes to these differing assessments. Thus, for example, the concept of ‘Aryanization’ is used in both its narrow and broad sense, to signify the transfer of property to an ‘Aryan’ and as a synonym for the economic and financial expropriation of the Jews *in toto*. The National Socialists themselves often used the same concept for different actions of expropriation. To preserve conceptual clarity, I suggest that ‘Aryanization’ be used primarily to signify the transfer of property, a process involving numerous beneficiaries and participants. This should be distinguished analytically from the confiscation of property and assets carried out by the state, which had a far more pronounced bureaucratic-systematic character.

In their essence, however, differing assessments by historians regarding the form and function of expropriation derive from the actual ambivalence and simultaneity of the most diverse methods for robbing and plunder. This was reflected in a striking way in the events that took place in Vienna after the *Anschluss* of 1938.²⁹ On the one hand, there was uncontrolled plundering of Jewish property and possessions during the pogrom-like excesses, since some 25,000 self-appointed ‘commissars’ had occupied Jewish firms, proceeding to indulge and satisfy their material desires without restraint after the Jewish owners had been removed. On the other, it was these very events which helped provide the impetus for a greater degree of bureaucratic-systematic influence on the part of the state, impacting in turn in a variety of ways on the situation in the *‘Altreich’* and the occupied territories. Enrichment and unfettered corruption

on one side and bureaucratic confiscations by the state on the other were thus not opposites, but rather two sides of the same coin of plunder.

A second controversy regarding expropriation revolves around the central concepts of 'ideology' and '*realpolitik*'. Was the Holocaust primarily ideological in its motivation, as the Bauer quotation cited earlier contends, so that material aspects such as expropriation can be seen as overshadowed by ideological motives and thus relegated to secondary importance? Or do the enormous effort and energy with which the perpetrators engaged in expropriation and the huge amounts they looted prove precisely the opposite: the substantial importance of motives rooted in '*realpolitik*', as Götz Aly never tires of contending? Under closer scrutiny, however, the 'ideology' versus '*realpolitik*' controversy turns out to be a bogus binarism, in itself highly problematic since both sides implicitly separate expropriation and ideology. In this perspective, material aspects are isolated as 'rational' or 'pragmatic', elements which ostensibly had nothing to do with Nazi ideology. Yet such an approach ignores the fact that expropriation was solidly anchored in a nexus of ideological reasoning and rationale: economic antisemitism had long been an integral component of antisemitic ideology. From the Nazi perspective, Jewish property was not personal property but 'property stolen from the people' (*geraubtes Volksvermögen*) and substantial numbers of Nazi perpetrators did not view their participation in expropriation as acts of robbery or plunder, but rather as appropriate 'compensation' and material redress for their supposed sufferings in the 'period of struggle' (*Kampfzeit*) before 1933. Within this ideological construction oozing self-pity, the victims were not the Jews but the National Socialists, who defined the expropriation of Jews as a justified compensation for their earlier 'sacrifices' on behalf of the advancement of National Socialism.³⁰ Without this internalized ideological content, the fervour and lack of scruples with which many National Socialist perpetrators engaged in Jewish expropriation would be hard to explain.

The extent to which expropriation was necessarily beholden to an ideological context is significantly reflected in the circumstance that it was initially diametrically opposed to the basic aim: namely, the emigration and expulsion of the Jews from Germany and Europe. It was, after all, neither 'rational' nor 'pragmatic' to press Jews to emigrate while simultaneously stripping them of any motivation to do so by implementing a rigorous financial expropriation at the very time they were opting to emigrate. This fundamental contradiction was not 'resolved' until 1938–39 by open, terroristic violence after the regime switched to a policy combining forced emigration with plunder by force.

On the whole, then, the 1990s have seen the publication of numerous studies on expropriation and expulsion in which many of these events have been investigated in a scholarly fashion for the first time. None the less, gaps in research and deficiencies remain which must be filled by future projects,

though these should not centre on detailing ever new incidents of plunder. Instead, what we urgently need are new research projects that seek to present a comparative analysis and classification of these phenomena. Many studies to date have been characterized by the fact that they serve primarily to clarify practical questions of restitution in the present, in the process sometimes shortchanging key guiding questions in historical inquiry. In conclusion, I will emphasize two desiderata that I think crucial for future inquiry:

1. Research on expropriation and expulsion is focused on the perpetrators and oriented to the documentary sources they have produced. By contrast, the Jews affected shrink to a residual statistical figure whose perspective is reduced to economic and financial loss. We know only very little about the individual strategies for self-assertion by Jews who opposed these extortive measures, and know even less about their own efforts, by no means always in vain, to salvage at least a portion of their possessions and assets (for example, by bribery, the smuggling of capital, etc.).

To date, we have only the barest beginnings of a history of expropriation from the standpoint of the Jews.³¹ Such a history cannot be reduced to material aspects alone. After all, there were substantial psychosocial costs and diverse experiences of non-material loss bound up with the loss of property by Jewish owners. The German social psychologist Harald Welzer has recently pointed out that material goods constitute an important component in the construction of identity.³² Objects imbued with minor material value can assume a huge importance when they become the focus of orientation for memories, for example the few remaining mementos that remind someone of murdered relatives. Moreover, who can quantify the psychosocial burden imposed on an entrepreneur compelled to sell a family business that has been handed down over many generations, and forced to regard himself in the gallery of successful ancestors as a failure? Ultimately, after all, the true worth of a firm does not lie solely in its economic value. For this reason, future studies should seek to apply the insights and analytical models of the cultural sciences in the historiography of the Holocaust. In his cultural-sociological analyses of power, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out that economic capital frequently assists in the acquisition of social and symbolic capital: the 'capital' of special social relations, respect and status, recognition.³³ This was all the more true in the case of a minority that was only semi-integrated in many European societies. Thus, for many Jews, successful economic and professional activity was bound up with the desire for recognition, status and social integration. Not only did the expropriation destroy all hopes of integration, it also shattered an individual's sense of self-esteem and self-definition. These were put into serious question by the racial hierarchies of National Socialism and expropriation. Expropriation also ravaged 'cultural capital' in Bourdieu's sense, such as professional qualifications

and education. It remains among the most urgent desiderata for research to examine such questions, advancing towards an integrative history of expropriation, which does not ignore or shortchange the internal perspectives and subjectivity of the victims.

2. The demand for an integrative history of expropriation is also connected with the question of restitution after the collapse of the Third Reich. These two spheres have to date tended to remain analytically discrete,³⁴ with the analytical focus clearly on the event of expropriation. There are various reasons for more intensive inquiry into restitution and its integration within research: for one, the moral (though not historiographically relevant) aim of restoring to the survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants their plundered property and assets, as far as this is possible. After all, restitution after 1945 did not encompass all cases and objects, so that many libraries and museums still contain books and works of art which were not returned to their rightful owners or their descendants.

From the perspective of historiography, the analysis of restitution makes possible important conclusions regarding the antecedent process of expropriation. Thus, for example, the number of so-called 'persons liable to restitution of property' reflects the scope of social participation in 'Aryanization' and expropriation, and the state of consciousness of the 'Aryanizers' after 1945 allows us to draw various conclusions about their motives and attitudes before 1945. On a superordinate level, the history of restitution provides a decisive gauge for assessing how societies in post-war Europe have come to grips with the Holocaust and expropriation. There are substantial differences here between West and East: there, in 1945, with the elimination of the bourgeois system of property relations, the foundations were also discarded for a possible restitution, while anti-fascism as state doctrine smothered all possible discussion about social participation in and collective responsibility for the mass expropriation. This dimension becomes especially clear in eastern Germany, the territory of the former GDR, where restitution could not begin until after 1989. For Germany as a whole, an analysis of the practice of restitution would show the extent to which the German state and German society faced and accepted their central responsibility for the Holocaust and the ravages of expropriation. In Austria, the practice of restitution, still ongoing, and the readiness to deal in a comprehensive way with expropriation and restitution will shed light on whether this state has convincingly surmounted its existential lie: the subterfuge of having been the 'first victim' of National Socialism.³⁵ In France and other countries, historical inquiry on expropriation and restitution has sparked important discussions on complicity and collaboration.³⁶ The growing boom in the topic of restitution points to a readiness to face up to responsibility for the pre- and post-history of expropriation and 'Aryanization'

in their totality. At the same time, it points up a shared European consensus in values: namely, to view both the Holocaust *and* the measures of expropriation and loss of property associated with it as criminal and a basic violation of human rights – hopefully with positive consequences for the future.

Notes

- 1 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, revised edition, 3 vols (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), pp. 53ff.
- 2 Y. Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 47f.
- 3 For a critique of Bauer's position, see J. Petropoulos, 'The Nazi Kleptocracy: Reflections on Avarice and Genocide'. Paper presented to the 'Lessons and Legacies' Conference VII at Minneapolis, 1–4 November 2002.
- 4 H. Genschel, *Die Verdrängung der Juden aus der Wirtschaft im Dritten Reich* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1966).
- 5 A. Barkai, *Vom Boykott zur 'Entjudung': Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich 1933–1943* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987); *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews 1933–1945* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989).
- 6 On the political and diplomatic conflicts surrounding questions of property, see S.E. Eizenstat, *Imperfect Justice: Looted Assets, Slave Labor, and the Unfinished Business of World War II* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003).
- 7 D. Diner, 'Gedächtnis und Restitution. Über die Begründung einer europäischen Erinnerung', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (8 September 2001).
- 8 N. Sznaider and D. Levy, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).
- 9 Among the most important local studies are F. Bajohr, 'Aryanisation' in Hamburg: *The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of their Property in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), German edition: 'Arisierung' in Hamburg. *Die Verdrängung der jüdischen Unternehmer 1933–1945* (Hamburg: Christians, 1997); A. Bruns-Wüstefeld, *Lohnende Geschäfte. Die 'Entjudung' der Wirtschaft am Beispiel Göttingens* (Hannover: Fackelträger-Verlag, 1997); B. Händler-Lachmann and T. Werther, 'Vergessene Geschäfte – verlorene Geschichte': *Jüdisches Wirtschaftsleben in Marburg und seine Vernichtung im Nationalsozialismus* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1992).
- 10 P. Hayes, 'Big Business and "Aryanization" in Germany', *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, 3 (1994), 254–81.
- 11 F. Bajohr, 'Verfolgung aus gesellschaftsgeschichtlicher Perspektive: Die wirtschaftliche Existenzvernichtung der Juden und die deutsche Gesellschaft', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 4 (2000), 91–114.
- 12 M. Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine 1941–1944* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
- 13 A. Kenkmann and B.A. Rusinek, eds., *Verfolgung und Verwaltung. Die wirtschaftliche Ausplünderung der Juden und die westfälischen Finanzbehörden* (Münster: Oberfinanzdirektion Münster, 1999).
- 14 On the competing struggles between security police and finance bureaucracy, see M. Dean, 'Co-operation and Rivalry: Civil and Police Authorities and the Confiscation of Jewish Assets in the Reich and the Occupied Soviet Territories', in *Networks of Nazi*

- Persecution: Division of Labor in Implementing the Holocaust*, ed. G.D. Feldman and W. Seibel (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).
- 15 K. Schilde, *Bürokratie des Todes. Lebensgeschichten jüdischer Opfer des NS-Regimes im Spiegel von Finanzamtsakten* (Berlin: Metropol, 2002).
 - 16 For example, U.D. Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972).
 - 17 E. Fraenkel, *The Dual State: A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941).
 - 18 H. James, *The Deutsche Bank and the Nazi Economic War against the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); G.D. Feldman, *Allianz and the German Insurance Business 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. Steinberg, *The Deutsche Bank and its Gold Transactions during the Second World War* (Munich: Beck, 1999); J. Bähr, *Der Goldhandel der Dresdner Bank im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1999); P. Hayes, 'The Deutsche Bank and the Holocaust', in *Lessons and Legacies III: Memory, Memorialization and Denial*, ed. P. Hayes (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), pp. 71–98; B. Lorentz, 'Die Commerzbank und die "Arisierung" im Altreich. Ein Vergleich der Netzwerkstrukturen und Handlungsspielräume von Großbanken in der NS-Zeit', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 50 (2002), 237–68.
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 - 20 The organization named after Alfred Rosenberg, chief Nazi Party ideologue. The ERR was mainly engaged in the plundering of art and cultural objects.
 - 21 W. Dreßen, *Betrifft: 'Aktion 3': Deutsche verwerten jüdische Nachbarn* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1998).
 - 22 J. Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); H. Feliciano, *The Lost Museum: The Nazi Conspiracy to Steal the World's Greatest Works of Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); W. de Vries, *Sonderstab Musik: Music Confiscations by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg under the Nazi Occupation of Western Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); A. Heuss, *Kunst- und Kulturgutraub. Eine vergleichende Studie zur Besatzungspolitik der Nationalsozialisten in Frankreich und der Sowjetunion* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000).
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 - 25 G. Aalders, *Roof! De Ontvremping van Joods Bezit tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag: SDU Uitg., 1999), German edition: *Geraubt! Die Enteignung jüdischen Besitzes im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Cologne: Dittrich, 2000).

- 26 G. Aly and C. Gerlach, *Das letzte Kapitel: Realpolitik, Ideologie und der Mord an den ungarischen Juden 1944/45* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002). See also G. Aly, 'Enteignung. Was geschah mit den Besitztümern der ermordeten Juden Europas? Zur Ökonomie der Nazis', *Die Zeit* (14 November 2002).
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- 28 On Holocaust and corruption, see F. Bajohr, *Parvenüs und Profiteure: Korruption in der NS-Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2001); idem, 'The Holocaust and Political Corruption', in *Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1, ed. J.K. Roth and E. Maxwell (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 613–29.
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- 30 F. Bajohr, 'Cliques, Organized Self-Pity and Political Integration: The Nazi Movement and the Property of the Jews'. Paper presented to the 'Lessons and Legacies' Conference VII at Minneapolis, 1–4 November 2002.
- 31 F. Bajohr, 'No "Volksgenossen": Jewish Entrepreneurs in the Third Reich', in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, ed. R. Gellately and N. Stoltzfus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 45–65.
- 32 H. Welzer, 'Vorhanden/Nicht vorhanden. Über die Latenz der Dinge', in 'Arisierung' im Nationalsozialismus. *Volksgemeinschaft, Raub und Gedächtnis*, ed. Fritz Bauer-Institut (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2000), pp. 287–308.
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4

Ghettoization

Tim Cole

As many of the essays in this book make clear, academic and broader public interest in the Holocaust did not gather momentum until some time after the end of the Second World War. Although there is dispute over when and why the Holocaust emerged as iconic in the United States in particular, there is general agreement that 1961 marked an important moment in both academic and public interest in this historical event.¹ That year saw the publication in the United States of Raul Hilberg's encyclopedic study *The Destruction of the European Jews*² and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel.

However, that is not to say that nothing was being written or said about the Holocaust prior to 1961. Far from it. In the immediate post-war period, there was a flurry of publications and a period of speaking out by survivors. Moreover, taking the literature on Holocaust ghettos specifically, an influential nascent historiography can be seen emerging in the late 1940s. In some ways, of course, the writing of the history of the ghettos was already being undertaken while the war was still in progress. Foremost among these efforts was the creation of the Oneg Shabbat archive in the Warsaw ghetto, under the direction of the historian Emanuel Ringelblum. Ringelblum himself had written on the socio-economic history of seventeenth-century Polish Jews, and therefore it is perhaps not surprising that the material collected by archival workers included a mass of demographic and economic data.³ Not only were the sources for future historical research collated in Warsaw, but preliminary studies were written up of ghetto life.

However, there was more to the early historiography of Holocaust ghettos and ghettoization than simply the writing of individual ghetto narratives both during and immediately after the war. What is perhaps particularly striking about this element of Holocaust historiography is that attempts were already being made to think theoretically about Holocaust ghettoization as a comparative experience a few years after the end of the war. In a lecture on the Kovno Ghetto first given at the Yiddish Scientific Institute in April 1948, and published

the following year in *Jewish Social Studies*, the sociologist Samuel Gringauz spoke of the weakness of ‘all the descriptions of ghetto life published thus far’, which bore ‘the stamp of individualizing reportage’.⁴ In an essay published a year later, he expanded on what he perceived to be the weaknesses of individual ghetto studies, written by those self-conscious of ‘being part of an epoch-shaping history in the making’.⁵ For Gringauz, ‘the result of this hyper-historical complex has been that the brief post-war years have seen a flood of “historical materials” – rather “contrived” than “collected” ...’⁶

Given what he saw to be the weaknesses of existing narratives of ghettoization, Gringauz attempted to place the study of Holocaust ghettos on a more secure scientific footing. He offered three conceptual frameworks within which to analyse Holocaust ghettos. First, the ghetto could be studied in ‘morphological’ terms as ‘one of the forms of mass destruction in the great Jewish catastrophe of 1939–45, which initiated the liquidation of the East European era of Jewish history’.⁷ Second, the ghetto could be studied in ‘philosophical’ terms, with a view to ‘grasping the deeper meaning of the course of history’.⁸ Within this approach, there was an attempt

to find continuity between the distantly separated beginnings and end of the movement and to discover a spiritual or ethical principle in this continuity. The European epoch of Jewish history began with the ghetto; from the ghetto burst forth, in the modern era, the flood of Jewish biological, economic and intellectual expansion to its culmination point – the ghetto – and there strangled the Jewish people in the blood of physical annihilation.⁹

Third, the ghetto could be studied sociologically (Gringauz’s preferred approach) as ‘a significant instance of enforced Jewish national concentration’.¹⁰ Its importance as an object of research in such terms lay less with the nature of Nazi persecution than with the fact that ‘the ghetto was a sociologically relevant experiment of a Jewish community under specifically abnormal and extraordinary living conditions’.¹¹

Gringauz himself acknowledged that it was ‘still too early to attempt a historical-philosophical assessment of the ghetto’, given that the ‘necessary distance for philosophical perspective’ was still lacking.¹² However, the other two approaches provided the conceptual framework adopted in the early post-war years by Gringauz himself and the historian Philip Friedman. Writing in *Jewish Social Studies* five years after the publication of Gringauz’s call for ghettoization to be studied in a scientific manner, Friedman acknowledged – implicitly at least – the influence of this earlier essay. In his seminal study ‘The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era’, he spelt out that rather than dealing ‘with the many sociological aspects of the ghettos, their internal life, institutions such as the *Judenrat* or the Jewish police, the reactions of their inhabitants, their social and economic

developments and moral climate', he was adopting 'the historico-morphological method' in order 'merely to examine the public conduct and the legal aspects that led to the establishment of the ghettos and to the development of their outward forms'.¹³ In working with such a methodology, Friedman's 1954 article differed markedly from the earlier essay by Gringauz, who examined the sociological aspects of the ghettos that Friedman chose to ignore.

What the approaches of these two early scholars of Holocaust ghettoization point to are two very different ways of looking at the ghetto. In essence, the differences between these two conceptual approaches can be distilled down to a focus on the victims versus the perpetrators; a focus on the ghetto as a 'Jewish'¹⁴ place versus the ghetto as part of the Holocaust process; and the adoption of the methodology of social and cultural history (and sociology) versus the methodology of political and institutional history (and political science). What is perhaps most striking when reviewing the last fifty or so years of writing on Holocaust ghettos is that those two approaches signalled by Gringauz have continued to shape the literature.¹⁵ As Yisrael Gutman noted, writing in 1982 on the Warsaw ghetto, 'most of the works written to date have related events from a single point of view: Jewish or German',¹⁶ with the former being 'sociological' and the latter 'morphological' studies of ghettoization.

In this essay I wish to examine the development of sociological and morphological approaches to Holocaust ghettoization, before turning to look at some of my own work on ghettos, which stresses the usefulness of drawing not only from the disciplines of sociology and history, but also from the discipline of geography. In essence, I want to suggest that as well as thinking sociologically and historico-morphologically about ghettoization, there is a value to thinking spatially about Holocaust ghettos.

'Sociological approaches' to the ghetto as a 'Jewish' place

In his study of the Kovno Ghetto, Gringauz adopted a 'sociological' approach to Holocaust ghettos, focusing his interests on the nature of the 'Jewish' community shaped by life in the ghetto. Although subjected to extreme external pressure – hunger, disease, forced labour and the threat of death – Gringauz painted a picture of a remarkable degree of internal order in Kovno. While acknowledging that 'theoretically... such conditions should have brought about the highest measure of animalization and brutalization of human life', Gringauz suggested that the case of Kovno revealed,

and this is the most amazing and most interesting sociological fact, [that] there was no complete suppression of cultural values in the ghetto. Important group decisions were made not under the pressure of pure self-preservation but because of definite religious, national and political considerations.

Individual decisions in not too infrequent instances rose above the pressures of the instinct of self-preservation . . . A level of social and moral values was retained throughout.¹⁷

What is perhaps most striking about Gringauz's essentially positive description of the internal world of the ghetto is both the methodology that he adopted and the broader context within which he self-consciously wrote. In developing his thesis of group solidarity in the ghetto, Gringauz posited that

[t]he relation of the moral niveau might be expressed in the following formula: V/A=L where V equals the social and moral value of the members of the community, A the animal instinct of self-preservation and L the level of communal social and moral values. Since the enormous pressures of external conditions made for an immeasurable increase of A, it was necessary for V to increase tremendously to retain L at a high level. The increase of V was possible only through the fact of Jewish national community, through the fact of heightened Jewish morality that had its roots in the community of fate and destiny.¹⁸

Re-reading these words half a century later, it seems remarkable that they come from a lecture given by a survivor-scholar in 1948. In the last decade, it has become fashionable in some quarters to mock the supposedly recent academicization of Holocaust studies. Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann have described the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* as a book where 'the horrors of the Third Reich disappear within a fog of relativizing, sociological rhetoric'.¹⁹ The editor of *Commentary*, in a scathing essay entitled 'Auschwitz and the Professors', complained that 'the very language in which the murder of the six million Jews is discussed has become in no way distinguishable from the language of agricultural macroeconomics or the sociology of chimpanzees – which is to say that even at its best, it is often full of the most egregious professional jargon'.²⁰ Damning what he saw to be the emergence of a fully-fledged 'Holocaust industry' from the late 1960s onwards, Norman Finkelstein mocked Steven Katz's thesis of the uniqueness of the Holocaust: 'To avoid any confusion, Katz elucidates that he uses the term *phenomenologically* "in a non-Husserlian, non-Shutzean, non-Schlerian, non-Heideggerian, non-Merleau-Pontyan sense." Translation: The Katz enterprise is phenomenal non-sense.'²¹ Yet it is clear that the roots of academic and theoretical engagement with aspects of the Holocaust lie much deeper than late twentieth-century American academic trends.

What is striking about Gringauz's immediate post-war work on the Kovno Ghetto is that he was already advocating and modelling what could be seen as 'academicization' of the Holocaust. For Gringauz, it was already necessary,

three years after the end of the war, to engage in 'scientific' study of Holocaust ghettos. In short, mere reporting of what happened was not enough. There was a need for analytical frameworks to inform the study of ghettoization.

The necessity of such 'academicization' was driven in large part by the broader contemporary context, which Gringauz clearly addressed. For him, the significance of the ghettos of Nazi-occupied Europe was that they offered the sociologist a unique opportunity to observe 'an experiment in transition from the prevailing diffuse conditions of Jewish life to an artificially imposed community existence'.²² The ghetto marked the externally imposed end of the Diaspora, and for Gringauz it was only the creation – albeit artificially – of a 'Jewish' national community which could have faced the terrors of Nazism. Writing somewhat witheringly of 'Jewish' diasporic life, he argued that it 'can be stated as a sociological assumption that had such pressures from the outside been applied to the Jews in their national diffusion there would have been a far greater deterioration of social and moral values'.²³ For Gringauz, 'the Jewish sociological experiment of the ghetto community, as exemplified by Kovno, has shown that an autonomous Jewish national concentration is capable of creating the kind of social, moral and spiritual values which a Jewish diffused community could never create'.²⁴

Implicitly at least, such words need to be seen in the context of the founding of the state of Israel. The analogy between the wartime ghettos and the newly established state was made explicit in a later article, where Gringauz noted that 'the ghetto of the great catastrophe is the only instance of a full-fledged Jewish community outside the state of Israel'.²⁵ Thus the ghetto's significance for Gringauz was not that it was part and parcel of the Holocaust, but that it was in essence a city within a city – a territorial experiment in 'Jewish' self-government. In short, the wartime ghettos established in cities such as Kovno were not so much Holocaust ghettos as first and foremost 'Jewish' ghettos. The Holocaust was seen almost as a footnote to what was seen to be the real significance of the ghetto – the antithesis of Diaspora assimilation.

Viewing ghettoization primarily in terms of an experiment in 'Jewish' collective life rather than as part and parcel of the implementation of the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' can be understood in the context of the late 1940s. As a number of historians have suggested, there was relatively little interest in the Holocaust as a distinct event in this period.²⁶ Rather, of much greater concern was the emerging Cold War, which necessitated a redrawing of just who the enemies were; and, for Jewish-America, the newly founded Israeli state. Given such a context, it is understandable that what Gringauz dubbed a 'sociological' approach to ghettos as places of 'Jewish' life was of greater concern than 'historical-morphological' approaches, which viewed ghettos as one element of the Holocaust. However, as I will examine below, this is not to say that no one was thinking about ghettoization in such terms in the immediate

post-war period. The work of Philip Friedman was an important exception to a more general trend.

Very broadly speaking, however, with the emergence of the Holocaust as a distinct event from the 1960s onwards, the divorcing of 'ghetto' and 'Holocaust' became more or less inconceivable. Increasingly, ghettos became studied in what Gringauz phrased 'historical-morphological' terms as Holocaust places. However, that is not to say that this other strand of methodology – the sociological – ceased to be of importance. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the 1961 Eichmann trial, studying the ghettos with an eye to the victims rather than primarily the perpetrators assumed an increased importance.

The stimulus to studying ghettos in such terms came less as a result of the trial itself, than the reporting of the trial. In particular, Hannah Arendt's controversial reporting of the trial for the *New Yorker* placed the ghettos, and specifically Jewish reactions in the ghettos, to the fore. In a series of magazine essays subsequently republished under the title *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Arendt argued that the collaboration of the Jewish Councils in the ghettos was essential in determining the scale and success of the Nazi exterminations.²⁷ Such accusations of collaboration on the part of the leadership were joined with charges of passivity by ordinary 'Jews', which were echoed in Raul Hilberg's compliance thesis. At the start of his highly influential study first published in 1961, Hilberg painted a picture of passivity being the normal response of 'Jews' living outside of Israel – and this included 'Jews' living in the ghettos.²⁸ Those twin claims – that ordinary 'Jews' were passive and their leaders complicit – raised an immediate furore.

Arendt's broad-brush attack on the wartime Jewish Councils was challenged most fully in Isaiah Trunk's massive study of the *Judenräte* in Poland and Lithuania.²⁹ Rather than writing of the role of the Jewish Councils in the monolithic terms adopted by Arendt, Trunk's nuanced study pointed out the need to recognize local differences and the context within which the Jewish Councils operated. However, in doing so, he did not attempt to sanitize the ghettos. Trunk did not shy away from such controversial areas as the payment of bribes within the ghetto or the social stratification of ghetto society.

The role of the Jewish Councils in the ghettos has developed its own historiography, which is somewhat tangential to the historiography of the ghettos *per se*. As a number of writers have pointed out, the Jewish Councils were engaged in a wide range of relief activities within the ghettos. Although facing the problems of famine, disease and overcrowding that were endemic to ghetto life, Charles Roland – in a 'medical history' of the Warsaw Ghetto – points to the remarkable social and medical provision organized by the Jewish Council.³⁰ The result of the network of arrangements was, Roland suggests, that 'although almost 100,000 Jews died of all causes in Warsaw from September 1939 to July 1942, it is estimated that another 100,000 or more survived that

long only because of the various self-help enterprises that operated in the ghetto'.³¹

Evidence of such self-help has been placed alongside evidence of armed resistance in refuting the charge that 'Jews' went like sheep to the slaughter. In particular, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising has been the focus of a number of studies, most significantly Yisrael Gutman's *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*.³² Perhaps more than any other event, the Warsaw Ghetto revolt has assumed a central symbolic role in offering an alternative writing of the ghetto to that offered by Arendt. It is the ghetto that has been studied most thoroughly.³³ Of course, it was a large ghetto, which was in existence for most of the war. However, there is more than simply a common-sense explanation for why it has emerged as the definitive Holocaust ghetto (to match Auschwitz as the definitive Holocaust concentration and death camp); there is also an ideological explanation, very much rooted in Israeli society and politics of the 1950s and 1960s,³⁴ as well as the response and reaction to Arendt's influential text.

Although Warsaw has been privileged to a degree because of the evidence of armed resistance, other ghettos have been examined as offering evidence of non-violent resistance to Nazi rule. As the historian David Cesarani noted in a historiographical survey published a decade ago, a number of studies of the ghettos pointed to 'a high level of cultural activity and a remarkable spiritual resistance that signified defiance of Nazi efforts to dehumanize and humiliate the Jews'.³⁵ The 'cultural miracle of the ghetto' was something that Gringauz himself had highlighted in 1948.³⁶ However, for Gringauz, such developments were taken as evidence of the strength of national solidarity in the ghetto, compared to the situation in the Diaspora. After 1961, cultural developments within the ghettos were interpreted as acts of cultural resistance, with the accusations of Arendt rather than the early years of the state of Israel in focus. Drawing on ghetto diaries, post-war memoirs and oral history accounts, the picture of vitality of Jewish life in the ghettos differed markedly from the fatalism of Arendt and compliance thesis of Hilberg.

It is their words that were no doubt at the back of his mind when Martin Gilbert wrote in his introduction to Avraham Tory's Kovno ghetto diary that

from the fall of 1942 to the summer of 1944, the Jewish Council in the Kovno Ghetto acted on a daily basis to ensure the preservation of as much of Kovno Jewry as possible: to feed, to guard, to maintain morale, to protect. We know about similar activities in other ghettos; Tory's diary is a full and sustained account of them. It therefore enables the reader to see the absurdity of the often reiterated suggestion – made by those who ignore the conditions of all Europe's captive peoples under Nazi rule – that Jews participated in their

own destruction. They participated in a desperate, prolonged, and tormented struggle to survive.³⁷

Reading the words of those who kept diaries during the war, or wrote memoirs in the immediate aftermath, the sheer variety of experiences in the ghetto is striking. Rather than the somewhat monolithic renderings of the ghettos in blanket positive or negative terms, the diarists and memoirists themselves reveal the complexity and moral ambiguity of ghetto life. Many of their voices are gathered together in a useful study by Gustavo Corni. He portrays the ghettos as places of both continuity with, and radical disjunction from, pre-war 'Jewish' life in eastern Europe. Taking just one element, social stratification, on the one hand, the ghetto heightened pre-existing differences in the 'Jewish' community. On the other hand, the opportunities for smuggling afforded by life in the closed ghetto created a newly privileged ghetto elite. The result was that the ghettos were places of differing experiences for the old and new rich, and the poor. Something of the contradictions of ghetto life comes through in the words cited by Corni of ghetto inhabitants in Warsaw. While one wrote of the 'piles of roasted or smoked geese, rich apple pies and other specialities' available in the two restaurants trading in the ghetto, the aspirations of most were for more basic foodstuffs, with one diarist confessing: 'Our constant song: potatoes. This word is repeated a hundred of times every moment. It is our whole life.'³⁸

Such evidence of social inequalities within the ghettos is, Corni suggests, one of the reasons why ghettos have been somewhat sidelined in historical literature on the Holocaust. The focus of that literature has been more on the camps than the ghettos. In the former, the external force of the perpetrators dominated, whereas in the latter, internal forces were of significance. The result of these differing places is that a place such as Auschwitz can be written of as a scene of tragic deaths, whereas the more complex and ambiguous experience of life in the ghettos has meant that the 'Jews' living there have been, 'apart from the heroes of Warsaw and Bialystok... mainly represented in collective memory as people who were selfish and indifferent, and who tried to live from day to day by ignoring what was happening to others'.³⁹

As the words of ghetto inhabitants themselves testify, everyday ghetto life was not so morally simple. While for some, the controversial Jewish Council leader in the Łódź Ghetto, Chaim Rumkowski, was 'a devil with white hair', others saw him more sympathetically as a man who 'was no more than an instrument and tried to save what was saveable'.⁴⁰ And while in Warsaw one rabbi criticized those ghetto inhabitants who 'have no pity for little children, naked in the streets, entering stores to beg for crumbs only to be cruelly chased out', a member of one of the house committees remembered 'the spontaneous instinct to help the impoverished masses' in the ghetto.⁴¹

In allowing the voices of the victims to be heard in all their complexity, Corni's study can be seen as the latest in a line of 'sociological' studies of Holocaust ghettoization. Indeed, his understanding of the ghetto as first and foremost a 'Jewish' place comes through:

In my opinion the ghetto cannot be considered as a simple phase of transition, an 'antechamber' on the road to extermination. It contains various characteristics which make an in-depth study particularly significant, seeing this as a distinctive moment in the life of the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe during the war. The working hypothesis is that the ghetto represents a unique social structure in which elements of the traditional pre-war Jewish society continued to exist.⁴²

However, it is clear from looking more widely at the way in which ghettoization has been examined in Holocaust studies that the tendency in the broader literature has been to adopt what Gringauz dubbed 'historical-morphological' approaches and to view ghettoization as a transitory measure. In short, within Holocaust historiography, the ghetto has been studied not simply – or primarily – as the place of the victim, but as a part of the destruction process implemented by the perpetrator. In these terms, the ghetto has been seen, not primarily as a 'Jewish' place, but as a Holocaust place. And arguably, the tendency within such writing has been less to focus on the ghetto as a place in its own terms and more to examine ghettoization as one element within the implementation of the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'.

Historico-morphological approaches to the ghetto as element of Holocaust process

This approach can perhaps be seen most clearly in the synthetic narratives of the Holocaust, of which Raul Hilberg's has been the most influential. In his work, ghettoization is characterized as 'a transitional measure'.⁴³ Rather than being studied for its own sake as a place of 'Jewish' communal life, the significance of the temporary world of the ghetto was that it proved a major element of the 'concentration' so central to the Nazi destruction process.⁴⁴ Such thinking vis-à-vis ghettoization was made explicit by Hilberg, who noted:

we are not going to discuss here the complex changes which the institution of the ghetto imported into the Jewish communities; that is a subject which belongs to Jewish history, not to the history of the anti-Jewish destruction process. In this book we shall be interested in the ghetto only as a control mechanism in the hands of the German bureaucracy. To the Jews the ghetto was a way of life; to the Germans it was an administrative measure.⁴⁵

Within such an approach, the focus was much more on ghettoization as process than the ghetto as place, and indeed for Hilberg 'ghettoization' encompassed far more than simply the creation of the physical places called ghettos. It was a five-step process involving 'the severance of social contacts between Jews and Germans, housing restrictions, movement regulations, identification measures, and the institution of Jewish administrative machinery'.⁴⁶ Seeing ghettoization in such general terms reflected, no doubt, the Europe-wide scale of Hilberg's project. After all, closed ghettos were not established everywhere within Nazi-occupied Europe, being primarily associated with occupied Poland and the Baltic states (although ghettos were also formed in the Soviet Union, Romania and Hungary). However, in a country such as Germany, where closed ghettos were never established, the measures identified by Hilberg as 'ghettoization' clearly were. Thus, for Hilberg, the focus was less on the ghetto as place, which was a largely eastern European 'Jewish' experience between 1939 and 1945. Rather it was on the more blanket term 'ghettoization', which was an element of concentration, with concentration itself being ultimately only one element of the Nazi destruction process.

Seeing the ghetto as part and parcel of the Nazi destruction of European 'Jews' has characterized the literature generated by the field of Holocaust studies, dominated as it is by the writings of historians. The main point of departure has been the precise role played by ghettoization in the radicalization of the Nazi destruction process. At the height of the functionalist versus intentionalist debate in the 1970s and 1980s, the ghettos established in Poland in the early years of the war played a crucial role in the debate about the authorship and dating of, and motivation for, the implementation of a policy of Europe-wide mass murders of the 'Jews'.

A foreshadowing of the intentionalist position can be seen in Philip Friedman's early writings on ghettos. Friedman published a number of other short studies of Holocaust ghettos, but his plan to write a book-length study was cut short by his premature death.⁴⁷ In perhaps his most important work on ghettos, first published in 1954, Friedman interpreted the ghettos planned and established by the Nazis in Poland from 1939 onwards as a 'step towards genocide'.⁴⁸ Heydrich's September 1939 order to the chiefs of *Einsatzgruppen* units in newly occupied Poland to concentrate 'Jews' in cities with a 'Jewish' population of more than 500 in proximity to a railway junction was interpreted by Friedman as a prelude to deportation and extermination. Heydrich himself had spoken of ghettoization as a temporary measure to be implemented prior to the 'ultimate goal'. While acknowledging that at this stage the precise nature of that 'ultimate goal' remained somewhat hazy, Friedman claimed that 'it is quite possible that the plan for the physical annihilation had already been spelled out'.⁴⁹ Thus Polish ghettos were seen as gathering points en route to the ultimate goal of mass extermination.

Interpreting ghettos in such terms, Friedman saw ghettos as transitional measures, rather than as ends in and of themselves. Rejecting what he saw to be the explanations for ghettoization put forward by Nazi propaganda – as a means of limiting epidemics or stopping ‘Jewish’ economic contact – Friedman suggested that ‘the true reasons for the setting up of the ghettos emerge from allusions made by high officials in private conversations or in conferences held by the Nazi party’.⁵⁰ These revealed that ghettos such as that established in Łódź in early 1940, were created as ‘a necessary *transitional* solution of the Jewish Question’ and nothing ‘more than a transitional measure’.⁵¹

However, while transitional in nature, Friedman did suggest that ghettos should be interpreted as deadly spaces in themselves. Not only did he suggest that ‘there is indirect evidence...that the “concentration” of the Jews was intended as a preparation for gradual extermination, as originally conceived, by hunger, cold, disease, epidemics, forced labor and, finally, by the murder operations called “actions”’;⁵² he went further to argue that ‘the ghettos were designed to serve the Nazis as laboratories for testing the methods of slow and “peaceful” destruction of whole groups of human beings’.⁵³ Such an interpretation of ghettoization as a self-consciously implemented exterminatory measure became a plank of later intentionalist writing, perhaps best illustrated in Lucy Dawidowicz’s suggestion that ‘the only institution comparable to the Nazi ghetto was the Nazi concentration camp.... Death bestrode the Nazi ghetto and was its true master, exercising its dominion through hunger, forced labor and disease’.⁵⁴

In marked contrast, functionalist writers interpreted ghettoization as a policy envisaged apart from extermination, suggesting that exterminatory policies were adopted only when ghettoization policies were seen by local actors to be failing. In contrast to Friedman’s assumption that Heydrich’s ‘ultimate goal’ in implementing ghettoization was destruction, Hans Mommsen argued that ‘the primary motive was revealed in the executory provisions of Himmler’s decree for the *Reichsgau Wartheland*: “The purging and protection of the new German areas” was designed to provide housing and employment prospects for the ethnic German settlers.’⁵⁵ However, once established, these ghettos presented increasingly intolerable conditions. It is in this context that Martin Broszat argued that a decision was made to implement exterminatory policies as a solution to the starvation, disease and overcrowding of the ghettos. He posited that ‘epidemics and a high mortality rate [in the ghettos] suggested the possibility of “helping nature along” in a systematic fashion’.⁵⁶ Thus, ghettoization was viewed by Broszat not as prelude to destruction, but rather as a crucial element in the radicalization of Nazi anti-‘Jewish’ policy. He noted that ghettoization was a ‘form of self-confirmation and self-fulfilling prophecy’, given that ‘epidemics in the ghettos made them a threat to the health of the general population’.⁵⁷ Ghettoization as a self-fulfilling prophecy

was, Broszat argued, 'exploited not only by Hitler and Himmler but also by Goebbels and Ribbentrop and by the district military and civil administration chiefs'.⁵⁸

In a critique of what he saw as the excesses of intentionalism and functionalism, Christopher Browning offered a middle path. In an important article on the Warsaw and Łódź Ghettos first published in the mid-1980s, Browning suggested that 'neither of these approaches [intentionalism or functionalism] adequately explains either ghettoization policy or its relationship to the subsequent program of systematic mass murder'. In contrast to intentionalist approaches, he claimed that 'ghettoization was not a conscious preparatory step planned by the central authorities to facilitate the mass murder nor did it have the "set task" of decimating the Jewish population'. In contrast to functionalist approaches, Browning argued that, 'left to themselves, most local authorities followed a course of normalization, not radicalization. In the end only renewed intervention from Berlin induced an abrupt change of course from the policies of normalization to which they inclined.' Advocating an approach sensitive to questions of both time and space, Browning suggested that 'ghettoization was in fact carried out at different times in different ways for different reasons on the initiative of local authorities'.⁵⁹

Taking the ghettos in Łódź and Warsaw by way of example, Browning argued that while the two 'were created at different times for different reasons' – in the case of the former as 'a strictly temporary device for extracting Jewish wealth',⁶⁰ and in the case of the latter as a measure to limit the spread of epidemic⁶¹ – once both ghettos were in existence, the German authorities in both cities were presented 'with identical problems'. These were essentially that of the 'imminent starvation' of the population of the closed ghettos.⁶² In this context, Browning signalled how tensions among the local German authorities were played out between those who favoured a rational exploitation of the productive potential of the ghettos – dubbed 'productionists' – and those who argued for their deliberate attrition – dubbed 'attritionists'.⁶³ In both Łódź – in the autumn of 1940 – and Warsaw – in May 1941 – productionist arguments prevailed, which meant that 'the ghetto was not to be starved to death but made into a productive entity'.⁶⁴ During 1941–42, however, these policies were superseded by policies of ghetto liquidation emanating from Berlin. Thus, Browning argued that during 1941 a decision was made – in Berlin – to kill Europe's 'Jews', which amounted to the ultimate victory of attritionist approaches.

Within the last decade or so, the heat has gone out of the functionalist versus intentionalist debate, which was for a time so central to Holocaust studies. The focus has shifted from the centre to the periphery, with an emphasis on local studies that explore the complexity of the implementation of the Holocaust, and the interrelationship of a host of actors at a variety of scales, ranging from

the national through the local. Such research, as Martin Dean notes in his essay in this volume, has been stimulated by the opening up of archives in the former communist countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Although not the primary focus of most of these studies, the implementation of ghettoization – a policy that, as Browning noted, was implemented locally – has been explored as one element of the implementation of the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’.⁶⁵

With the waning of the functionalist versus intentionalist debate, Christopher Browning’s 1986 *Central European History* article, ‘Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland, 1939–1941’, remains a model of ‘historical-morphological’ approaches to ghettoization and a marker in the shift from the earlier parameters of debate to more localized study. While a key work in the literature on ghettoization, I want to end this essay by suggesting what I see to be a major methodological weakness in Browning’s study. It is a weakness shared by much of the ‘historical-morphological’ literature on ghettoization – the failure to take the physicality of ghettoization seriously. It is here that I want to suggest that recent writings in human geography have something to offer. As Andrew Charlesworth shows elsewhere in this volume, there is much that geographers’ concerns with space, place and landscape study can contribute to the interdisciplinary field of Holocaust studies in general. I will close this essay with a brief assessment of what geography might add to our understanding of Holocaust ghettoization specifically, and in particular the critical question of the motivation behind placing ‘Jews’ in ghettos.

Geographical approaches to the spatiality of Holocaust ghettoization

Although Browning is right to signal the importance of studying the initiative of local authorities if we are to understand why ghettos were created, a weakness in his approach is his over-reliance on written sources produced by the perpetrators. In identifying the motivation underlying ghettoization in Łódź and Warsaw to be concerns with extracting Jewish wealth and limiting the spread of epidemics respectively,⁶⁶ Browning largely accepts the explanations offered by Nazi officials in both cities. However, a number of historians have suggested that these pronouncements are best read as revealing justifications for ghettoization (in essence, propaganda), rather than the motivations underlying ghettoization.⁶⁷ In the case of Łódź, Lucjan Dobroszycki has pointed out that Nazi officials articulated a variety of reasons for ghettoization in a variety of contexts. Thus, ‘in their internal correspondence, whose function was to help convince themselves, and in their public pronouncements, which were chiefly for propaganda purposes, the Nazis put forward other reasons for isolating the Jews – that they represented a criminal element, were the bearers of contagious

diseases, were unwilling to work, and so forth'.⁶⁸ Similarly, in the case of Warsaw, Gutman argued that 'the claim that the Jews constituted a danger to the health of the population at large – which was not entirely unfounded – was consciously blown out of all proportion to serve as a convenient tool of the Nazi propaganda campaign to convince the Poles, as well as the Germans, that the Jews were being segregated out of concern for the Jewish masses of Warsaw'.⁶⁹ This is a view shared by Friedman, who saw the justification of ghettoization on the grounds of health measures as a German propaganda move.⁷⁰

Browning himself has countered such criticisms, which he sees – in the case of the Warsaw Ghetto – belying a simplistic thesis that 'the Nazi reference to epidemics was a mere pretext to justify ghettoization, which in turn was a conscious preparatory step for total annihilation'. To argue thus, Browning suggests, 'presumes both a uniformity of view among the various German agencies in Poland and a continuity in Jewish policy from 1939 to 1941 that is impossible to reconcile with the reality of the German occupation regime in the General Government'.⁷¹ His dismissal of such criticism is essentially grounded in a broader moderate functionalist critique of the intentionalist approach of a writer such as Friedman.

However, I do not think that Browning's critics can be dismissed so easily. Their comments have a certain bite to them, given that there is the tendency in Browning's writings on the motivations behind ghettoization to blur rhetoric and reality. There is surely a need for a more critical reading of the textual sources that give us an insight into what the implementers of ghettoization said.⁷² But perhaps more significantly, there is a need to study the landscapes of the ghettos themselves, which provide an insight into what the implementers of ghettoization actually *did*, not just what they *said*. This necessitates looking beyond textual sources, to engage in the mapping and landscape study of ghettos.

In some ways, Friedman came close to adopting that sort of approach in his 1954 article. In stressing the physical realities of ghetto formation, he turned the focus away – somewhat – from the study of purely textual discourses, to the study of discourses in space. Friedman juxtaposed official statements and newspaper articles, which he viewed primarily as sources of propaganda and 'German explanations of the need of segregation',⁷³ with sources which he saw as revealing 'the true reasons for ghettoization'.⁷⁴ These sources included the textual and non-textual – private conversations – with Friedman suggesting that 'the purpose of the ghettos became apparent from *the manner of their formation*'.⁷⁵

That focus on the ghetto landscape as a source in its own right was repeated by Friedman in 1960, in his *Guide to Jewish History*, co-authored with Robinson. They noted there that 'a careful examination of the ghetto maps is...of

utmost importance in the study of the trends and objectives of Nazi ghetto planning', and suggested that:

a comparison of the ghetto maps with the city maps can help the student to decide whether there was a Nazi master-plan to locate the ghettos in the periphery of a town, in its dilapidated and overpopulated suburbs, or in those sections which were destroyed by military operations. A comparison of the ghetto area with the 'Aryan' section of a town will show the relationship between density of population and available living space for Jews and non-Jews, and thus reveal a pattern of overcrowding the Jewish ghettos. A study of the ghetto and city maps will indicate whether gardens, squares and other recreation areas were permitted in the ghetto area. The ghetto maps themselves will show the non-Jewish enclaves (e.g. the Gypsy ghetto in Łódź) and intimate why they were placed there by the Nazis. On September 21, 1939, Reinhard Heydrich recommended that the ghettos be placed near railroads in order to facilitate the deportations of the Jews. The ghetto maps may indicate whether this recommendation was accepted by local authorities. This does not exhaust their usefulness. They also reveal a peculiar feature of Nazi ghetto planning: the simultaneous creation in several towns of two or even three ghettos, with either no communication between them, or with very little.... The maps also show the frequent changes the Nazis made in the ghetto areas, almost all of which were meant to worsen the existing facilities, narrow the available space, or move the inmates to new sites...⁷⁶

To be fair, Browning does engage in something of this landscape study of the ghetto, writing, for example, of the significance of boundary changes in the Warsaw Ghetto.⁷⁷ However, his work on the Warsaw and Łódź Ghettos contains no attempt to map out the ghettos or any attempt to examine motivation in terms other than the discourse adopted by the perpetrators. He is not alone. Robinson and Friedman's words have fallen on deaf ears. The mapping of Holocaust ghettos as a way to reconsider motivation is something that has not really been taken on board by historians, and indeed, the mapping of ghettos in general remains rather sketchy. Even in such a geographical text as Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of the Holocaust*, there is only one detailed ghetto map⁷⁸ and it is a map of 'The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt, 19 April 1943' which is not so much a mapping of the ghetto, as it is a mapping of the revolt.⁷⁹

However, there is a need to do more than simply draw maps, given that geography is about much more than simply cartography. There is a need for readings of those mappings along the lines suggested by Friedman and Robinson. There is a need to examine the precise location of the ghetto within the larger place of the city. Doing so is to take seriously the notion of the ghetto as a spatial product which is located in a particular place for functional

and ideological reasons. I want to close this essay by examining two strands of geographical thinking which I have adopted in my historical research on Holocaust ghettoization, and which are perhaps suggestive of future research into ghettoization which takes their physicality seriously. The first is to think of ghettoization in terms of the creation of spaces of 'Jewish absence' and spaces of 'Jewish presence'.⁸⁰ The second is to think of ghettoization as a territorial solution.

Ghettoization as 'Jewish absence' and 'Jewish presence'

Holocaust ghettoization involved both the removal of 'Jews' from large swathes of the city (and thus the creation of spaces of 'Jewish absence') and their relocation to one particular place – the ghetto (and thus the creation of spaces of 'Jewish presence'). Those two sides to ghettoization are recognized at least implicitly within writing on the creation of ghettos. Taking Hilberg's work by way of example, he points to the decision to locate the ghetto in Łódź, in 'a slum quarter',⁸¹ in order to facilitate appropriation and not simply concentration and segregation:⁸²

As the Jews moved into the ghetto, they left most of their property behind. This 'abandoned' property was confiscated. It can readily be understood now that the choice of the ghetto location was of utmost importance to the success of the operation. As a rule, the preferred ghetto site was a slum, for in that way the better houses, apartments and furniture were left behind. But this solution also had its difficulties, because the slums were often filled with warehouses and factories.⁸³

As Hilberg's reading of the locating of the ghetto makes clear, there were concerns not only with where the city's 'Jews' were to be relocated to ('a slum quarter'), but also where they were to be relocated from (areas of the city with 'better houses'). Everywhere that ghettoization was enacted, putting the city's Jews in one place necessarily meant that the remainder of the city was made *judenfrei*. However, while both were achieved through the location of the ghetto, it is useful to make the distinction between the two explicit, because the shifting prioritization of ghettoization as a means of exclusion ('Jewish absence') and a means of inclusion ('Jewish presence') is potentially one way into thinking about changing motivation.

Certainly in my own work on ghettoization in Budapest, there would seem to be shifting concerns, with ghettoization being envisaged primarily as a means of creating 'Jewish absence' at times, and as a means of creating 'Jewish presence' at other times. In April 1944, initial ghettoization was primarily motivated by confiscating 'Jewish' apartments for the use of 'non-Jewish'

bomb victims (the primacy of 'Jewish absence'). By May 1944, plans for ghettos highlighted both the importance of removing 'Jews' from the main streets and squares in the city, and the possibility of placing them in seven ghettos located close to the strategic sites threatened by bombing as a form of human shield (concerns with both 'Jewish absence' and 'Jewish presence'). A month later, in June 1944, plans to disperse the city's 'Jews' in over 2,000 ghetto houses were motivated by a pragmatic desire to ghettoize 'Jews' where they already lived ('Jewish presence') and perhaps more importantly, where 'non-Jews' did not live. Two weeks later, the number of ghetto houses was cut, as a desire to remove 'Jews' from the most desirable villas was announced (a return to concerns with 'Jewish absence'). In the final stage of ghettoization enacted in December 1944, all of Budapest's 'Jews' were moved into two ghettos located on the Pest bank of the river. Not only did this make pragmatic sense in terms of where the majority of the city's 'Jews' already lived ('Jewish presence'), it also made available 'Jewish' properties on the Buda side of the city to officials fleeing westwards from the rapidly approaching Red Army ('Jewish absence').⁸⁴

As this very brief example shows, the value of reading ghetto landscapes in terms of concerns with 'Jewish absence' and 'Jewish presence' is that it provides another way to get to the questions of motivation so central to historical study. In the case of Budapest, shifting concerns over the ghetto as a means of creating spaces of 'Jewish absence' and a means of creating spaces of 'Jewish presence' reflected shifting meanings given to ghettoization as a tool of appropriation, geo-strategic policy and pragmatic means of segregation. It would seem that taking the ghetto landscape itself as a source is one that has real potential. But stressing the physicality and spatiality of Holocaust ghettoization allows us to do more than map out the ghetto and read the ghetto landscape. Stressing the physicality of ghettoization also acts as a reminder of the central place of territoriality in the implementation of the Holocaust.

The ghetto as territorial solution

Territoriality – the exercise of power through the control of space – is an important concept within geographical writing.⁸⁵ Of course, power can also be exercised in non-territorial ways, but territoriality is a prevalent means of exercising power through demarcating and guarding a particular place.

During the Holocaust, territoriality clearly played a key role in Nazi efforts to exert control over Europe's 'Jews'. Not all control involved territorial solutions, but territoriality was central to solutions such as ghettoization, involving as it did an attempt to demarcate and control 'Jewish space'. And such territorial solutions had their advantages to the perpetrators, in particular in terms of allowing for greater degrees of control. As Robert Sack comments, 'it is easier to

supervise convicts by placing them behind bars than by allowing them to roam about with guards following them. Controlling things territorially may save effort'.⁸⁶ However, territorial solutions also had – as I have suggested in my own work – their costs.⁸⁷

That the Holocaust ghetto was a marked example of the territorial exercise of control is something that is certainly implicit – if not explicit – in the literature. I think that is what Hilberg is suggesting in his important analysis of Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat*, when he refers to the ghetto as a political entity. His description makes clear that by political he is referring to the exercise of power through territoriality. Thus Hilberg writes that

the principal characteristic of the ghetto was the segregation of its inhabitants from the surrounding population. The Jewish ghetto was a closed-off society, its gates permanently shut to free traffic, so much so that Trunk labels as relatively 'open' those of the ghetto communities (in smaller cities) that dispatched labor columns daily to projects outside the ghetto limits.⁸⁸

This latter reference to 'open' ghettos suggests that ghettos could – and did – vary in their degree of territoriality, by which I mean their degree of spatial control. This raises the question not only of whether (and why) territorial solutions were adopted by the Nazis in specific places, but also in the case of the territorial solutions, the degree of territoriality being exercised. Certainly my own work on Budapest would suggest that the degree of territoriality increased over the course of 1944.⁸⁹ With increased degrees of control in particular, the policing of borders becomes all the more significant. As Sack makes clear, 'territories require constant effort to establish and maintain.... Circumscribing things in space, or on a map... identifies places, areas or regions in the ordinary sense, but does not by itself create a territory. This delimitation becomes a territory only when its boundaries are used to affect behavior by controlling access'.⁹⁰ With the creation of closed ghettos in particular, the construction and policing of the ghetto wall was of central importance to enforcing territorial control.

The ghetto wall was in many ways a liminal space, which generated a degree of anxiety to the Nazis. As Browning's work on Warsaw suggests, the difficulties of policing the boundaries of the ghetto led to the relocation of the wall in the centre of streets to prevent openings being made in the backs of houses along the boundary and thus allow for more effective policing.⁹¹ Such forced re-siting of the wall points to the fact that what at first sight appeared to be an impermeable boundary was in reality far more permeable. While the ghetto wall was created to ensure control over the entry of such essentials as fuel and food-stuffs, the reality was that foodstuffs came not simply through the gateways into the ghetto in official transports, but also over the wall in the pockets of

smugglers. Smuggling played a critical and paradoxical role in the ghetto. On the one hand, it resulted in the creation of a new class of well-to-do through 'illegal' activities. On the other hand, it was a means of penetrating the ghetto walls and undermining the territorial solution being applied to the 'Jews' in the ghetto, which quite literally was a lifeline.⁹² Thus in the words of Dr Israel Milejkowski – head of the hospitals in the Warsaw Ghetto – 'the smuggler with his blood and sweat, gave us the possibility of existence and work in the ghetto'.⁹³ And smuggling offered not simply food to eat, but also a means of resistance – undermining as it did the finality of the territorial solution. In the words of one ghetto rhyme:

Hitler won't be able to cope
With the English fleet
And with the Russian sleet,
With American dollars
And Jewish smugglers.⁹⁴

Reading the words of the ghetto inhabitants, which saw in smuggling acts of resistance against a Nazi-imposed territorial solution (of 'the Jewish problem'), suggests the need to draw together the various approaches to Holocaust ghettoization I have outlined. On the one hand, there is a need to think 'historical-morphologically' about ghettoization as a Nazi-imposed measure, which allowed for careful control over the quantities of foodstuffs consumed. Such control was, as I have suggested, something that was exercised territorially. However, there was more to the ghettos than simply the history (or geography) of the Nazis. Ghettos were not simply places created by the Nazis as part and parcel of the implementation of the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. They were also places lived in and experienced by 'Jews' in multiple ways – including the resistance offered by smuggling.

It would seem that there is a value to combining sociological, historical and geographical concerns in attempting to understand Holocaust ghettos. There is certainly considerable room within the seemingly vast literature generated by Holocaust studies for further research. Ghettoization remains one aspect of the Holocaust that is relatively under-researched and under-theorized. As Corni notes, 'the hundreds of both large and small ghettos which the German authorities and their "satellites" (Romania and Hungary) created throughout Eastern Europe during the war, constitute a variegated microcosm to which, it would seem, historiography has so far paid insufficient attention'.⁹⁵ There is surely an irony in the fact that an aspect of the Holocaust that attracted such strikingly early academic and theoretical attention is a theme which has been relatively understudied since scholarly interest in the Holocaust really took off.

Notes

- 1 Cf., for example, P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) and N.G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry. Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000).
- 2 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).
- 3 D. Ofer, 'Everyday Life of Jews under Nazi Occupation: Methodological Issues', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 9 (1995), 49.
- 4 S. Gringauz, 'The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization', *Jewish Social Studies*, 11 (1949), 4.
- 5 S. Gringauz, 'Some Methodological Problems in the Study of the Ghetto', *Jewish Social Studies*, 12 (1950), 65.
- 6 Ibid., 65.
- 7 Gringauz, 'The Ghetto as an Experiment', 3.
- 8 Ibid., 3.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid., 4.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid., 3–4.
- 13 P. Friedman, 'The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era', *Jewish Social Studies*, 16 (1954), 61.
- 14 On my use of quotation marks around the word 'Jew', see T. Cole, 'Constructing the "Jew", Writing the Holocaust: Hungary 1920–45', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33, 3 (1999), 19–27.
- 15 Cf., for example, the approaches adopted in Ofer, 'Everyday Life', 42–69 and C.R. Browning, 'Genocide and Public Health: German Doctors and Polish Jews, 1939–41', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3, 1 (1988), 21–36.
- 16 Y. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. ix. Gutman himself aimed to merge these two approaches, although the majority of the book does focus on 'Jewish' experiences in Warsaw, and specifically upon resistance.
- 17 Gringauz, 'The Ghetto as an Experiment', 5–6.
- 18 Ibid., 7.
- 19 M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State. Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 2.
- 20 G. Schoenfeld, 'Auschwitz and the Professors', *Commentary*, 105, 6 (1998), 42–6.
- 21 Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, p. 44.
- 22 Gringauz, 'The Ghetto as an Experiment', 5.
- 23 Ibid., 6.
- 24 Ibid., 20.
- 25 Gringauz, 'Some Methodological Problems', 67.
- 26 See Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, especially part 1, and T. Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), especially the Prologue.
- 27 H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), especially pp. 117–25.
- 28 Hilberg, *The Destruction*, pp. 16–17.
- 29 I. Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
- 30 C.G. Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4.

- 31 Ibid., p. 39.
- 32 Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, p. ix notes that his aim was 'to examine the character and conduct of the Jewish community of Warsaw in face of the persecutive tactics of the Nazi occupation regime; to throw light on the means that were adopted to cope, both intellectually and psychologically, with the grave problems of the period; and to analyze the development of the armed resistance movement and the armed struggle of the Jews of Warsaw'.
- 33 G. Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society 1939–1944* (London: Arnold, 2002), p. 1.
- 34 Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, pp. 122–6.
- 35 D. Cesarani, 'Introduction', in *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, ed. D. Cesarani (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 16, and see his bibliographical notes on p. 28, nn. 54 and 55.
- 36 Gringauz, 'The Ghetto as an Experiment', 16.
- 37 M. Gilbert, 'Introduction', in A. Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. xvi.
- 38 Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, pp. 135, 172.
- 39 Ibid., p. 330.
- 40 Ibid., p. 85.
- 41 Ibid., p. 331.
- 42 Ibid., p. 2.
- 43 Hilberg, *The Destruction*, p. 150.
- 44 See also H. Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), figure 3–2, on p. 63, where Fein essentially adopts Hilberg's process-oriented approach, seeing ghettoization as one element of a five-fold 'chain of Jewish victimization': 'definition, stripping, segregation, isolation, concentration'.
- 45 Hilberg, *The Destruction*, pp. 152–3.
- 46 Ibid., pp. 106–7.
- 47 R. Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), p. 109.
- 48 Friedman, 'The Jewish Ghettos', 61.
- 49 Ibid., 62.
- 50 Ibid., 75.
- 51 Ibid. (emphasis Friedman's).
- 52 Ibid., 63.
- 53 Ibid., 76.
- 54 L.S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933–45* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 258.
- 55 H. Mommsen, *From Weimar to Auschwitz: Essays in German History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 243, where he claims that 'there is no doubt that the resettlement program agreed to in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, whereby ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union were to be settled mainly in the *Wartheland*, provided the impetus for the large-scale deportation program, which affected Poles as well as Jews'.
- 56 M. Broszat, 'Hitler and the Genesis of the "Final Solution": An Assessment of David Irving's Theses', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 13 (1970), 97.
- 57 Ibid., 119.
- 58 Ibid., 120.
- 59 C.R. Browning, 'Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland: 1939–1941', *Central European History*, 19 (1986), 344–5.

- 60 Ibid., 346.
- 61 Ibid., 347–8.
- 62 Ibid., 348.
- 63 Ibid., 355.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 On Hungary, see two recent studies which point to the importance of initiative by municipal officials: J. Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben az V. (Szegedi) Csendörkerületben* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Kiadó, 1995), especially pp. 72–94; T. Cole, 'The Implications of Archival Discoveries: Changing the Shape of the Ghetto, Budapest 1944', in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, eds. J.K. Roth and E. Maxwell (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 198–210, and T. Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York: Routledge, 2003), especially chapters 4–8.
- 66 Browning, 'Nazi Ghettoization', 346–8; Browning, 'Genocide and Public Health', 23–4.
- 67 See, e.g., U. Herbert, 'Labor and Extermination: Economic Interest and the Primacy of *Weltanschauung* in National Socialism', *Past and Present*, 138 (1993), 160, who argues that the rational discourse adopted in the implementation of ghettoization was a form of justification belying the real motivation, and then suggests that once implemented, ghettoization 'became a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy' whereby conditions in the ghettos acted as a form of proof of the 'rational' arguments used in their construction. For example, overcrowding led to epidemics.
- 68 L. Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto 1941–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p. xxxvi.
- 69 Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, p. 55.
- 70 Friedman, 'The Jewish Ghettos', 73.
- 71 Browning, 'Genocide and Public Health', 24.
- 72 Roland, *Courage under Siege*, chapter 7, suggests the usefulness of examining the specific rationalizations being articulated within a broader study of the discourse of typhus. Cf. P. Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe, 1890–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 73 Friedman, 'The Jewish Ghettos', 73–4.
- 74 Ibid., 75.
- 75 Ibid., 75 (my emphasis).
- 76 J. Robinson and P. Friedman, eds., *Guide to Jewish History under Nazi Impact* (Jerusalem and New York: Yad Vashem and YIVO, 1960), p. 74.
- 77 Browning, 'Genocide and Public Health', 26.
- 78 M. Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (London: Michael Joseph Limited, 1982), map 204, p. 158.
- 79 There are more ghetto maps in M. Gilbert, *Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). See also United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Historical Atlas of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan, 1996).
- 80 For more on this, see Cole, 'The Implications' and Cole, *Holocaust City*, chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
- 81 Hilberg, *The Destruction*, p. 222. See also, on the location of the Łódź ghetto, D.M. Smith, *Geography and Social Justice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 258–61.
- 82 This reading of the ghetto landscapes supports Browning's reading of the texts produced by the officials planning and implementing ghettoization in Łódź.
- 83 Hilberg, *The Destruction*, pp. 241–2.
- 84 For more on the changing shape of ghettoization in Budapest, see Cole, *Holocaust City*, especially chapters 4–6 and 8.

- 85 The most significant study is R.D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). He defines territoriality as 'a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area' (p. 1).
- 86 Sack, *Human Territoriality*, p. 22.
- 87 See Cole, *Holocaust City*, especially chapters 5 and 6.
- 88 R. Hilberg, 'The Ghetto as a Form of Government: An Analysis of Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat*', in *The Holocaust as Historical Experience: Essays and a Discussion*, eds. Y. Bauer and N. Rotenstreich (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), p. 157.
- 89 Cole, *Holocaust City*, especially chapters 6 and 8.
- 90 Sack, *Human Territoriality*, p. 19.
- 91 Browning, 'Genocide and Public Health', 26.
- 92 On the contradictory role of smuggling see Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, pp. 332–3.
- 93 Cited in Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews*, p. 265.
- 94 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 272.
- 95 Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p. 1.

5

War, Occupation and the Holocaust in Poland

Dieter Pohl

Poland was a central site of the Second World War, the earliest victim of the National Socialist military attack, with the longest period of occupation, the territory where most of the Holocaust took place and the country with the highest percentage of human loss. No wonder that this period is not only a pre-eminent field of Polish and international historiography, but also the cornerstone of Polish historical identity today. It is almost impossible to give an exhaustive overview of the publications relating to this subject, which began appearing as early as 1940 and now cover a period of more than 60 years. Probably tens of thousands of books and articles, memoirs, pamphlets and scholarly works have been published since then across the world.¹

The development of historiography

This historiographical effort can be divided into five chronological periods.²

Immediately after the liberation in 1944/45 a wave of publications appeared in Poland. Even these were not the first, since there had been a constant flow of exile publications and a variety of underground newspapers and brochures from 1940 onwards. But after liberation the ramifications changed fundamentally, especially since there was, though restricted, a pluralism in the Polish public sphere until early 1947. Survivors, both Jewish and non-Jewish, wrote their memoirs, and newspapers covered the occupation history of their region. The work of newly installed official commissions proved to be of major importance. The government tried to establish war losses, the Ministry of Justice inaugurated the Main Commission for the Investigation of German (later: Nazi) Crimes and the remnants of the Jewish communities united in the Central Jewish Commission. All those bodies compiled documentary evidence or witness statements, and supported the war crimes trials taking place in Poland and Germany.

The political scene was dominated by Soviet rule, and more and more by its Polish communist allies, which took over the state between 1944 and 1948. This severely disrupted political life and resulted in the violent persecution of all non-communist forces. The quantity and variety of publications on the war declined only gradually, first in the newspapers, then all other fields, until 1951/52.³ During this second period of historical inquiry, labelled in Poland 'Stalinist', certain patterns of interpretation were enforced: communist resistance dominated the wartime narrative and, associated with it, a primitive denunciation of all other forces, including the Home Army resistance, the Government-in-Exile and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Many of these forces' representatives were imprisoned in communist Poland, some for the second time, after 1945. The fate of the Polish Jews during the war was, unlike in most other communist states, not fully neglected, but considered of minor importance.

The change of political climate, especially after autumn 1956, also directly affected historiographical inquiry. Of course, the field was still dominated by Communist Party members, but a national communist interpretation evolved, which included the 'bourgeois' forces under occupation. This public discourse somehow had to reflect the fact that the majority of the population remained anti-communist. Nevertheless, wartime history to a large extent consisted of the resistance issue. But gradually the occupation regime itself and its crimes came into focus. The Main Commission, the Jewish Historical Institute, the Academy of Sciences and some universities published fundamental works on most of these aspects; its culmination is represented by Czesław Madajczyk's synthesis of occupation history. But there still existed clear limits for historiographical work: access to sources was given to certain historians only, and was especially restricted in the party and ministry archives.⁴ Most of the research was controlled by state institutions, which channelled interpretation in certain directions, such as pro-communist interpretations of suffering and resistance. By the mid-1960s even nationalist trends were included. The political antisemitic campaign of 1967/68 brought research on the Holocaust almost to a halt and several important historians from the Jewish Historical Institute emigrated. As in all communist countries, the ability to publish was restricted by the state publishing houses, and censorship intervened until 1989.⁵

During the 1970s the interpretations did not vary considerably from the preceding decade, but knowledge of the German occupation regime deepened. Polish historiography to a certain extent was challenged by a number of émigré historians, notably in Paris and London, and was accompanied by the first studies in western countries including the United States, West Germany and Israel.

A major change in historiography occurred in both Poland and the West at the beginning of the 1980s. In Germany especially, interest in the history of Nazism, its occupation policy and its crimes, increased enormously. In Poland

itself matters were complicated by the period of martial law (1981–83). Now, a 'second historiography' emerged, connected to the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) movement. The 'blank spots', such as the Soviet occupations and Stalinist crimes against the Poles, were addressed, though authors had to rely on the underground press or publishers in exile. On the official side, from 1983, the role of Jews in Polish history was reconsidered and studies on the Holocaust started anew. For the first time since 1947, the reaction of Polish society to the occupation came under debate, and in 1987 the Polish response to the Holocaust was addressed. In the late 1980s, Polish historiography, despite the dominance of communist historians and the restrictions of censorship, led the field in eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, changes after the fall of communism in 1989 were inevitable. In the Third Republic historical research shifted from the Academy of Sciences to the universities, and fierce discussions with Communist Party members emerged. Now censorship has been abolished, most sources are available and there exists a broad political variety of publishing facilities. On the other hand, the interest in history in general, but especially concerning the German occupation during the war, has declined in the new market economy. Historiography is now dominated by the investigation of the Soviet takeover of eastern Poland in 1939 and post-war history up to 1956. For the first time, research into the war is not restricted to Poland's post-war borders, but includes the '*kresy*', the former eastern Polish areas which had been annexed by Moscow. Several of the mythical notions of the war have been challenged, but right-wing interpretations are simultaneously on the rise. These two aspects of the fierce debate on the collaboration of Poles in the Holocaust emerged with especial clarity in 2000 around the murder of Jews in Jedwabne.

Today, Polish historiography is more or less integrated in a world-wide dialogue on the Second World War. But even now, most of the research is overlooked because it is published in Polish and the availability of translations is limited. In the West since the 1990s research on the occupation and the Holocaust has dealt with eastern Europe far more than before, while Israeli researchers continue to reconstruct the fate of Polish Jews. In general, we see a broad variety of aspects and interpretations. Methodology has almost reached international standards, but the main trend in historiography, a cultural interpretation of the past, has not yet reached Polish wartime history. Even aspects of gender play only a minor role in research.⁶ Political history and social history prevail, often at a local level, but less so at the micro level.

General studies and interpretations

The general Polish narrative on the war shifted from focusing exclusively on communist resistance to general resistance and martyrdom and finally to

a multifaceted interpretation, integrating the role of Soviet occupation. The milestone for research was published in 1970: Madajczyk's two-volume history of the German occupation. In the 1980s he added a broader interpretation, comparing all German (and Italian) occupations in Europe during the war.⁷ These works still count among the most important, but they have been challenged over the years: Madajczyk devotes only minor parts of his books to the Holocaust, which affected Poland more than any other country, and he tends to see collaboration as having only marginal significance.

Western syntheses had a more limited approach, like that of Martin Broszat who, as early as 1961, outlined German policy in Poland, and Richard Lukas, who concentrated on the suffering of the Poles.⁸ Although there has been a good deal of research on society under occupation and resistance, it was not until 1993 that Czesław Łuczak, the leading historian of the occupation's economic policy, tried to synthesize all aspects of the war, including the Soviet occupation and the exiled Poles.⁹ Eugeniusz Duraczyński, in a rather old-fashioned approach, concentrated on the political history of the Poles, the resistance and the government-in-exile.¹⁰ In a combined effort, Polish and German historians have recently tried to summarize the state of research on German–Polish relations during the war and immediately afterwards.¹¹

War

The war on Polish soil, in 1939 and then again in 1944/45, was dealt with quite early on, but was seen almost exclusively as a German–Polish and only later as a Polish–Soviet conflict. Since the 1980s a broad re-evaluation of the Soviet role has taken place.

Most of the inquiry was devoted to the diplomatic crisis caused by Hitler's war plans during the summer of 1939.¹² Since the opening of the Russian archives, nearly all the important aspects of the crisis have been dealt with, even though major syntheses were published without these sources.¹³ The so-called Hitler–Stalin pact has been discussed in-depth since the 1980s, and in the CIS and the Baltic states since the 1990s.

While studies on the German campaign in September 1939 are almost exclusively older,¹⁴ recent years have brought forward several new publications on the Soviet entry into the war on 17 September and the immediate cooperation of both powers immediately after the fall of Poland.¹⁵

Aspects of the war other than political and operational ones – like the fate of Polish POWs – were not dealt with extensively.¹⁶ The Jews among them were treated far worse than their non-Jewish comrades.¹⁷ Research concentrates here on the murder of Polish POWs (and civilians) by the Soviet NKVD in 1940, especially in Katyn, Kalinin and Kharkov.¹⁸ With regard to POWs in German captivity, one has to rely on studies of individual camps. Nothing substantive

exists on the role of the German *Einsatzgruppen* and the violence against the civil population in 1939, only an extensive chronology.¹⁹ There is still a need for a reconstruction of the violence Poles directed at ethnic Germans immediately before and after the attack, which played a major role in German propaganda. At least the infamous Bydgoszcz incident ('Bromberger Blutsonntag'), in which some 1,000 ethnic German Polish citizens were killed by Poles on 3 September 1939 – a number that was inflated to 58,000 by Nazi propagandists – has been demythologized.²⁰ On the other hand, the continuation of the Polish military effort abroad was one of the favourite subjects of exiled Poles (on the Anders army in the UK) and historians working in Poland (on the Berling army in the Soviet Union).²¹

In 1944/45 Poland was more a battlefield than an active participant in warfare. The German-Soviet battles of that time have been reconstructed by military historians,²² again with few references to issues of politics or the civilian population. But the new Polish and Russian historiography sheds light on Soviet efforts to fight non-communist underground forces immediately after the campaign through Poland.²³

German occupation

The 5½-year German occupation is the central subject of Polish wartime history. Following the different structures of occupation, some of the historiography can be divided into studies pertaining to the so-called annexed territories in western Poland and others on the *Generalgouvernement* in central and southeastern Poland.

Western Poland has, it seems, attracted more attention. Research by and large was undertaken by the Instytut Zachodni, which for a long time focused on wartime studies.²⁴ The three incorporated areas in the western regions – Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen in the north, Reichsgau Wartheland in the centre and the Regierungsbezirk Kattowitz – were considered by the Nazi leadership as settlement areas for Germans, and thus were treated similarly.²⁵ The comparatively most neglected area of the annexed territories was the Bezirk Białystok in northeastern Poland, which came under German rule only after June 1941. Most of its occupation files have been destroyed, important work has not been published and the research is very thinly spread.²⁶

The situation looks much better if one turns to the *Generalgouvernement*, a kind of German colony which did not belong to the German Reich. Some excellent studies have been written on this, focusing on the exploitation and the resettlement schemes;²⁷ or taking a more narrow, regional approach.²⁸ Nearly all larger cities in Poland have had a history of their occupation period written, most of them in a rather orthodox style.²⁹

Like the overviews, the reconstruction of the occupation apparatus has in general focused on the western territories, for which a wealth of administrative studies have been written. But unlike for the military administration, which ruled all German-occupied Poland until October 1939³⁰ and some other areas,³¹ the *Generalgouvernement's* administration still awaits a structural and personal analysis.

The same applies to the important functionaries. Almost no scholarly biography has been published on them, especially not for General Governor Hans Frank. The books that have been published are generally either not comprehensive enough or aimed at a broader audience.³² Some interesting cases are represented by the diary of a typical administrator in the annexed territories and recollections of those German functionaries who helped Poles.³³

The occupation policy was characterized by two major aims: demographic restructuring, which seemed to be the predominant feature for the annexed territories, and economic exploitation, which dominated all occupied areas. Czesław Łuczak wrote an overall synthesis of the two issues, treating all areas equally, with the exception of the '*kresy*'.³⁴

In general, economic policy was divided in two: in the annexed territories all enterprises and bigger farms were to be confiscated and 'Germanized', but a steady economic development was envisaged. The '*Haupttreuhandstelle Ost*' served as the main agency to strip Poles of their property.³⁵ There has been until recently only scattered research on the different branches of industry and commerce, for example the extremely successful exploitation of the Upper Silesian coal mines.³⁶ New insights are being gained from the current general interest in German banks and insurance companies, many of which had branches in occupied Poland.³⁷

In the *Generalgouvernement*, however, during the early years a negative economic policy prevailed; exploitation was concentrated on agriculture. In reality it took a while until the Reich could benefit from these Polish farms.³⁸ Contrary to the initial approach, from 1942 German firms were transferred to occupied Poland in order to save them from Allied bombing.

The major form of exploitation was the recruitment of a workforce for the Reich. More than 2.8 million Poles had to work in Germany with the sign 'P' on their clothes. There they faced persecution by the administration and the police, although the work situation varied: better in agriculture, worse in heavy industry and coal mining.³⁹ The worst fate awaited those who were transferred to 'work education camps' or concentration camps, the sick or pregnant women.⁴⁰

While Polish historiography dealt with the treatment of the workers inside the eastern provinces of Germany and also included the recruitment procedure,⁴¹ German researchers focused almost exclusively on the situation inside the Reich, and here predominantly its western areas.⁴² The issue has recently

gained new political importance as a result of the German law on restitution for forced labour.⁴³

The situation for the occupied inside Poland was not much better. In the annexed territories in particular, the Poles faced many forms of discrimination in social life, such as the closure of schools and social institutions and humiliations in day-to-day contact with the Germans. Poles were placed under special laws which made them citizens of minor status, with almost no rights vis-à-vis the Germans, but in a somewhat better situation than the Jews.⁴⁴

On the other hand, the German occupation was short of ethnic Germans to be 'settled', and thus tried to screen the Poles for any kind of German ancestry. The '*Deutsche Volksliste*', a screening apparatus, divided applicants into four categories of 'racial' status. In Danzig-Westpreußen the administration tried to 'Germanize' as many Poles as possible, whereas in the Warthegau the opposite prevailed.⁴⁵ The majority of men who were considered of German origin had to serve in the Wehrmacht. Unfortunately, no overall history of the '*Deutsche Volksliste*', which was a problematic topic in Polish post-war politics, has been written.⁴⁶

One of the worst features of 'Germanization' consisted of the racial screening of children. War orphans and those from families of alleged resisters were forcibly removed from their families, deported to the Reich and there adopted by German couples. Often it turned out to be impossible to return them to their families after the war.⁴⁷

Persecution and annihilation

The theft of children was only one aspect of persecution during the occupation. Another example is seen in the context of large resettlement schemes, which had been developed earlier in Germany and, from 1941 on, came under the umbrella of the '*Generalplan Ost*'.⁴⁸ Throughout the 1930s German '*Ostforschung*' had discussed plans for 'restructuring' Poland, first and foremost the redrawing of the German–Polish frontier, but also the deportation of 'undesirables' in order to 'modernize' the Polish economy, which was considered backward due to the predominance of small-scale farming and trade.⁴⁹ During the course of the 1939 campaign these plans were high on the agenda, and Himmler was given the role of Resettlement Commissar. But despite his enormous resources of SS and police personnel, Himmler was not able to monopolize settlement policy, but had to compete with the other internal affairs and occupation administrations, the Wehrmacht and agricultural institutions.⁵⁰ Over the next years short- and long-term plans were developed, predominantly to 'Germanize' and 'modernize' the annexed territories. The *Generalgouvernement* was included in planning only after spring 1941, with German 'settlement islands' in the south and east designed to 'squeeze' the Poles. The Germanization of these

areas was envisaged for the next 25 years, but Himmler ordered concrete planning for the Zamość region, south of Lublin.⁵¹ At the end of 1941 these schemes were extended to parts of eastern Poland under the *Generalplan Ost*, which later became the *Generalsiedlungsplan*. Now western Lithuania came into focus, and some officials advocated the total Germanization of Latvia and Estonia. Settlement in the other Soviet territories was to be restricted to existing settlement 'islands', such as those in Volhynia or south of Zapozhie, both in Ukraine. For practical reasons, all other settlements were to be established along the main logistic roads, with periodic 'settlement fortifications' (*Wehrburgen*), which would exploit the local economy and terrorize the population. All in all, the first version of the *Generalplan Ost*, of which no copy has survived the war, included the deportation of 31 million Slavs. Later, even more radical suggestions were put forward, which would have resulted in the expulsion of over 45 million human beings. The *Generalplan* thus was the most gigantic project of genocide ever developed. But due to the course of the war, after the battle of Stalingrad these projects had to be abandoned.⁵²

The plans did not remain theoretical, but often deportations began before large-scale schemes had been worked out in detail. Immediately after the conquest of Poland a massive circulation of population was set in motion. Ethnic Germans from those areas which were to be taken over by the Soviet Union had to move to western Poland,⁵³ and Poles were driven out of their houses and farms to make room. These forced resettlements, predominantly into the *Generalgouvernement*, began during the harsh winter of 1939–40 and ended only in spring 1941. Approximately 900,000 people were thrown out of their homes and deported, approximately half of them to the *Generalgouvernement*, the others inside the occupied regions; often under appalling conditions. And the victims remained in a very difficult position inside the reception areas.⁵⁴

One should not underestimate the relevance of internal resettlements during the occupation. During the course of 'Germanization' inhabitants were driven inside the towns, from town to town, or from west to east within an administrative area. A key place in the history of deportation is taken by the so-called Zamość action south of Lublin, where from autumn 1942 to summer 1943 more than 100,000 locals were deported, some of them to Auschwitz and Majdanek. This was probably the most violent deportation action of non-Jews, which led to an increase in partisan activity in the area.⁵⁵

German crimes in Poland were investigated as early as 1940, with important publications appearing immediately after the war. This perspective was once again adopted in the 1960s, and led to a broad reconstruction of all aspects of mass murder, including the worst such as crimes against children.⁵⁶ The Main Commission published almost continuously on the subject of German atrocities in their journal,⁵⁷ and overviews were given in more popular books and at scholarly conferences.⁵⁸ For internal use, a 50-volume register of all executions

inside (the post-war borders of) Polish territory was put together, a considerable addition to the directory of memorials.⁵⁹

A main precondition for the investigation of Nazi crimes is a broad knowledge of the police apparatus, the main executor of policies and violence in the east. Long before western historians started to investigate the German police in depth, Polish historians had published regional and branch studies of the German occupation police.⁶⁰ The main interest was, of course, in the Gestapo, which was responsible for organizing and implementing persecutions and mass murder. Several regional and local studies have been published, but as yet no synthesis.⁶¹ Western research on the Gestapo and *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) still excludes the occupied Polish territories for the most part.

During the early occupation, a specific terror apparatus emerged, the ethnic German *Selbstschutz*, which was to a large extent responsible for the first mass murders of Poles.⁶² The main target of Nazi extermination in that period was the so-called 'Polish intelligentsia', which included teachers, university personnel and clerics, but also members of political organizations and participants of the 1921 Silesian Uprisings. The victim groups were extended as retaliation for alleged Polish crimes against ethnic Germans. During this period, the annexed territories, especially western Prussia, became major sites of mass murder.⁶³ The intelligentsia in central Poland was heavily affected by mass arrests, as with the infamous incident with the Cracow professors, which in Polish national consciousness has almost equal status with the massacre at Katyn.⁶⁴ In spring 1940 mass murder also struck the Polish intelligentsia in the *Generalgouvernement*, in the so-called *Ausserordentliche Befriedungsaktion*.⁶⁵ Later, mass arrests were frequent, for example, during the so-called *Asozialenaktion* at the beginning of 1943.

Alleged resistance or violations of any occupation rules resulted in trials in the infamous *Sondergerichte* (special courts) or in direct deportation to the camps. The special courts were most active in the annexed territories, based on the specific *Polenrecht* and, until early 1942, against the Jews.⁶⁶ Their activity was almost unknown in the West for a long time.⁶⁷ But most of the persecuted Poles were sent to concentration camps, mostly to Dachau and Mauthausen, where they constituted a major inmate group.

The variety of camps on Polish soil has been dealt with nearly exclusively by Polish historians, who put together an encyclopaedia of camps and internment places (inside current Polish borders), which lists no fewer than 5,800: camps, their branches, ghettos and prisons.⁶⁸ Regional studies show the camp density in more detail.⁶⁹ Of course, the large concentration camps on Polish soil have attracted most attention. The Auschwitz State Museum published a five-volume history of the camp and an impressive camp chronology;⁷⁰ there is intensive research, especially by the Museum staff and in its journal,⁷¹ but also by historians.⁷² On a smaller scale, the same can be said for Majdanek, which was at one

point planned as the biggest concentration camp for Poles,⁷³ and for Stutthof, near Danzig, which became a concentration camp in autumn 1941.⁷⁴ In two other camps inmates were predominantly Jews: unlike the Warsaw concentration camp from 1943, Kraków-Płaszów, which acquired the same status in 1944, has not been the subject of in-depth research, but rather journalistic accounts based on 'Schindler's list'. Most of the camp's administrative files have been lost.⁷⁵

But there were many more categories of camp, predominantly labour or penal camps for workers who had allegedly violated work rules, or farmers who did not supply enough goods. There living conditions varied considerably.⁷⁶ Other camps functioned as transit points or to isolate the Poles from the German population, the '*Polenlager*'. Especially infamous were the camps for Polish youth, in Łódź and in Konstantinów (Tuchingen).⁷⁷

The focus on the camps has ignored the fact that in eastern Europe prisons often had a similar function, and sometimes similar effects. Polish historians have reconstructed the structure and events especially in the biggest prisons – Pawiak in Warsaw, Montelupich in Cracow or the Zamek in Lublin.⁷⁸ These also served as transit points for mass executions.

With the advance of the Red Army into central Poland in July 1944, a hasty evacuation of camps and prisons began, either by train or – especially from January 1945 – by foot, in the so-called death marches. Tens of thousands of prisoners were shot in their detention places, as occurred in several prisons, or killed en route. The death marches from Stutthof and Auschwitz, both in the cold of January 1945, proved to be extremely murderous.⁷⁹

During the second half of the war, the occupiers faced more and more active resistance. For a long time, studies on the resistance movements prevailed, with relatively little interest in the German response to it. This situation changed during the 1980s, when several studies on the Gestapo's ideological perception and the interaction of both forces were published.⁸⁰ Though anti-partisan raids had been launched by the police as early as 1940, large-scale anti-partisan warfare did not start until autumn 1942. This included the Security Police, the Order Police, the SS and the Wehrmacht.⁸¹ In regions where these combined actions took place, villages were burned and their inhabitants either deported or shot. These so-called 'pacifications' cost tens of thousands of lives.⁸²

Unlike the Polish intelligentsia, the Jews and the victims of anti-resistance terror, our knowledge of other victim groups who died on Polish soil is scanty. The inmates of psychiatric institutions were among the first to be killed, starting at the end of 1939. Following the direct murder actions in 1939–40, most died of malnutrition during the occupation.⁸³

It is almost unknown in the West that, in 1941–42, Poland was not only a major site of the Holocaust, but also of the mass death of Soviet POWs who

had been captured during the first year of ‘Operation Barbarossa’. Approximately half a million Soviet soldiers died in POW camps in Poland, most of them from neglect, but tens of thousands of ‘undesirables’ – Jewish soldiers or commissars – were shot.⁸⁴ Polish historiography predominantly reconstructed the history of those POW camps in areas that came under Polish rule only in 1945.⁸⁵

The fate of Polish Romanies began to receive attention only in the 1990s. Apparently there was no overall plan to kill all of them, but nevertheless a genocide took place. Approximately 10,000 Romanies, especially those without permanent residence, were killed by local police. Even more, deported from central Europe, died in Auschwitz.⁸⁶

Soviet occupation

The Soviet occupation of eastern Poland constitutes a new field of research. Despite some important first efforts,⁸⁷ nearly all source-based research has been done since the 1990s, when the Russian archives were opened. This research has reached a state which is in many respects similar to the historiography of the Nazi occupation. It is not surprising that Polish historiography, especially Albin Główacki’s synthesis, concentrates on the Poles in the eastern territories,⁸⁸ while Ukrainian historians have focused on Volhynia and eastern Galicia with its Ukrainian majority.⁸⁹

Soviet rule led to the Sovietization of these areas, a new political order and the gradual expropriation of all major private property – business enterprises, houses and farms. As in the German case, the outstanding feature was persecution, mass arrests and four waves of deportation into remote areas of the Soviet Union, some into the Gulag. Poles and Jewish refugees were among the main targets of this repression.⁹⁰ In eastern Poland the NKVD hunted down alleged resisters, many of whom were executed after secret trials. Finally, the NKVD killed most of its political prisoners during the retreat from the advancing *Wehrmacht* in June 1941.⁹¹ Very few historians have dared to try comparative approaches, especially for the years 1939–41, when both dictatorships ruled Poland at the same time.⁹²

Holocaust

The Jews were the main victims of the Nazi occupation and the only group to be the target of complete extermination from 1941 on. The majority of Polish citizens who fell victim to German rule were of Jewish origin. Despite these simple facts, for a long time the Holocaust did not play a central role in the historiography of wartime Poland. Until 1968 the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw regularly published solid reconstructions of the Jews’ fate,⁹³ summarized

by Artur Eisenbach's still unique synthesis, which was accompanied by an important documentary volume.⁹⁴ During the 1960s international research gradually took over, beginning with Raul Hilberg's classic analysis of the genocide. But Poland did not receive in-depth treatment until the 1990s.⁹⁵

Violence against Jews started in the first days of the war in 1939. Several thousand Jews had already been murdered during the September campaign.⁹⁶ Later, the anti-Jewish policy was taken over – more or less independently – by the regional occupation administrations. Since the 1990s, several regional studies of 'perpetrator' history have been published, which show the attitudes of the different institutions, including the police, administration and economic organizations, towards the Jews, in both German-occupied Poland in 1939⁹⁷ and the eastern territories.⁹⁸ But several of the important regions have not yet been investigated; in those cases it is necessary to rely on older studies.⁹⁹ And there are very few systematic studies on the different fields of German persecution, some on ghettoization,¹⁰⁰ but almost none on two very important issues: expropriation and forced labour. Nevertheless, on a regional basis, some of the several hundred forced labour camps for Jews have been investigated. These had appalling living conditions, and the inmates' life expectancy was extremely short.¹⁰¹

Jews were already dying *en masse* in 1940, especially in the large ghettos. The turn from indirect to direct genocide, which was taken by the Nazi leadership during the course of 1941, has been a topic of historical debate since the end of the 1970s. The active role in this process of the regional occupation administrations, which constantly made proposals to the Nazi leadership in Berlin, has been underlined as the radicalizing framework of both resettlement and economic policy. The administrators wanted to get rid of a minority whom they had stripped of all rights and adequate living conditions.¹⁰²

Outright mass murder started with the invasion of eastern Poland, where, in June–July 1941, predominantly Jewish men were the target of the SS and police units. Virtually unknown is the death of tens of thousands of Jews who had fled from the ghettos and were shot after being captured from November 1941 onwards.¹⁰³ From the end of 1941 extermination facilities were installed on Polish soil; the majority of Jews fell victim to the brutal 'ghetto clearances', which from summer 1942 turned into wild shootings inside the cities and towns. Not all the victims were deported to the extermination centres; almost one million were shot near their homes, predominantly in eastern Poland.¹⁰⁴ The three camps of the *Aktion Reinhard*, Bełżec, Sobibor and Treblinka, became, from the spring of 1942, the murder sites of almost half of Polish Jewry,¹⁰⁵ but no scholarly camp monograph has yet been published.¹⁰⁶ A similar situation applies to the Kulmhof (Chełmno) camp, a major killing site from December 1941 for Jews from the Warthegau.¹⁰⁷ And although there is much more documentation on the mass murder of Jews in the death camps of Auschwitz

and Majdanek, very few studies have devoted space to the 'Jewish aspect' of these camps, contrary to Stutthof.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear, for example, whether there was a close connection between the murder of Jews in Auschwitz and in *Aktion Reinhard*.¹⁰⁹

While German historiography predominantly deals with the perpetrators, Israeli historians focus on the victims. Polish research tries to deal with both aspects.¹¹⁰ It is quite difficult to undertake in-depth research on Jewish life under occupation, since the majority of the witnesses were murdered and most of their wartime documentation destroyed. An outstanding exception to this rule is the Warsaw Underground Archive of Emmanuel Ringelblum and his group, which remains a major source.¹¹¹ It was an Italian researcher who wrote the first scholarly analysis of life in the ghettos in general, with emphasis on Poland.¹¹² Warsaw, with the biggest Jewish community in Poland, has attracted most attention. Several excellent monographs on the ghetto have been published, emphasizing social self-help and resistance.¹¹³ The second largest ghetto, in Łódź, has also been the subject of some, predominantly older, studies.¹¹⁴ Both the Warsaw and the Łódź Ghettos have dominated the picture of Polish Jewry, despite the fact that closed ghettos were not installed in most regions before 1941, and in some instances not before 1942. Much less knowledge has been acquired on these smaller ghettos, but books on Białystok, Grodno, Kielce, Cracow, Lublin, Lwów and Wilna are available, all with special reference to resistance.¹¹⁵ Regional studies on the victims, which analyse life in the smaller communities, are still few.¹¹⁶ The most comprehensive overview of the fate of Jewish communities is given in the *Pinkas Hakehillot* series, an encyclopaedia of community history.¹¹⁷

Some aspects of Jewish life under persecution have been treated thoroughly, such as nutritional and health status, or religious observance.¹¹⁸ Research on women and children in the ghettos has been patchy or has relied on a narrow empirical basis.¹¹⁹ Hence Jewish self-perception and identity, as well as their view of the Poles under occupation, remain unexplored.

Historiography has been much more concerned with the contentious issues of the Jewish organizations and Jewish resistance. Most conflict surrounds the *Judenräte* (Jewish Councils), bodies that were set up by the occupation authorities. After serious attacks on their role during the occupation, Isaiah Trunk published a monumental book analysing all the activities of the *Judenräte*, focusing on their social role and differentiating their activities to a much greater extent than earlier studies.¹²⁰ The worst – and most contentious – chapter of the Jewish Councils remains their participation in the deportations, using the Jewish ghetto police.¹²¹

Much more positive is the image of the illegal Jewish organizations, like the various Zionist and socialist groups,¹²² especially the Bund.¹²³ The spectrum of resistance among the Jews has been broadened by historians. Some count

nearly all activities that saved Jewish lives and maintained Jewish collective identity as forms of civil defence or resistance. Earlier research focused only on armed resistance,¹²⁴ which started in eastern Poland in 1942 and culminated in the Warsaw Uprising of April–May 1943. The Uprising itself has acquired an almost mythical status, which can detract from the events themselves.¹²⁵ Today activities such as social assistance, smuggling and underground publications and culture are taken more into consideration.¹²⁶

The majority of Polish Jews had been killed by the end of 1942. By September 1943 all ghettos except Łódź had been liquidated; Jews could survive for only a limited time in camps or in hiding, either with the help of non-Jewish Poles or by passing as 'Aryan'. The question of how Polish society reacted to the murder of the Jews was being discussed immediately after the war. But from 1947 the issue was restricted to one topic, the rescue of Jews by Poles. Especially during the 'Anti-Zionist' campaign of 1967–68, several publications were issued to defend the Polish image. Jewish witnesses and historians outside Poland took a rather different stand: they accused Poles of having collaborated in the Holocaust.¹²⁷ Starting in the late 1980s, intellectuals began to reconsider Polish–Jewish relations. Then, in 2000, Jan T. Gross, in his book on the Jedwabne pogrom of 1941, caused a moral outcry in Poland. Despite some very critical¹²⁸ and even antisemitic responses, the case led to a re-evaluation of Poles' reactions. There is no study of wartime antisemitism among Poles, including the role of the Catholic Church in this context.¹²⁹ Apparently the acknowledgement of the 'Judeo-Bolshevik' stereotype spread among the Polish population, especially in 1940–41.¹³⁰

But despite enormous efforts to clarify the events in and around Jedwabne,¹³¹ there is almost no modern research on Polish–Jewish relations. Several efforts to reconstruct this interrelation on a local basis resulted in contention.¹³² The only advanced field remains Polish rescue efforts on behalf of Jews, which have been analysed by western historians.¹³³ Much information has been amassed on the attitude of the different resistance movements to the Jews, which, not surprisingly, varied widely;¹³⁴ even the Government-in-Exile, which installed the Council for Aid to Jews,¹³⁵ seemed reluctant to make the genocide public.¹³⁶ Much less is known about the participation of Poles in the persecution or other pogroms, the role of the Polish police, denunciations or of local Poles who profited from the expropriation of Jewish property.¹³⁷ Despite these blank spots it is necessary to emphasize the difficult situation of the Poles themselves, who until early 1943 had no hope of being liberated.

Polish society and the underground

Until the 1970s, Polish society under the occupation remained a subject of fiction. With few exceptions, historiography started to investigate the moods and behaviour of ordinary citizens under foreign rule only at the end of that

decade. Tomasz Szarota's history of daily life in Warsaw remains path-breaking,¹³⁸ as does the sociological interpretation by Jan T. Gross, who was the first to emphasize corruption as a structural pattern of occupation, which enabled bargaining between rulers and ruled.¹³⁹ Since then others have extended this approach to eastern Polish areas¹⁴⁰ or tried to synthesize the history of society under occupation, especially under economic aspects.¹⁴¹ Still counted among the most important sources are two diaries, an urban one by Ludwik Landau and a rural one by Zygmunt Klukowski. Both require re-editions, since they were obviously subjected to censorship.¹⁴²

The majority of the Polish population lived in the countryside. As research has shown, they fared much better than the urban population, sometimes even better than before 1939, since Polish agriculture had been in serious structural crisis from the 1920s. Of course, the situation was much worse in the incorporated territories and in those regions where anti-partisan warfare was followed by large-scale terror from 1942–43.¹⁴³

The workers remained much less important in occupation history, since Poland had very few regional industrial centres, and a significant proportion of the workforce was deported to the Reich. Nevertheless, communist historiography emphasized this stratum of the population, with an inevitable Marxist slant.¹⁴⁴

Only a few Polish institutions were permitted under the occupation rule, including the Red Cross and the Main Social Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*), a welfare organization which played an important role under German rule.¹⁴⁵ Much more difficult was the position of the most important social institution in Poland, the Catholic Church. Clerics, especially in the Warthegau, were persecuted as part of the Polish national intelligentsia, but the Church remained intact and a bastion of Polish identity. Nevertheless, historiography is limited to Nazi persecution or the organization and welfare activity of the Church.¹⁴⁶ There is almost no research, based on archival sources, on the Church's cultural role and day-to-day relationship with the occupying forces.¹⁴⁷

As well as the Catholic Church, one has to consider the Protestant minority in the west, the Orthodox Churches and the Greek Catholic Church in the east of the country. This leads us to the minority issue, which caused intense conflict, particularly during the 1930s. In the *Generalgouvernement* the Ukrainians were able to obtain a somewhat better position than the Poles in their area.¹⁴⁸ Conflicts arose during the second half of the war, leading to a kind of domestic war between the Polish and Ukrainian Underground. Polish and Ukrainian historiography were deeply divided on these issues, but in the 1990s a dialogue on the critical topics began.¹⁴⁹ The most influential minority during the war, the ethnic Germans, have not attracted the interest of historians at all.¹⁵⁰

Even more critical seems to be the question of whether there was any form of collaboration, as in most other countries under Nazi rule. This has been

rejected for a long time, but since the 1990s different features of Polish participation in the administration, especially in the *Generalgouvernement*, have been uncovered.¹⁵¹ Most prominent is the *Policja granatowa*, the Dark Blue Police, which supported the Germans in raids and anti-Jewish actions, but also was highly infiltrated by the Underground.¹⁵² Except for Warsaw, the indigenous communal administrations have not yet been analysed.¹⁵³ Other fields of interest remain the official local press or auxiliary organizations like the *Baudienst* or the Poles in the railways.¹⁵⁴

There is much less debate about the central factor of Polish historical wartime identity: the so-called Underground state and the resistance movements. Hundreds of books have been devoted to the Polish efforts to undermine and challenge German occupation rule, including some rather biased general works,¹⁵⁵ and some new syntheses.¹⁵⁶

For the most part the Underground tried to establish a counter-state and a counter-culture, since both had been abolished or suppressed by the occupation authorities. Historians have published an enormous amount on all the forms of underground education.¹⁵⁷ But underground culture, theatres and music have also been dealt with.¹⁵⁸ The most political forms of counter-culture were represented by the broad spectrum of illegal publications, including leaflets, newspapers, brochures and books.¹⁵⁹ They aimed to challenge the occupation-sponsored publications for the population's attention. These publications, including the work of famous Polish authors, have been neglected for a long time. Now a re-evaluation of these extremely anti-Bolshevik, often antisemitic publications has begun, revealing that German propaganda from early 1943 tried to a certain extent to integrate the Poles into an anti-Soviet front.¹⁶⁰

The continuity of the Polish Second Republic was taken over by the Polish Government-in-Exile, which in 1940 moved to London. These politicians were in an extremely difficult situation, since until 1941 and from 1943 they had to fight both the German and the Soviet dictatorships, and the British government gave priority to the larger ally.¹⁶¹ Inside Poland an Underground administration, the *Delegatura*, was created. It also had to face more and more conflict with communist forces from 1943 on.¹⁶²

It is almost impossible to summarize the publications on Polish resistance movements. In general, one can see a tendency to do research from the left wing of resistance immediately after the war to its right wing today. But the central part consisted of the *Armia Krajowa*, the Home Army, which, under the guidance of the Government-in-Exile, united groups of different political orientations. Historians can still rely on the important exile history of the Home Army from 1950.¹⁶³ Recently several collections dealing with the Home Army have shed new light on its history, including, for example, its negotiations with the German forces in the Wilna area in 1944.¹⁶⁴ The Home Army

represented Polish continuity, especially with the political system before 1935; its strategy was to concentrate on underground work and propaganda and to try to avoid armed conflict with the occupation powers until the latter became weaker.

Studies include organization,¹⁶⁵ concepts, intelligence work for the British, sabotage and propaganda, the fight against collaborationists, and an important biography of Stefan Rowecki, the Home Army leader until 1943.¹⁶⁶ There is a wealth of regional histories for almost every part of Poland. But it was only during the last decade that the eastern Polish territories were included. This was where conflict with Soviet partisans and the National Ukrainian Underground was increasing from 1943 onwards.¹⁶⁷ Much less is known about the other resistance movements, like the Peasant Battalions, which were very active and cooperated with the Home Army; the 'Grey Rows', which was an offshoot of the Boy Scout movement; and the Polish Socialist Party.¹⁶⁸

Communist historiography always emphasized the role of the communist underground, the Polish Workers Party (PPR), which was founded in 1942, with its military branch, Gwardia Ludowa, and, from 1944, the Armia Ludowa. For a long time the extreme difficulties faced by the communists in their post-war takeover of Poland were ignored. Their party had been exterminated by Stalin in 1938, and apparently had to be re-installed with the help of the NKVD. They could not rely on broad social support, since the overwhelming majority of the Poles were anti-communist. Nevertheless the communist resistance from the beginning sought confrontation with the occupiers and, from 1943 on, prepared for a political turnover in favour of Stalin.

The historiography of the PPR, GL and AL is extensive, though in general apologetic. But even orthodox historians have had to reconsider the problems of this Underground.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, younger researchers are now trying to revise this image and present the PPR/GL as criminal thugs, sponsored by the NKVD, and fighting mainly against the liberal forces and not the Germans.¹⁷⁰

Almost the opposite perception pertains to the right-wing Underground, which was a branch of the National Democratic Party and its fascist sub-organizations. The National Armed Forces (NSZ) fought the Germans and communists, but also, unlike most of the Home Army, the Jews and other minorities. In Polish historiography they were mostly treated as illegitimate forces, especially because of their tactical cooperation with the occupation administration. As was previously the case among historians-in-exile, there is now a tendency to rehabilitate the NSZ.¹⁷¹

Non-Polish resistance organizations were always treated critically within Poland. Apart from the Soviet partisans, who were active particularly in western Belorussia, the Ukrainian Uprising Army (UPA) was one of the biggest resistance organizations in Europe. Its image remained negative until the

1980s, when Ukrainian historians began to re-evaluate the UPA as part of their national tradition and present it in a favourable light.¹⁷² Nevertheless, the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' of Poles, especially in western Volhynia, and the armed conflict with the Home Army remain disputed topics.¹⁷³

One cannot speak about Polish resistance without referring to the biggest armed uprising in Hitler's Europe, the Warsaw Uprising which lasted from August to October 1944. The Government-in-Exile and the Home Army leadership relied on the 'Burza' (Storm) concept, waiting for a general uprising during a German retreat. These plans had already failed during the Red Army advance into eastern Poland, which triggered uprisings in Wilna and Lwów.¹⁷⁴ When the Red Army approached Warsaw, in a very short time the fatal decision was taken to liberate the capital immediately prior to a Soviet take-over. Until 1956, Polish historiography had to consider this as an adventurous step ordered from London. Since then the decision to launch the uprising has been under debate.¹⁷⁵ The events themselves have been reconstructed in detail, including each relevant quarter of Warsaw, the military actions,¹⁷⁶ the losses and extermination of approximately 180,000 civilians, and the forced exodus of the remaining population.¹⁷⁷ After the opening of the Russian archives it became possible to analyse more closely Stalin's decision not to help the insurgents.¹⁷⁸

Consequences

Poland had to face unique consequences after liberation: half the country was taken over as Soviet territory; shifting the territory to the west was accompanied by a massive forced resettlement of the German inhabitants; and, little by little, by 1947–48 Poland had become a communist state. The human losses were enormous. For a long time, the figure of six million dead, or one sixth of the population, was undisputed. Only during the 1990s did criticism of these statistics, which were calculated by the government immediately after the war, surface.¹⁷⁹ The attempt to establish reliable data faces several obstacles: the loss of files, the complicated territorial situation, disagreement on the number of victims of Stalinist rule in eastern Poland. Today, one can assume that around three million Polish Jews died in the Holocaust; probably more than 1.5 million ethnic Poles fell victim to the German occupation; several hundreds of thousands died during the Soviet occupation; and more than 600,000 Polish citizens lost their lives during the military actions of 1939. To this one has to add approximately half a million non-Poles and non-Jews, especially Ukrainians, Belorussians, ethnic Germans and Romanies. To sum up, probably around six million Polish citizens were killed during the war, of whom almost half were of Jewish origin and more than one third were ethnic Poles.

Notes

- 1 Cf. *Bibliografia historii polskiej* (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, 1952ff), which appears almost on an annual basis, last issue for 1999 (2001); A. Lawaty and W. Mincer, eds., *Deutsch-polnische Beziehungen in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Bibliographie* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 735–950: almost 4,000 entries, Polish titles with German translation. Cf. W. Okonski, *Wartime Poland, 1939–1945: A Select Annotated Bibliography of Books in English* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997).
- 2 Apparently there are no publications on the sector of Polish historiography which dealt with the war, unlike postwar history. Cf. K. Ruchniewicz, 'Die zeithistorische Forschung in Polen nach 1989: Hauptprobleme der Forschung, Forschungsdefizite sowie historische Debatten', *Jahrbuch für europäische Geschichte* (in press).
- 3 Cf. E. Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska w oczach Polaków. Poglądy i opinie z lat 1945–1948* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1987); R. Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem. Spory o nowy model historii w Polsce, II połowa lat czterdziestych – początek lat pięćdziesiątych* (Łódź: Wydawn. Uniw. Łódzkiego, 1993).
- 4 For the state archives, see Naczelną Dyrekcją Archiwów Państwowych, ed., *Katalog inwentarzy archiwalnych*, 2 vols (Warsaw: NDAP, 1971/77); *Druga wojna światowa. Informator o materiałach źródłowych przechowywanych w archiwach PRL* (Warsaw: NDAP, 1972). For German archives, see H. Boberach et al., eds., *Inventar archivalischer Quellen des NS-Staates*, vol. 2 (Munich: Saur, 1995).
- 5 Cf. Z. Romek, ed., *Cenzura w PRL. Relacje historyków* (Warsaw: Neriton, Inst. Historii PAN, 2000).
- 6 See the new approach by E. Harvey, "Die deutsche Frau im Osten": "Rasse", Geschlecht und öffentlicher Raum im besetzten Polen 1940–1944', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 38 (1998), 191–214.
- 7 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, 2 vols (Warsaw: PWN, 1970); idem, *Faszyzm i okupacje 1938–1945. Wykonywanie okupacji przez państwa Osi w Europie*, 2 vols (Poznań: Wyd. Poznańskie, 1983/84).
- 8 M. Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1961); R.C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation 1939–1944* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986).
- 9 C. Łuczak, *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej* (Poznań: Wyd. naukowe UAM, 1993); cf. also his chronology: *Od pierwszej do ostatniej godziny drugiej wojny światowej. Dzieje Polski i Polaków* (Poznań: PSO, 1995).
- 10 E. Duraczyński, *Polska 1939–1945. Dzieje polityczne* (Warsaw: Bellona, Wiedza Powszechna, 1999); W. Bonusiak, *Polska podczas II wojny światowej* (Rzeszów: Wydawn. Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1995).
- 11 W. Borodziej and K. Ziemer, eds., *Deutschland und Polen 1939–1945–1949: Eine Einführung* (Osnabrück: fibre, 2000).
- 12 One of the most recent titles: St. Żerko, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1938–1939* (Poznań: Inst. Zachodni, 1998).
- 13 D.C. Watt, *How War Came. The Immediate Origin of the Second World War, 1938–1939* (New York: Pantheon, 1989); H. Graml, *Europas Weg in den Krieg. Hitler und die Mächte 1939* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990).
- 14 T. Jurga, *Obrona Polski 1939* (Warsaw: Inst. Wydawn. Pax, 1990); *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Vol. 2* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1979); cf. Centralna Biblioteka Wojskowa, ed., *Wojna obronna Polski w 1939 r.: Bibliografia*, 3 vols (Warsaw: CBW, 1979–92).

- 15 H. Batowski, ed., *17 września 1939: Materiały z Ogólnopolskiej Konferencji Historyków, Kraków, 25–26 października 1993* (Kraków: Nakł. Polskiej Akad. Umiejętności, 1994); C. Grzelak et al., eds., *Agresja sowiecka na Polskę w świetle dokumentów 17 września 1939*, 3 vols (Warsaw: Bellona, 1994–96); S. Slutsch, '17. September 1939. Der Eintritt der Sowjetunion in den Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 48 (2000), 219–54.
- 16 J. Pollack, *Jeńcy Polscy w hitlerowskiej niewoli* (Warsaw: Wyd. MON, 1982); D. Kisielewicz, *Oficerowie polscy w niewoli niemieckiej w czasie II wojny światowej* (Opole: Centralne Muzeum Jeńców Wojennych, 1998); S. Datner, *Zbrodnie Wehrmachtu na jeńcach wojennych armii regularnych w II wojnie światowej*, 2nd edition (Warsaw: Wyd. MON, 1964); abridged English trans.: *Crimes against POWs* (Warsaw: Zachodnia Agencja Prasowa, 1964). Cf. E. Nowak, ed., *Niemiecki i radziecki system jeniecki w latach II wojny światowej: podobieństwa i różnice* (Opole: Centralne Muzeum Jeńców Wojennych, 1997).
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6

Local Collaboration in the Holocaust in Eastern Europe

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For many years the issue of local collaboration did not play a major role in the debates surrounding the Holocaust. The long-running skirmishes that emerged from the 1960s on the primacy of ‘intentionalism’ or ‘functionalism’ in the realization of Nazi genocidal plans were focused squarely on the German administration and the decision-making process at the centre.² Only with the development of more detailed regional studies, especially in the 1990s, has the role of local collaboration become more closely integrated into our understanding of the destruction process.³

This is not to say that the phenomenon was unknown before. The seminal work of Raul Hilberg drew attention to the participation of local auxiliaries in many countries, especially in Lithuania, Croatia and Ukraine, where they played a particularly active part.⁴ The national historiographies of satellite states, such as Hungary and Romania, have grappled for some time with assessing the relative weight of German pressure and local initiatives in explaining their role in the Holocaust.⁵ Until relatively recently, however, these debates took place mainly on the margins of historical discourse.

Now a number of elements have come together to focus attention on local collaboration. First, the fall of communism in eastern Europe and the opening of the archives prepared the way for a more critical reassessment of local participation in the Holocaust in these countries. Meanwhile, the investigation of Nazi war criminals living in the United States and other western countries, begun in earnest during the 1980s, has furnished some of the evidence and public attention necessary to overcome both Soviet and nationalist reluctance to confront the issue.⁶

In more general terms the historical debate also moved on in the 1990s. One backlash from the extreme position taken by Daniel Goldhagen, with his theory of ‘eliminationist anti-Semitism’ as a uniquely German trait, has been

to cause some critics to point to the lengthy traditions of antisemitism in other countries. In a direct rebuttal of Goldhagen, Ruth Bettina Birn presented comparative evidence on the motivation of local auxiliaries in order to expose weaknesses in his thesis.⁷ More recently, the reaction in Poland to Jan Gross's book *Neighbors*, on the participation of Poles in one local massacre, has projected questions of local collaboration, and their implications for 'national identity', towards centre stage.⁸

The increasing significance of the Holocaust and human rights issues in international relations has also fuelled research into local collaboration. Diplomatic pressure exerted on the states of eastern Europe to try war criminals, return Jewish property and confront their past has resulted in the establishment of Historical Commissions in several countries and much greater public debate on the Holocaust.⁹ To date, an improved understanding of the Holocaust has mostly been limited to a small academic élite. Nevertheless this is an important first step.

In this brief survey of current debates on collaboration it is not possible to present a comprehensive analysis of the many facets of this issue. In terms of geography alone, justice cannot be done to the historiography of more than ten eastern European countries in the space available here. Rather, the aim of this essay is to concentrate on several key aspects where recent research has begun to change or clarify our perception of events. Reference will be made to specific examples from several countries that reflect these important trends. The main focus of attention will be on the direct participation of local collaborators in the events of the Holocaust, although reference will be made also to those who benefited economically from the killings. The analysis of local collaboration must also examine the evidence of assistance to Jews or its absence, as an important barometer of local attitudes.¹⁰

The question of pre-war antisemitism in eastern Europe is very important for establishing the framework of events. It cannot be dealt with extensively here, but it is important to note that estimations of its intensity vary considerably among authors even for the same country, as much of the available evidence is anecdotal, while the main events and laws can be subjected to differing interpretations.¹¹ Linked to antisemitism is the impact of the brief Soviet occupations in the period 1939–41 in eastern Poland, the Baltic states and Romania, which caused some elements of the population initially to welcome the Germans as liberators. However, for many scholars the litmus test of collaboration is the initial response to the German invasion, in particular, the degree of spontaneity of initial attacks against the Jews by the local population. As this debate has produced some particularly heated exchanges, it will be examined first as a way into the complex issues surrounding collaboration.

Perhaps more significant for the actual implementation of the Holocaust was the participation of local auxiliaries in mass murder within regular police

formations under German control. Most historical attention hitherto has been directed towards a small number of notorious units such as the Latvian *Arajs Kommando*, or the Lithuanian 12th *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion, which acted as mobile killing squads for the Germans.¹² Recently, there has been more attention paid to other police battalions that did not leave such a clear documentary trail.¹³ For example, Christoph Dieckmann has concluded that, in 1942, 8,000 Lithuanians were serving in 20 mobile police battalions, of which at least ten were involved in the murder of the Lithuanian Jews in 1941.¹⁴ My own research has focused on the role of local police collaborators, who served in the so-called *Schutzmannschaft-Einzeldienst*. These units comprised the bulk of police manpower under the Germans and were recruited mainly from the remaining local male population of military age. During the 'second wave' of killings conducted in western Belorussia and Ukraine in 1942, there is strong evidence to support the contention that their participation was a necessary precondition for the successful completion of the Nazi genocidal campaign against the Jews.¹⁵

The issue of political collaboration with the Germans at a national level has always been a staple of historical debate, if this has not always been linked directly to collaboration in the Holocaust.¹⁶ However, it is only recently that a more detailed examination of the role of the indigenous administration under the Germans at the local level has begun. Given the small numbers of German personnel throughout occupied eastern Europe, there was necessarily considerable reliance on local collaborators, not only in terms of everyday administration, but also for the implementation of certain aspects of anti-Jewish policies.¹⁷ This becomes readily apparent, for instance, in the registration of Jewish property, where the local administration played a significant role.¹⁸

The example of property raises the broader question of the responses of the local population to the Holocaust. Karel Berkhoff's recent work on everyday life under Nazi rule serves as a good model on the need to avoid national stereotyping on the basis of limited evidence. His broad survey of sources from German, Jewish and local perspectives attempts to balance the evidence of Ukrainian antisemitism against the examples of aid given to Jews by some individuals, while also noting certain regional differences.¹⁹ This microcosm holds true for all eastern Europe. It is perhaps through such regional, and also broader international, comparisons that a better assessment of the extent, motives and consequences of local collaboration can be achieved.

In a final section, several recent reinterpretations of the Holocaust in Hungary will be examined. Although the context and timing here are in many respects quite different from events in the occupied Soviet territories, this example shows nevertheless how similar themes of local collaboration unfolded in 1944. In particular, the new approach of Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach argues that a combination of a desire for the revision of Hungary's borders, anti-communism

and economic measures against the Jews helped to align Hungary with Nazi Germany in the 1930s. As in Germany, the unfolding of the Holocaust of Hungarian Jews is closely linked to the economic expropriation of their property and broader Hungarian plans of 'ethnic homogenization'.²⁰

The work of the three Baltic Historical Commissions, partly responding directly to international pressure, also reflects some of the historiographical developments outlined briefly above. For instance, the Historical Commission established in Estonia has attempted to define the main local collaborationist organizations that were involved in the Holocaust. These included members of the Estonian Political Police that worked closely with the Nazis, individual members of specific Estonian Police Battalions (*Schutzmannschaften*) and a relatively small proportion of the 40,000 or so men who served in the 'forest brothers' (*Omakaitse*) units during the early stages of the German occupation. Applying strict legal definitions of criminality, rather than addressing the more general attitude of the local population towards their Jewish neighbours, the Commission's initial approach appears to confine culpability to a relatively small number of individuals. Yet the small size of Estonia's Jewish population (4,000), of which some 75 per cent managed to flee, does make Estonia something of a special case. The careful wording of the Commission's introductory overview reflects its dual concerns of answering international criticism and establishing certain basic facts: 'It is unjust that an entire nation should be criminalized because of the actions of some of its members; but it is equally unjust that its criminals should be able to shelter behind a cloak of victimhood.'²¹

This last sentence reflects a prominent theme in the historiography of eastern Europe, that of 'competitive martyrology'.²² In many countries, but especially in the Baltic states, any awareness of the suffering of the Jews has generally been obscured by the acute sense of national suffering at the hands of the Soviets. This has been compounded by an exaggerated impression of local Jews having actively supported the Soviet authorities, especially during the annexations and deportations of 1939–41. In fact, the percentage of Jews deported by the Soviets and dispossessed was generally higher than that of other nationalities in the annexed territories.²³ However, the predominant approach among many scholars working on the Baltic states, even in dealing with the Holocaust period, is still to examine events from a strongly nationalistic perspective.

A recent international conference organized by the Uppsala Centre for Multiethnic Research in Sweden demonstrates this point. The main thrust of a number of papers discussing collaboration was to frame the events of the Holocaust within a familiar 'Baltic narrative'. There was a similar pattern to the remarks, whether the country was Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia. Speakers initially argued that there was relatively little antisemitism in the region prior to the war, except for some extremist groups. Then they would mention the

deep scars left on the national psyche by the Soviet occupation. Finally, the causal chain leading to collaboration was generally completed by a discussion of the perceived image of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets.²⁴

This very narrow national focus and selective choice of key events largely ignores the more complex issues of Jewish relations with non-Jews prior to the Second World War (and still smacks of apology to western ears). As Omer Bartov points out, 'merely reconstructing the two years of Soviet occupation that preceded the German invasion is hardly sufficient as a context for the events of 1941–1944'.²⁵ Clearly, there was a rebound effect from the Soviet deportations and many people had false expectations of national independence from the Germans. However, the genocidal treatment of the Jewish population cannot be explained solely in terms of anti-communism and geopolitics. The diverse motives of the individual perpetrators at the local level also deserve closer attention.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this 'Baltic narrative' is its self-obsession and disregard for the perspectives of Holocaust victims and survivors. A few local Jews were communists, but the majority were also victims of Stalin's terror apparatus. More account has to be taken of the unenviable predicament facing the Jewish (and other) minorities in this region. There is a need for historical interpretations that examine the suffering of all groups of the population, rather than looking to settle old political scores.²⁶

While the work of the historical commissions in the Baltic states is to be welcomed and offers the opportunity for the development of more balanced local scholarship, their approach is in some respects problematic. All three Commissions have chosen to examine Nazi crimes within the broader framework of the Soviet occupations and deportations both before and after the Nazi invasion. This structure unfortunately serves to reinforce some of the arguments, noted above, that try to explain local participation in the Holocaust primarily in terms of responses to the Soviet occupation. Although this immediate political context is very important, there is also a need to look at the longer-term historical background and the local social conditions that were not conditioned solely by people's views of communism. It remains to be seen how the Commissions deal with these delicate issues in their final reports.

The most heated controversies and debates in recent years have surrounded the concept of 'spontaneous' local collaboration in the Holocaust accompanying the initial Nazi advance. This is very much at the heart of the *Neighbors* debate unleashed by Jan Gross's work, as his interpretation at least implied that the German role was minimal and that in Jedwabne local Poles willingly took part in the murder of their Jewish neighbours on a large scale. The shock waves of public opinion created by his book, which initially outraged many Poles who felt personally insulted by any taint of collaboration, has gradually given way to more detailed scholarship. A pattern of German-inspired actions has now

been confirmed in some of the neighbouring towns (most notably Radziłów) and it is most likely that the initiation, or at least the permission, for the 'massacre' in Jedwabne came from the Germans, if the role of the Poles as active perpetrators is undisputed.²⁷

The work of the Polish Institute for National Memory, examining a number of issues surrounding the Jedwabne debate, confirms the need for further scholarship on the broader issues of 'collaboration'. The Institute's report also examined the pattern of anti-Jewish incidents in the Białystok district during the first month following the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union.²⁸ However, it is clear that the scope of such research needs to be expanded still further. For example, one topic that has been largely neglected previously is the role played by Poles in the local police forces in *Generalbezirk Weissruthenien* (roughly contiguous with the western part of modern Belarus). Although subject to repressive measures as a group, and clearly mistrusted by the Germans, there were nevertheless hundreds of Poles who actively participated in anti-Jewish measures here as members of the *Schutzmannschaft*.²⁹

In the Baltic states the debate on the issue of 'spontaneous' pogroms occurring before the arrival of the Germans and what the absence or presence of such actions might tell us about the nature of local antisemitism remains very much alive.³⁰ The foremost case is Lithuania, where local nationalist activists (described confusingly as 'partisans') sought to round up and settle scores with their political opponents the moment the Soviets took to their heels. Many Jews also fell victim to these local anti-communist 'purges' in Lithuania, although their full extent remains disputed, partly due to the limited sources available for this chaotic period of transition from Soviet to German control.³¹

The question remains clouded on account of the Nazis' plans to coordinate local 'self-purges' or pogroms directed specifically against the Jews, without leaving any trace of their own role as *agent-provocateurs*.³² Thus some nationalist historians attempt to play down the significance of local participation in the initial anti-Jewish measures, including those that occurred before the German arrival, claiming that even these were a product of German manipulation and not a spontaneous outburst.³³ Certainly for Latvia the comparative lack of evidence for widespread spontaneous actions against the Jews leads to a greater degree of caution. Nevertheless, as Henry Huttenbach points out, the great disparity between Jewish accounts of the first days of the German invasion and the versions to be found in other sources still requires some explanation.³⁴

Historians have noted similar spontaneous pogroms in Ukraine and Belorussia in the interim period between the Red Army's retreat and the Germans' arrival, although many of these initial actions were directed against Jewish property more than Jewish lives.³⁵ In Romania, the Iași pogrom and other atrocities committed shortly after the Axis attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 demonstrate the willingness of both the Romanian state and some of its people

to take the lives of fellow Jewish citizens.³⁶ Clearly, there is an element of spontaneity and local initiative involved in these actions that indicates not all blame can be laid at the door of the Germans.

In explaining these local excesses at the start of 'Operation Barbarossa' reference is frequently made back to the mass deportations conducted by Soviet forces a few days earlier and the alleged role of Jews in the NKVD and as informers. In particular, the warm welcome given by many Jews to the Red Army in 1939 (mostly out of relief at escaping German occupation)³⁷ served to reinforce German and local propaganda that accused all Jews of sympathizing with the communists. The work of Bogdan Musial has demonstrated the close links between the uncovering of victims of the Soviets in towns liberated by the Germans and the outbreak of local pogroms and massacres against the Jews, who were often rounded up to bury the corpses.³⁸ There is a danger, however, that this explanatory schema can be used to 'excuse' the anti-Jewish actions as an 'understandable' revenge measure. The truth is that the vast majority of those Jews killed had nothing to do with Soviet atrocities. The perpetrators had mostly fled with the Soviet forces. Yet there was clearly an element of 'hot blood' in some of these early and improvised outbursts.

These 'spontaneous' outbursts were, however, short-lived, as the Germans had little interest in permitting civil unrest in the area of military operations. The German military and police authorities usually established more organized local police forces that were directly answerable to them within a matter of days. This brings us to the question of the service of non-Germans in police and auxiliary forces and their role in the implementation of the Holocaust: could the Germans have murdered so many of the Jews of eastern Europe without active support from members of the local population?

At first glance the detailed reports created by the *Einsatzgruppen* appear to give an unequivocal answer to this question. If only some 3,000 German SS and police troops could murder more than 600,000 people (mostly Jews) within the first ten months of the occupation of the Soviet Union, then shortage of personnel and therefore the need for local collaboration could not have been a major restriction on the implementation of the Holocaust. A more careful reading of this key source reveals, however, that the *Einsatzgruppen* did not act alone, but with considerable support from other SS, police and also local collaborationist forces.³⁹

Christopher Browning, in arguing that the Nazis took a key step towards genocide during late July 1941, points to a massive build-up of forces at this time. Not only did Himmler assign more than 16,000 men of the SS and police to the Higher SS and Police Leaders in support of the *Einsatzgruppen*, but on 25 July 1941 he issued orders for the creation of auxiliary police formations (*Schutzmannschaften*), made up of 'Ukrainians, the inhabitants of the Baltic States and Belorussians'.⁴⁰ By July 1942 the *Schutzmannschaften* exceeded

75,000 men and formed the bulk of the available police manpower in these regions.⁴¹ However, it is not necessarily correct to assume that their creation was a direct result of Nazi plans for genocide.

As Christoph Dieckmann has pointed out, the creation of auxiliary police forces on a large scale in the occupied Soviet territories arose initially not so much from the intention to use them for the murder of the Jews, but rather from concerns of the Economic Staff East (*Wirtschaftsstab Ost*) for sufficient security personnel to ensure the intended policy of feeding the Army off the land. The orders issued by Himmler and Daluge at the end of July 1941 for the establishment of *Schutzmannschaft* units were in response to a request from the military high command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) for more security personnel.⁴² Of course, this also presented Himmler with a convenient opportunity to override Hitler's reluctance to rely on collaborationist forces for key tasks. Yet this implies a degree of opportunism and improvisation rather than careful planning in the employment of collaborators to implement the Holocaust.

In practice, the role of local collaborationist forces remained largely improvised during the mass killings of the 'first wave', which lasted until the winter of 1941–42, when many of the German police battalions had to be redeployed to the front.⁴³ Some notorious collaborationist formations were deployed repeatedly as mobile killing units in the massacres of the Jews, but the manpower they represented was only a few hundred men, who could easily have been replaced by Germans if required.

The case of the *Rollkommando Hamann*, which murdered some 60,000 Jews mostly in the small towns of Lithuania between July and September 1941, demonstrates, however, that even the mobile killing units required local assistance to implement genocide. *Hamann's* unit consisted of only a handful of Germans and a few score of Lithuanian auxiliaries. But they relied on the local Lithuanian police and civil administration to assist in preparing the gravesites, rounding up the victims and escorting them to their deaths.⁴⁴ Thus hundreds more local policemen and administrators became vital accessories to these crimes. This still meant that only a very small percentage of the total population actively participated in the killings, but this local support certainly made the German task much easier.

In occupied Ukraine and Belorussia there are also numerous examples of locally recruited 'militia' units participating in the murder of Jews during the 'first wave'. For example, in the town of Mir in Belorussia it is clear that local policemen played a key role in the shootings.⁴⁵ One *Einsatzgruppen* report mentions a division of labour that assigned the killing of children to the local Ukrainian forces.⁴⁶ As Dieter Pohl has noted for Ukraine, without local knowledge it would have been difficult for the Germans even to identify the Jews.⁴⁷

In terms of sheer manpower, however, it was probably not until the 'second wave' of mass killings, focused mainly on western Belorussia and Ukraine

during the summer and autumn of 1942 that a 'necessary dependence' on local support can be identified. In excess of 300,000 Jews were murdered in the *Reichskommisariate Ostland* and Ukraine during this 'second wave' and, despite careful organization, it probably could not have been conducted effectively without local help, because of the response of the Jews on this occasion.⁴⁸ Warned by personal experiences or rumours of events in nearby towns, the Jews took evasive measures, building bunkers or trying to escape, requiring more manpower on the side of the perpetrators.⁴⁹

As much available German manpower was occupied at the front, they necessarily drew on the *Schutzmanschaften* and other auxiliary forces to assist with the 'ghetto liquidations'. In particular, numerous local police units played an active role in searching the emptied ghettos for Jews in hiding or scouring the surrounding forests for escapees in the days after the main actions. These local policemen usually came from nearby villages and knew the area. They also received support from local peasants in tracking down those who had escaped. The German presence in most of the smaller rural towns where the Jews were concentrated consisted often of only a few *Gendarmes* (of the Order Police) and civil administrators, who relied on local collaborators and translators as their eyes and ears. Thus for much of what is today Belarus and Ukraine, it is important to stress that without the German occupation there would have been no Holocaust, but without local assistance the loss of Jewish life would not have been so great.

What were the motives of the individual local policemen and other collaborators who assisted the Germans in murdering more than 90 per cent of the Jews trapped in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union? My research concludes that while different forms of antisemitism were important, they were buttressed by more mundane concerns, such as personal greed, careerism, anti-communism, peer pressure and even alcoholism.⁵⁰ These conclusions, based on the examination of extensive war crimes investigation files for the local police in Belorussia and Ukraine, have been confirmed to a great extent by the independent research of Alfonsis Eidintas and Michael MacQueen with regard to Lithuanian police personnel.⁵¹ Detailed research of this nature has been greatly facilitated by the opening of the KGB archives in many parts of the former Soviet Union, which has made available the files of thousands of those tried for 'collaboration'.⁵² Despite the broad Soviet interpretation of this 'crime' (it might also include Soviet prisoners of war or those deported to Germany), these files can provide considerable information on the personal background of those who served in the Nazi police formations and occasionally also on the local implementation of the Holocaust.

As Jan Gross argues with regard to the immediate post-war investigations conducted by the Polish authorities into the events in Jedwabne (supported by the findings of the Institute for National Remembrance), such investigations

were primarily of a criminal nature and without strong political undertones.⁵³ Therefore, despite many shortcomings in the documentation, the evidence regarding police service and also war crimes can be viewed in many cases as reliable, especially where separate investigations conducted at different times (and even in different countries) corroborate each other.⁵⁴ Thus the availability of this vast amount of additional documentation has helped to galvanize research into 'local collaboration' in much the same way as the opening of the German judicial archives (at Ludwigsburg and elsewhere) inspired new approaches to the Holocaust from the 1980s onwards.⁵⁵

War crimes allegations have always been closely intertwined with the development of research on collaboration. Some of the few Soviet publications devoted to the issue of collaboration from the 1960s onwards were in English, written with the aim of discrediting émigré groups, some of whose members had actively collaborated with the Germans.⁵⁶ However, it was not until western historians gained direct access to the Soviet archives, initially during the course of war crimes investigations conducted by special units in the United States, Australia, Canada and Great Britain, that a detailed examination of the extent and nature of local collaboration became possible. These special investigation units were unusual in that they directly employed historians to conduct archival research and thereby created expertise within the profession.⁵⁷

Ultimately, the only successful criminal prosecution of a 'collaborator' in the Anglo-Saxon countries was that of Anthony Sawoniuk, a local police officer in Domachevo, Belorussia, which resulted in two life sentences from a British court in 1999. This meagre result was mainly due to the insistence on live eyewitness evidence as the basis for any charges brought in a criminal court. However, the US has successfully conducted dozens of denaturalization cases in the civil courts, where historical documentation alone has proved sufficient to satisfy the court.⁵⁸ The difference between civil and criminal cases is best illustrated by the fate of Antanas Gecas, an officer in the Lithuanian 12th *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion, who lost his libel case against Scottish Television. The conclusion of the judge in the case, Lord Milligan, was unequivocal: 'that contemporary documentary evidence strongly suggests that ... in Belorussia in late 1941 ... all platoons in the Lithuanian Battalion, were heavily involved in participating in executions of Jews and other innocent civilians'.⁵⁹ Without live eyewitnesses, however, this documentation was deemed insufficient by the Scottish Crown Office to bring a criminal prosecution against one of the unit's platoon commanders.

A particular problem with the mobile killing units was that the victims were unable to identify the killers, who came to the town for only one or two days. Much more success in locating reliable witnesses was possible for local police units, where most of the personnel came from the town or the surrounding villages and were well known to victims and bystanders. In the Sawoniuk case

one Jewish witness had even grown up with the accused, who had previously worked for the Jews of the town lighting fires on the Sabbath. Detailed investigations into the events in such small rural communities reveal the ‘gruesome intimacy’ of the Holocaust in this area, where victims and perpetrators knew each other personally and ambitious individuals sometimes exploited their position to settle personal scores.⁶⁰

Another recent historiographical trend that has fostered interest in ‘local collaboration’ has been the renewed interest in Jewish source studies. Precisely at the time that the last survivors are leaving us, there have been intensive efforts by the ‘Shoah Foundation’ and others to record their testimonies. This has been linked to the rediscovery of the Yizkor books and other survivor documentation, much of which had remained inaccessible to many historians, partly due to translation difficulties.⁶¹

From the perspective of Jewish survivors, the attitude of the local population, their neighbours, is generally a more painful and emotive topic than the actions of unknown Germans who came from outside. Apart from the burning issue of ‘Jewish collaboration’ – that is, the role of the Jewish Councils and Jewish police as (coerced) instruments of German persecution – it is the actions of their ‘once good’ neighbours that resonate most powerfully in many survivor accounts. In the Yizkor books published in the first decades after the war and in the recollections of many survivors, descriptions of local policemen who participated in the murders and neighbours who stole their property present vivid images of local collaboration etched into their memories.⁶²

At the same time it must be noted that these are the testimonies of the few that survived and most could not have done so without some support from the non-Jewish population.⁶³ Thus most of these accounts do not condemn all their former friends and neighbours, but distinguish sharply between those who offered help and those who sickeningly disappointed them. The study of assistance to Jews in eastern Europe has also been boosted by the uncovering of many new cases since the collapse of the former Soviet Union. As research by Frank Golczewski has demonstrated, the files of the ‘Righteous Among the Nations’, still being compiled at Yad Vashem, now include many cases of support from Ukrainians (among others), which might be cause for the revision of those depictions of the Holocaust that mention only local hostility.⁶⁴ In any case it would be a distortion to focus only on collaboration in the Holocaust, without also mentioning those who risked their lives to help Jews. The decision to collaborate or resist in Nazi genocidal plans was informed by similar cultural, social, political and also material factors that would recommend the examination of these phenomena together, as the two extremes of societal responses to genocide.

For the mass of the population, however, indifference and inaction rather than active participation or resistance were the norm. In eastern Europe, however,

the Holocaust was conducted much more openly than in the West: frequently, mass shootings took place within hearing of the Jews' own homes. The key position held by Jews in the local economy, often dominating certain key crafts and trades, also meant that few local inhabitants remained untouched by the effects of genocide. In particular, the widespread distribution of at least the household goods and clothing from Jewish property to parts of the local population served to spread a form of local complicity in the crime. Certainly, the resurgence of interest in the restitution of Jewish property in the mid-1990s has combined with the emergence of new archival sources to encourage historians to reassess the role played by Jewish property in the local dynamics of the Holocaust.⁶⁵

The rapid development of the killings following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and the relatively small sums obtained mean that Jewish property was not a major motive for the Germans in this region. The most valuable items were nevertheless sent back to Berlin to help finance the war. However, Jewish property proved to be a useful tool in mobilizing 'local collaboration' against the Jews. Some of the money collected from the initial massacres was used to fund the hard-pressed local administration. Inevitably, local policemen and administrators sought to divert part of the loot into their own pockets.⁶⁶ Local collaborationist organizations, such as the Belorussian Self-Help Organization, also used income from Jewish property to reward their own followers.⁶⁷ Some of the property and money stolen from the Jews was made available to local policemen and officials as a direct reward for assistance in actions against the Jews and partisans.⁶⁸

A detailed picture of the successive nature of attacks on Jewish property in the eastern ghettos can be gained from an examination of the Glebokie Memorial Book. The Germans demanded a series of exorbitant 'contributions' from the Jewish community with menaces. The establishment and successive reduction of the ghetto also provided the opportunity for local inhabitants to loot their property. Meanwhile, hunger forced Jews to sell their last belongings to local peasants for mere scraps of food. Attempts to conceal property with Christian 'neighbours' might even serve as an incentive for them to denounce them – in order to 'inherit' the property. After the final liquidation of the ghetto, furniture taken from the Jews could be found in the homes of many local peasants, sitting awkwardly in these unfamiliar surroundings.⁶⁹

In strict economic terms, the distribution of part of the property taken from the Jews to the local population in the occupied Soviet Union was a 'windfall gain' that only helped to prop up the collapsing local economy a little longer. But for surviving Jews it was a clear symbol of the hostility of many of their neighbours, who did not expect any Jews to return. After the war, Jews in the Soviet Union encountered great difficulties in recovering their property due to the loss of documents and government obstruction.⁷⁰ Thus the question of

Jewish property rights remains unsolved in many eastern European countries to this day, as communist expropriations have served to overlay and consolidate the theft of property conducted under Nazi rule.

In other countries, such as Hungary, the significance of Jewish wealth within the economy was greater and the local government also enjoyed more autonomy from the Germans. This final section will review briefly some of the recent historiography of the Holocaust in Hungary as a useful example for comparison. Although the timing and organization of the Holocaust in Hungary during 1944 differed considerably from that described in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, nevertheless, several recent interpretations have focused on the issue of 'local collaboration', stressing themes similar to those analysed above.

Despite the well-oiled machinery of destruction the Nazis had created by 1944, it is unlikely that they could have destroyed the bulk of Hungary's Jewish community without local assistance. As described by the leading historian of the Holocaust in Hungary, Randolph Braham:

Without the unequivocal support of the new, constitutionally appointed Hungarian government [of Döme Sztózay] that enjoyed the blessing of Miklós Horthy, who was Hungary's highly respected head of state, the Nazis – as the cases of Bulgaria and Romania had clearly shown – would have been severely hampered if not helpless. The SS commandos were, in fact, amazed at the enthusiasm with which their Hungarian counterparts were ready to 'solve' the Jewish question. The new government placed the instruments of state power at the disposal of the Hungarian and German Nazis bent on the swiftest possible implementation of the Final Solution. With Horthy still at the helm and providing the symbol of national sovereignty, the Hungarian police, gendarmerie, and civil service collaborated with the SS in the anti-Jewish drive with a routine and efficiency that impressed even the Germans.⁷¹

Tim Cole has recently taken Braham's analysis of the indispensability of Hungarian support one step further by examining the direct contribution of the local authorities to the anti-Jewish measures. He even criticizes the approach of Braham and others, who worked primarily from German sources, noting that they inevitably laid 'greater stress on external rather than internal factors, characterizing power as emanating from the centre, and portraying Hungarian officials as merely carrying out German orders'. Cole draws attention to the conclusions drawn by Elek Karsai in his study of the Hungarian administration: 'if any local administration deviated from the national directives, they were aimed at exceeding the target: either by implementing the government decrees ahead of schedule or by taking more severe and harsher measures than required.'

There are by far less instances of milder measures put in force.' Cole cites restrictions on Jewish shopping hours, introduced in May and June 1944, as an example of local initiatives that presaged the central directives. In particular, he stresses the need to study pre-war Hungarian antisemitism and public opinion during the war in order to assess better the significance of Hungarian initiatives from the 'bottom up'.⁷²

In reassessing the Holocaust in Hungary several scholars have focused recently on various aspects of the exploitation of Jewish property. In particular, the controversial issue of the post-war fate of Jewish property has caused both Ronald Zweig and a native Hungarian team to examine in detail the fate of the infamous 'Gold Train' which left the country heading towards Austria in the final weeks of the war.⁷³ Zweig's analysis notes especially the popular myth of fantastic Jewish wealth in Hungary, which fuelled envy and greed during the war and even in its aftermath. He stresses, however, that

the fantasies of Jewish wealth confused two separate issues – the material possessions of the Jews, which could be seized and redistributed, and their prosperity and economic well-being, which was based on intangibles such as education, expectations, motivation, professional standing, and experience, as much as it was based on the ownership of property. These are cultural attributes, which cannot be seized and redistributed. They can only be destroyed, together with the society that created them and gave them meaning.⁷⁴

None the less, as the new study of Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach documents extensively, the temptation to seize Jewish wealth for the purposes of propping up the ailing Axis war effort and winning Hungarian support for the alliance was very great.⁷⁵ In particular, the eagerness of the Hungarian administration to seize Jewish property is in part explained by its concurrence with earlier independent measures to seize Jewish land in Hungary and restrict Jewish economic influence. The plunder and resale of Jewish property, organized primarily by the Hungarian state, served to absorb inflationary pressure and buy complicity in the anti-Jewish measures, while also providing state finances with a vital shot in the arm as war costs spiralled. The ultimate beneficiary, however, in the view of Aly and Gerlach, was still primarily the German Reich, which at the same time extracted vast 'occupation costs' from Hungary and took part of the state treasury with them on their retreat (in the 'Gold Train').

Among many interesting insights in this study, is Götz Aly's extension to Hungary (and other Axis countries) of his earlier thesis on the close interdependence of the development of the Holocaust with more general plans of ethnic resettlement.⁷⁶ New research on Romania, based on the extensive new documentation now available, has traced similar links between the policies of economic 'Romanianization', plans for a more general 'ethnic homogenization'

and the development of policies against the Jews.⁷⁷ This is representative of the more general trend noted above not to treat the non-Jewish populations of eastern Europe merely as 'bystanders' to the Holocaust, but to examine their role as independent actors who directly influenced and participated in the implementation of genocide at the local level.

In conclusion, the increased interest in the issue of 'local collaboration' indicated by this selective survey reflects certain key trends in the way scholars are approaching the Holocaust. As more documentation from the archives of eastern Europe has become available, the sharp division between studies based mainly on 'perpetrator' or 'victim' sources is thankfully being overcome. Instead, there is growing recognition of the need to examine events from the perspective of all participants and especially to integrate the viewpoint of the local non-Jewish populations of eastern Europe into the narrative. This produces a complex and often painful picture of quite widespread 'local collaboration', as well as sometimes surprising aid for Jews. As Omer Bartov has forcefully argued, there is a need to understand the social fabric of the local societies in these areas and to piece together in detail how they reacted during this fateful period.⁷⁸ Thus the spontaneous reactions of the local population on the arrival of the Germans, the motives of individuals serving in the collaborationist police and the significance of Jewish property in gaining support for anti-Jewish measures all add considerably to our understanding of the dynamics of genocide. For it is important to remember that the Holocaust required not only central plans, but also real people at the local level, many of them non-German, for the nightmare to become reality.

Notes

- 1 The opinions stated in this chapter are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.
- 2 On the genesis of this debate, see, for example, M. Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (London: Longman, 1981); C.R. Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985); I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold, 1989).
- 3 Two regional studies that examine in more detail the role of local collaboration are B. Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front: Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weissrussland, 1941–1944* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998) and S. Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941–44* (Jerusalem: Achva Press, 1990).
- 4 R. Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, 3 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1961, 1982), see especially pp. 326–8 and 758–61.
- 5 On the Holocaust in these two countries, see especially R.L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and R. Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000).

- 6 The removal of Nazi war criminals from the US was made possible by the Holtzman Act of 1978 and the establishment of the Office of Special Investigations in 1979. On the investigation of Nazi war criminals in the West, see, for example, A.A. Ryan, *Quiet Neighbors: Prosecuting Nazi War Criminals in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984); D. Cesarani, *Justice Delayed* (London: William Heinemann, 1992); and M. Aarons, *War Criminals Welcome: Australia, a Sanctuary for Fugitive War Criminals since 1945* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2001), all of which include case studies of specific collaborators.
- 7 R.B. Birn, 'Revising the Holocaust', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 195–215, especially 207–8.
- 8 See J.T. Gross, *Neighbors: the Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); on this debate, see, for example, *Thou Shalt Not Kill: Poles on Jedwabne* (Warsaw: WIEZ, 2001).
- 9 Historical Commissions have been established in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Croatia, while in Poland the Institute of National Remembrance conducted a detailed investigation into the events in Jedwabne and the surrounding area.
- 10 S. Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), pp. 271–85 discusses local collaboration with the Nazis and assistance to Jews in the same chapter as two sides of the same coin.
- 11 For a survey of the declining position of the Jews in inter-war eastern Europe, due mainly to rising nationalism, see the classic study of E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).
- 12 See R. Breitmann, 'Himmler's Police Auxiliaries in the Occupied Soviet Territories', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, 7 (1990), 23–39 and A. Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941–44: the Missing Center* (Riga: Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996).
- 13 See, for example, the paper given by Arunys Bubnys, 'Die litauischen Hilfspolizeibataillone und der Holocaust', at the conference organized by Uppsala University in April 2002 entitled 'Collaboration and Resistance in Reichskommissariat Ostland' (conference proceedings, forthcoming). Bubnys is the author of a series of publications in Lithuanian dealing with the Lithuanian police battalions. D. Pohl, 'Ukrainische Hilfskräfte beim Mord an den Juden', in *Die Täter der Shoah: Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?*, ed. G. von Paul (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), pp. 205–34 also examines briefly the role of Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft battalions in the Holocaust. I am grateful to Wendy Lower for making this article available to me.
- 14 C. Dieckmann, 'Die Zivilverwaltung in Litauen', in *Täter im Vernichtungskrieg: Der Überfall auf die Sowjetunion und der Völkermord an den Juden*, ed. W. Kaiser (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002), p. 104.
- 15 M. Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (London: Macmillan, 1999). In his Ina Levine Scholar Award Annual Lecture at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on 13 March 2003, Christopher Browning argued that the role of local collaborators was numerically much more significant during the 'second wave'.
- 16 See, for example, W. Röhr, ed., *Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945): Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik* (Berlin: Hüthig, 1994).
- 17 In occupied Lithuania in 1944 only some 660 German officials worked in the civil administration with about 20,000 Lithuanian officials subordinate to them. See C. Dieckmann, 'Die Zivilverwaltung in Litauen', in *Täter im Vernichtungskrieg*, ed. Kaiser, p. 105.

- 18 See, for example, M. Dean, 'Seizure, Registration, Rental and Sale: The Strange Case of the German Administration of Moveable Property in Latvia (1941–1944)', in *Latvia in World War II: Materials of an International Conference, 14–15 June 1999, Riga* (Riga: Latvijas vestures instituta apgads, 2000), pp. 372–8.
- 19 K.C. Berkhoff, 'Hitler's Clean Slate: Everyday Life in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 1941–1944' (PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Toronto, 1998), see especially pp. 415–44.
- 20 C. Gerlach and G. Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel: Der Mord an den ungarischen Juden* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002), pp. 415–46.
- 21 Report of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity: Phase II – The German Occupation of Estonia, 1941–1944. Introduction (www.historycommission.ee/temp/conclusions.htm, 19 February 2003).
- 22 I have borrowed this term from Alfred Senn, who used it during a conference on the Holocaust in Lithuania held at Nidda, Lithuania in 1997, but he is not alone in observing this phenomenon.
- 23 For the number of Jews deported from Lithuania and Latvia, see D. Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils: Eastern European Jewry under Soviet Rule, 1939–1941* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), p. 265. For Belorussia, see also M. Wierzbicki, 'Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Zachodniej Białorusi w latach 1939–1941', in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, ed. P. Machcewicza and K. Persaka (Warsaw: IPN, 2002), vol. 1.
- 24 See, for example, the contributions of Meelis Maripuu, Andrew Ezergailis and also the more nuanced arguments of Saulius Suziedelis presented at the conference organized by Uppsala University in April 2002 entitled 'Collaboration and Resistance in Reichskommissariat Ostland'.
- 25 O. Bartov, 'From the Holocaust in Galicia to Contemporary Genocide: Common Ground – Historical Differences', the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Annual Lecture, presented at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 17 December 2002 and published as an Occasional Paper by the Museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Washington, DC (2003), p. 5.
- 26 The contribution of Anton Weiss-Wendt at Uppsala University conference on 'The Extermination of Gypsies in Estonia during World War II' is a more positive development in this direction. An extended version of this paper will be published in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.
- 27 A. Rossino, 'Polish "Neighbors" and German Invaders: Contextualizing Anti-Jewish Violence in the Białystok District during the Opening Weeks of Operation Barbarossa', *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* (forthcoming).
- 28 P. Machcewicza and K. Persaka, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego*, 2 vols (Warsaw: IPN, 2002); see especially the contribution of Andrzej Zbikowski (short abstracts in English were available on www.ipn.gov.pl/summary_1.pdf in late 2002).
- 29 See M. Dean, 'Polen in der einheimischen Hilfspolizei: Ein Aspekt der Besetzungsrealität in den deutsch besetzten ostpolnischen Gebieten', in *Die polnische Heimatarmee: Geschichte und Mythos der Armia Krajowa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. B. Chiari (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003), pp. 355–68.
- 30 See, for example, A. Eidintas, *Zydai, lietuviai ir holokaustas* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2002). I am grateful to Professor Alfred Senn of Wisconsin Madison University for preparing a short summary (or unconventional review) in English of this book.
- 31 See, for example, K. Friedman, 'German/Lithuanian Collaboration in the Final Solution, 1941–1944' (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1994), pp. 181–2; W. Benz and M. Neiss, eds., *Judenmord in Litauen: Studien und Dokumente* (Berlin: Metropol, 1999).

- 32 See *Fernschreiben Heydrichs an die Einsatzgruppenchefs vom 29.6.1941* published in P. Klein, ed., *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion, 1941/42: die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD* (Berlin: Edition Henrich, 1997), pp. 318–19.
- 33 Karlis Kangeris, for example, argues that the Germans deliberately sought to propagate the image of local initiative in the murder of the Jews, in order to justify their own actions, and therefore any German evidence on this point should be treated with great caution. See K. Kangeris, 'Die Nationalsozialistischen Pläne und Propagandamassnahmen im Generalbezirk Lettland 1941/1942', presented at the conference organized by Uppsala University in April 2002 entitled 'Collaboration and Resistance in Reichskommissariat Ostland'.
- 34 See H. Huttenbach, 'Was there a Latvian War against the Jews, 22 June–July 1941? The Controversy and its Resolution', presented at the conference organized by Uppsala University in April 2002 entitled 'Collaboration and Resistance in Reichskommissariat Ostland'.
- 35 See Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia*, pp. 271–2; Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, pp. 64–71.
- 36 Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, pp. 62–109.
- 37 See B.-C. Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews and Soviet Rule: Eastern Poland on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 6.
- 38 B. Musial, 'Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschiessen': *Die Brutalisierung des deutsch-sowjetischen Krieges im Sommer 1941* (Berlin: Econ Ullstein, 2000), especially pp. 170–91. Musial takes issue with Raul Hilberg and also Dieter Pohl for not laying more emphasis on the effects of Soviet atrocities on the mood of the local population.
- 39 R. Headland, *Messages of Murder. A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992) presents a summary of the killing totals of the various *Einsatzgruppen* units from their own and other reports, see p. 105. On the support provided by local collaborators, see, for example, pp. 122–3.
- 40 Browning, *The Path to Genocide*, pp. 105–6; Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg (BA-MA) RW 41/4 RFSS to the Higher SS and Police Leaders: Berlin, 25 July 1941.
- 41 Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BAL), R 19/266, Strength of the Schutzmannschaft on 1 July 1942.
- 42 Dieckmann, 'Die Zivilverwaltung in Litauen', pp. 103–4.
- 43 Former Special (Osobyi) State Archive in the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA), 1323–2–267, Report by the Head of the Order Police, *Generaloberst Daluge*, on the strength and war deployment of the Order Police during 1942. For examples of police battalions that participated in shooting Jews in 1941 and were deployed to the front in the winter of 1941–42, see F. Wilhelm, *Die Polizei im NS-Staat: Die Geschichte ihrer Organisation im Überblick* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997), pp. 149–67.
- 44 K. Stang, *Kollaboration und Massenmord: Die litauische Hilfspolizei, das Rollkommando Hamann und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 156–71.
- 45 Dean, *Collaboration*, pp. 46–50.
- 46 BAL, R 58/217, *Ereignismeldung UdSSR Nr. 88*.
- 47 Pohl, 'Ukrainische Hilfskräfte'; see also Dean, *Collaboration*, p. 164.
- 48 D. Pohl, 'Schauplatz Ukraine: Der Massenmord an den Juden im Militärverwaltungsgebiet und im Reichskommissariat 1941–1943', in *Ausbeutung, Vernichtung, Öffentlichkeit*:

- Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Lagerpolitik*, ed. N. Frei, S. Steinbacher and B. C. Wagner (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2000), pp. 135–74, here p. 162 notes more than 200,000 for the RK Ukraine; C. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Mord: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: HIS, 1999), p. 705 estimates some 115,000 for RK Ostland in 1942.
- 49 Dean, *Collaboration*, pp. 78–104.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 162–3.
- 51 M. MacQueen, ‘Lithuanian Collaboration in the “Final Solution”’, unpublished paper presented at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s panel presentation on ‘Lithuania and the Holocaust’ on 28 October 2002, in which he referred also to the recent findings of A. Eidintas in his book *Zyda, lietuviai ir holokaustas*. See also M. Dean, ‘Schutzmänner in Ukraine and Belarus: Profiles of Local Police Collaborators’, a paper given at the *Lessons and Legacies* conference held in Minneapolis in November 2002 (publication in preparation).
- 52 See, for example, R. Viksne, ‘The Arajs Commando Member as Seen in the KGB Trial Files: Social Standing, Education, Motives for Joining it, and Sentences Received’, in *The Issues of the Holocaust Research in Latvia. Reports of an International Conference, 16–17.10.2000, Riga, Latvia* (Riga: Latvian History Institute Press, 2001), pp. 350–80. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives already holds KGB materials from Estonia (RG-06.026), Latvia (RG-06.027) and Russia (RG-06.025), and is currently receiving additional collections from Lithuania and Ukraine.
- 53 Gross, *Neighbors*, pp. 26–32; Machcewicz and Persaka, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego*, especially the contributions by Andrzej Źbikowski and Andrzej Rzepliński.
- 54 See especially B. Musiał, ‘NS-Kriegsverbrecher vor polnischen Gerichten’, *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 47 (1999), 48–56. Musiał compares the trials against Nazi war criminals directly with other ‘political’ trials conducted against opponents of the communist government.
- 55 See, for example, C.R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).
- 56 See, for example, *Do You Know This Man?* (Vilnius, 1963); B. Baranauskas and K. Ruksenas, *Documents Accuse* (Vilnius: Gintaras, 1970); M. Hanusiak, *Lest We Forget* (New York: Ukrainian-American League, 1975).
- 57 On the organization of these special units, see, for example, Australia’s Attorney General’s Department, *Report of the Investigations of War Criminals in Australia* (Canberra: AGPS, 1993).
- 58 *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 April 1999: ‘Anthony Sawoniuk was jailed for life yesterday after Britain’s first war crimes trial.’ On the U.S. cases, see, for example, C. Ashman and R.J. Wagman, *The Nazi Hunters* (New York: Warner Books, 1990).
- 59 Opinion of Lord Milligan in the Scottish Television libel case, 17 July 1992, p. 165.
- 60 See M. Dean, ‘Microcosm: Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust in the Mir Rayon of Belarus, 1941–1944’, paper presented at the Uppsala conference in April 2002 (in press).
- 61 An increasing number of the ‘Yizkor’ (Memorial) Books for individual communities, which were mostly published in Hebrew and Yiddish, are now being translated, often with direct access through the Internet. The Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has recently initiated a programme to rescue rare ‘Jewish-source’ collections and promote their study at the Center.
- 62 For accounts in English that demonstrate this point see, for example, *Memorial Book of Glebokie*, a translation into English of Khurbn Glubok by M. and Z. Rajak which

was originally published in 1956 in Yiddish in Buenos Aires by the Former Residents' Association in Argentina, 1994; or M. Diment, *The Lone Survivor: A Diary of the Lukacze Ghetto and Svytiukhy, Ukraine* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991).

- 63 Bartov, 'From the Holocaust', p. 6.
- 64 F. Golczewski, 'Die Revision eines Klischees. Die Rettung von verfolgten Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg durch Ukrainer', in *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit. Vol. 2: Ukraine, Frankreich, Böhmen und Mähren, Österreich, Lettland, Litauen, Estland*, ed. W. Benz and J. Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 1998), pp. 9–82. On rescue in Ukraine, see also Berkhoff, 'Hitler's Clean Slate', pp. 439–44; on the Righteous Among the Nations programme, see, for example, M. Paldiel, *Saving the Jews: Amazing Stories of Men and Women Who Defied the 'Final Solution'* (Rockville, MD: Schreiber, 2000).
- 65 On the re-emergence of Jewish property issues in the 1990s, see, for example, I. Levin, *The Last Chapter of the Holocaust?*, 2nd edition (n.p.: Jewish Agency for Israel in cooperation with The World Jewish Restitution Organization, 1998). Unfortunately, access to Jewish property records remains more difficult in many countries of eastern Europe than in the West, partly due to the 'fear' of restitution claims.
- 66 M. Dean, 'Jewish Property Seized in the Occupied Soviet Union in 1941 and 1942: The Records of the Reichshauptkasse Beutestelle', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 14 (2000), 83–101, here at 91 and 99 n. 54; see also Y. Arad, 'Plunder of Jewish Property in the Nazi-Occupied Areas of the Soviet Union', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 21 (2000), 109–48.
- 67 Chiari, *Alltag*, pp. 114–22.
- 68 Dean, 'Seizure', p. 372; Dean, *Collaboration*, p. 97; USHMM, RG-53.004M (Grodno Oblast Archive) reel 1, 1-1-54, p. 41 Gendarmerie Kreis Grodno, Bezirk Bialystok to Landrat in Grodno, 24 February 1943.
- 69 See M. Dean, 'Die Enteignung "jüdischen Eigentums" im Reichskommissariat Ostland 1941–1944', in 'Arisierung' im Nationalsozialismus: *Volksgemeinschaft, Raub und Gedächtnis*, ed. I. Wojak and P. Hayes (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2000), pp. 201–18.
- 70 L. Smilovitsky, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944* [The Holocaust in Belorussia, 1941–1944] (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka Matveia Chernogo, 2000), p. 23.
- 71 R.L. Braham, 'Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust', in *Hungary and the Holocaust: Confrontation with the Past: Symposium Proceedings* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, USHMM, 2001), p. 48.
- 72 T. Cole, 'Hungary, the Holocaust, and Hungarians: Remembering Whose History?', in *Hungary and the Holocaust: Confrontation with the Past: Symposium Proceedings* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, USHMM, 2001), p. 11.
- 73 R.W. Zweig, *The Gold Train: The Destruction of the Jews and the Looting of Hungary* (New York: Morrow, 2002); the work of G. Kadar and Z. Vagi, *Holocaust Looted Assets of Hungarian Jewry: A Case Study on American Policy* (Budapest: Restitution Committee of the Alliance of Jewish Communities in Hungary, 2000) stresses that very little property was restituted to Hungary's Jewish community after the war.
- 74 Zweig, *The Gold Train*, pp. 217–18.
- 75 Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, especially pp. 186–239, which gives an extensive analysis of the state seizure of Jewish property in Hungary, based mainly on a very wide selection of mostly German language sources.
- 76 See G. Aly, 'Endlösung': *Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1995).

- 77 See especially the forthcoming studies of V. Solonari and D. Deletant. On economic Romanianization, see J. Ancel, 'Seizure of Jewish Property in Romania', in *Confiscation of Jewish Property in Europe, 1933–1945: New Sources and Perspectives*, Symposium Proceedings published by the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, USHMM as an Occasional Paper in February 2003.
- 78 Bartov, 'From the Holocaust', p. 5.

7

Big Business and the Third Reich: An Appraisal of the Historical Arguments

Christopher Kobrak and Andrea H. Schneider

A grave economic system of decay was the slow disappearance of the right of private property, and the gradual transference of the entire economy to the ownership of stock companies... labour had sunk to the level of an object of speculation for unscrupulous Jewish businessmen.

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

In economic terms, Fascism and National Socialism were advantaged by their theoretical opportunism and purely instrumental and decisionist approaches to economic problems. They were anti-capitalist enough to be threatening to private enterprise and property but flexible enough to take advantage of the efficiencies of capitalist enterprises in the mobilization of societies.

Gerald Feldman, 'The Economic Origins of European Fascism'

Introduction

The reappraisal, concentrated over the past twenty years, of big business's relationship to the Holocaust – or more generally business's responsibility for the consequences of National Socialism – is one of the most vibrant and controversial areas of modern historiography. The reassessment itself, as well as some of the preconditions that spawned it, have profound implications for our attitudes about business, the Third Reich and, for that matter, our general views about modern history. Discussions of business's relationship to or responsibility for genocide go well beyond questions about the profits that were earned from slave labourers and the extermination of millions of Jews and other 'unwanted' groups. They also involve the larger question of how sober and austere leaders of a civilized community like pre-Nazi Germany could accept – some would argue were seduced by – and work with representatives of a movement that not

only thrived on the basest of human inclinations, but also very often espoused views, as Hitler did, that were antithetical to modern capitalist institutions and the material interests of big business. A proper study of business and the Third Reich should begin with the structure of German business, the attitudes of businessmen prior to Hitler's coming to power and their relationship to the Weimar government, and end with business's post-war reaction to the Nazi experience.

Though concentrated in Germany and the United States, the renewed historical interest and activity has spread to countries such as the Czech Republic, Denmark and France, which suffered from occupation and complicity, and to the study of business and other political phenomena related to National Socialism, such as Spanish and Italian fascism.¹ Whereas twenty years ago there were no detailed company histories written by professional historians using primary source material to recount corporate activities in connection with the Third Reich, over the past five years alone, at least twenty company histories, and national, industry and topical studies – such as those on Aryanization – have aimed at broadening our knowledge of business behaviour during the period. Historians have developed a much more detailed typology of business's response to National Socialism, with a much more precise catalogue by business segments, company size and countries of origin, as well as descriptions of the role of timing, personalities and perhaps even the role of chance in determining company responses to the challenges and opportunities of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, despite the recent activity, much needs to be done. As Peter Hayes summed up the research agenda:

In short, how ought one make proper allowances for ideology and interests, culture and context, personality and function, compulsion and volition, contingency and structure in explaining the German corporate world's role in the Nazi Dictatorship? And how can one face, fairly and forthrightly, the issues of responsibility and guilt that these questions pose?²

The availability of new information has done much to stimulate the resurgence of interest in this period. Rarely do political and economic circumstances produce such a rapid augmentation in archival sources, stimulating a rethinking of earlier assumptions and conclusions. The fall of communism, which opened many ostensibly public archives, such as those in Potsdam and Moscow, to western historians with little or no access before 1990, was quickly followed by a rash of lawsuits against German and Swiss companies for their treatment of mainly Jewish workers and the property of those who fled or suffered in concentration camps.³ Unsettled by actual or potential lawsuits and the prospect of historians finding incriminating materials in public archives, many companies themselves wisely undertook to employ professional historians to examine

their archives and other sources to determine the extent of their corporate moral or legal guilt. In the name of good corporate citizenship, some companies with little or no contact with the Nazi regime and with no pending lawsuits also opened their historical records from the period.⁴ Suddenly, historians found themselves with an abundance of two resources the profession rarely has in abundance: funding and an overwhelming volume of primary source material. This largesse, however, came at a price. Many of those who received funding had their professional judgement and objectivity attacked by virtue of being paid for their efforts, even though this support was linked in most cases to contracts that virtually eliminated the risk of company interference.

Moreover, the role of business in bringing Hitler to power was the cause in the past few decades of some of the most bitter controversy among historians and in the popular press about methodology and the proper role of criticism.⁵ It has also highlighted significant differences in the approaches and interests of business historians, between the organizational and political study of business and society.⁶

This chapter is divided into four sections: (1) the role of business in the creation and consolidation of the Nazi dictatorship; (2) the special problems of foreign businesses operating in Germany at this time; (3) business's role in organizing the German war effort, forced and slave labour, along with direct party involvement in commercial activities and the profits derived from extermination; and (4) a general conclusion about business and social memory. These topics have been chosen in order to highlight the degree to which business has opened itself to professional historians, as opposed to employees and journalists, and the variety of actors and outcomes – ranging from business winners and losers, victims and profiteers, and enthusiastic compliance to avoidance⁷ – historians have uncovered in business documents from the Nazi period. We have tried to give the reader a broad overview of the work in this area, especially what has been produced in German- and English-speaking countries, but space limitations have prevented a complete detailing of all contributions, especially from those outside of Germany and the United States.

Creating the context for war and extermination: big business and the Nazis' rise and consolidation of power

Recent literature in the field strongly suggests that neither a one-sided economic nor a political explanation of the rise of National Socialism and business's place in that historical phenomenon is sufficient for understanding those infamous years. Business's response to Nazi policies varied over time, within departments in any one company, among managers in one company – even the same manager at different times – and among companies, reflecting the economic interests and strengths of different commercial sectors in the early 1930s.

Post-war scholarly accounts of business's role in bringing Hitler to power and the early years of his rule tended to swing between the extremes of attributing a decisive role to economics and business, or none at all. Although there were several rival interpretations, the basic thesis that capitalism brought National Socialism to power was extremely popular in many circles from the mid-1930s.⁸ Business leaders were thought to be relatively early supporters of Hitler as evidenced by their financial contributions to the party, such as that ostensibly given by coal companies in the Ruhr, some big name early converts, such as Fritz Thyssen and Emil Kirdorf, big business's alleged representation at the Bad Harzburg meeting, its response to Hitler's Düsseldorf Industry Club speech, its petition to Hindenburg in 1932 and other forms of conniving to get Hitler into the government.⁹

Moreover, big business and the Nazi government were assumed to be working hand in glove on virtually all phases of the domestic and foreign activities, for which the Nazi government is justifiably infamous. Fearing business collusion, many American commentators were aghast at the tightly knit industrial-governmental organizations that they saw in Germany, even before the Nazis took over. For them, this was a sign of an inappropriate business control of government, or at least the absence of checks and balances that could help block a monolithic concentration and abuse of power.¹⁰

Europeans tended to prefer a more 'structural approach' to the question. According to many European scholars, Germany's 'monopoly capitalism' brought Hitler to power in order to exploit the working class and facilitate international expansion. Structuralist arguments take several forms, the most prevalent probably being that the contradictions in the capitalist economic system and political hierarchies became so unwieldy that Germany's ruling elite had no recourse but to bring to power an authoritarian party with roots in the lower classes to resolve the contradictions by totalitarian means.¹¹ With falling profits due to weak domestic demand and international competition, German big business's only option was to push its government towards war to expand its markets.¹² Drawing on Lenin's views on imperialism, this point of view dominated orthodox Marxist interpretations of National Socialism, especially those emanating from East Germany and the Soviet Union, but it also had many adherents in the West.

Certainly, after the Second World War, some German historians avoided discussions of the role played by business in the Nazis' rise to power and maintaining them there. Many German historians considered German industry's attitude to National Socialism, but their focus was mainly on the 'economic policy' of the Third Reich and the organization of business during the war (*Kriegswirtschaft*).¹³ Dealing with individual enterprises was not part of their agenda. German scholars found that the *Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie* (RDI), unlike other interest groups, for example, was put under less pressure by

the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) to bring its policies in line with the party's (*Gleichschaltung*) than were other associations.¹⁴

Some of the most important books on National Socialism written in the early years of the Federal Republic devoted little space to economic questions. Excellent general studies, such as Karl Dietrich Bracher's *The German Dictatorship*, virtually ignore the role of business in creating and perpetuating the Third Reich.¹⁵ Anticipating later works favouring the primacy of politics, Bracher played down issues about 'capitalism, middle-class values or socialistic doctrines' in Nazi economic policy.¹⁶ Industrialists seemed to be unimportant as economic and political factors.¹⁷ Although some earlier works stressed the more complex structures and aims of the Nazi leadership *vis-à-vis* German industry,¹⁸ German industry was viewed by many as a servant of government policy.¹⁹

Richard Grunberger, who devoted nearly twenty pages to business's role in the Third Reich, perhaps best summed up the prevailing views about business. Relying on Franz Neumann's influential work *Behemoth*, written during the war, Grunberger acknowledged that the secret of Nazi mass appeal was that the party was seen as a panacea for many middle-class economic ills.²⁰ Despite a few titbits thrown to small business, such as controls on department stores and takeovers of Jewish businesses by small business supporters of the Nazis (Aryanization), large firms ultimately were the victors in the three-pronged dynamic of big business, the *Mittelstand* and the state. Without directly taking a position on Marxist assertions that the Nazis were a tool of Ruhr business interests or the popular post-war view that big business was a 'helpless accessory after the fact', he claimed that 'there can be no gainsaying industry's role as chief grave-digger of the Weimar Republic'.²¹

Ironically, the first salvo directed at the thesis that business's economic interest brought the Nazis to power and drew the contours of Nazi economic policy was fired in 1968 by a Marxist, Tim Mason. Although he supported the view that politics represents a superstructure serving a particular economic and social system and should be the starting point for historical inquiry, according to Mason, the Nazi regime, especially after 1936, should be treated as an exception for several reasons.²² First, the German economic situation in the early 1930s was so chaotic that no one economic group had the power to forge an economic consensus. This could be achieved only by a radical group, willing to use extraordinary means (often terror) to forge social cohesion. Second, the *Führerprinzip* allowed Hitler to remain above the ordinary give-and-take of various economic interests that might have used a more pluralistic government to gain political control. Lastly, shortages of raw materials and labour required political direction to determine industrial priorities, especially as the economy geared up for war.

Although he left the overall Marxist framework untouched and did not address many of the building blocks of the structuralist view, Mason's pointing out weaknesses in some Marxist assumptions prompted others to turn more

attention to the National Socialists' economic ideology and financial support. Until Avraham Barkai published his study of Nazi economics (original German edition 1977), most historians believed that the Nazis had no theoretical or practical economic programme and that whatever success they had in mitigating the economic misery of the depression in Germany was attributable to pragmatic improvisation or war preparations (a 'war economy in peacetime').²³ Barkai reminded his readers of how consistently and thoroughly the Nazis had railed against big business before they came to power, and how they applied their theories about the proper role of business in society once they attained power. Although National Socialists used some traditional business institutions early on, their overall aim was to restructure companies and commercial attitudes to turn businesses away from the pursuit of individual profit and towards the good of the whole (the state and *Volk*) as defined by the party. German business, for its part, was not nearly as opposed to extensive government intervention to achieve certain social goods as their counterparts in other countries, which may help explain why German industrial leaders so quickly became 'sleeping partners' (to use Barkai's words) of the new Nazi state. Nevertheless, industrialists were apprehensive about the extent to which the 'Movement' was willing to trample on traditional distinctions between public and private. Taking as his starting point Mason's observation that the defining characteristic of the Nazi regime was the 'primacy of politics', Barkai argued that, by the time business began participating in the preparations for war, big business had lost all influence. Where he differed from Mason is the latter's view that decisions emanated from Hitler alone. According to Barkai, Nazi ideology consistently placed the needs of the whole over that of individual profit, which demanded political guidance ostensibly for economic decisions. He concluded that, whereas business shared in the profits of the recovery and the plunder of Jewish and foreign property, the business community 'had no real say with regard to far-reaching objectives of economic policy; at best they had partial and limited influence on the manner in which this policy was implemented'.²⁴

Henry Ashby Turner Jr challenged the popular faith that business had actively aided Hitler's coming to power. After dissecting in detail the evidence for the arguments that the Nazi Party had received substantial help from big business before 1933, he concluded that big business's role in undermining the Weimar Republic and the early gains of National Socialism had been greatly exaggerated by historians. Although still not without controversy, Turner's views are now widely accepted, most importantly by historians active in research about the period. Despite some important and well-known early supporters, the vast majority of active leaders of big business – in contrast to the owners of small and medium-sized businesses, who tended to be Nazi sympathizers – were at worst only nervous about the prospects of a National Socialist government and most probably actively pushing for other solutions to Germany's social and

economic problems. While no enthusiastic democrats, business leaders feared the rabble-rousing, anti-business rhetoric of the NSDAP and even its harsh forms of antisemitism. Although some business and individual contributions were made to the Nazi Party before 1933, the vast majority of big business's political contributions went to parties of the centre-right. Nevertheless, as Turner has pointed out, when economic and especially political circumstances worsened and the Hindenburg-appointed governments paid as little heed to business interests as the parties of the left, business leaders were increasingly willing to support other anti-democratic parties of the right such as Hugenberg's. By the late autumn of 1932 and early winter of 1932–33, a good many were abandoning their strong opposition to a Nazi-led government. Some were vainly trying to cultivate relationships with seemingly more reasonable Nazis like Gregor Strasser. Most business leaders were passive, ill-informed bystanders to the final negotiations that brought Hitler to power in January 1933, but after the *Machtergreifung* they adapted quickly enough. Big business began to view the Nazis more opportunistically as a possible means of ridding Germany of vestiges of the near-universally hated Versailles Treaty, reducing international financial and competitive pressures and quelling labour unrest:

The leaders of German big business were, for all their pretensions, such absorbed and confined men, preoccupied with the management of large, complex organizations. They sustained fashion to that sphere of activity, so that they remained part-time amateurs, operating only sporadically, and usually ineffectually, on the periphery of politics. As such, they were sorely ill-suited to deal with a phenomenon like Nazism.²⁵

On the heels of Turner's landmark study, his student, Peter Hayes, established what has become the paradigm for all other company studies by comparing the evolution of the changes in company attitudes and behaviour as National Socialism tightened its grip on German society. Freed of the extreme suppositions that businessmen were either manipulating the Nazi thugs or were themselves innocent victims, Hayes' greatest contribution to the study of business lies in the area of process, how the management of IG Farben was transformed from industrial to ideological agents. He was the first scholar to show in detail how the managers of an international firm, devoted to technical innovation and steeped in traditions of managerial independence, could end up convicted of crimes against humanity, leaders of a firm that had lost, as it were, even its legal right to exist. Although Hayes begins his story with a short history of IG Farben's member firms and the first seven years of the resulting merged company, his focus is the incremental steps that took Farben from being a despised – even to party zealots a 'Jewish firm', in which party members were not particularly welcome and were certainly outnumbered in management during the early 1930s

by democrats and even Jews – to a trusted partner of the Nazi state by the late 1930s. His core idea is that Farben's management was seduced and coerced by a mix of 'carrot and stick' incentives. Desperate to restore 'stability' to its markets, Farben management naively underestimated the dangers of the movement. Some senior managers tried in vain to resist pressures, while trading freedom from radical Nazi influences in the workplace for acceptance of moderate changes in their business practices, hoping that the economic interests of the firm could be melded to the political interests of the party. Even 'liberal' companies like Farben during the early years of Nazi rule permitted Nazi labour organizations to take over much of the human resource and union functions, party manifestations to become a part of everyday working life, and a general 'thinning out' of Jewish management by attrition and by reassignment to relatively safe foreign posts. By 1938, IG Farben was taking the lead in designing and implementing the second Four-Year Plan. Its pre-Nazi management had been replaced by a new, more cooperative team and, of course, all Jews had been removed from management.²⁶

Subsequent works have, by and large, confirmed the main outlines of Hayes' analysis, while also highlighting the differences between industries and companies, arising out of the personalities of their leaders, location or economic necessity. Among these works Christopher Kopper's study of the banking industry, Gerald Feldman's study of Allianz and the insurance industry, and Harold James' studies of Deutsche Bank stand out.²⁷ Some studies have elaborated on the mechanics of the 'carrot and stick' approach used by the party to gain adherence to its views. Frequently, these intrusions into commercial life had both negative and positive consequences for companies; always they involved greater state control over business decision-making.²⁸

Much of government's intervention had been sought by a wide range of businesses not only to ward off the effects of the worldwide depression, but also the effects of their own ill-advised investments. Having welcomed the intruder and participated in the design of the intrusion, they were hard-pressed to defend themselves. Even those sectors active in international markets and competitive in comparison with non-German companies were linked with companies that were not and felt indebted to their government.²⁹ Many sectors had lost their viability and independence before the Nazis came to power.

Harold James points out in his chapter on the history of Deutsche Bank, for example, that capital markets had been marginalized even before January 1933. Many of the controls put in place by the Nazis' predecessors in the early 1930s had already severely limited the freedom and normal business activities of banks. Since the new regime aimed at controlling all phases of social life and was particularly inimical to 'finance capital' and its 'high priests' – international bankers, the big German banks – most bankers seemed to recognize the threat to the economic system in which they functioned. The new regime favoured

the growth of savings banks (*Sparkassen*), traditional competitors of the money-centre banks, and new large state-owned firms that could function independently of the banks. For banks, their weakened economic and political positions meant that they had little power to influence policy and that so-called 'acts of defiance' were nugatory efforts to carve out a tiny sphere of independence. By and large, and to various degrees, they sought to maintain their 'relevance' and economic viability by taking on the tasks that the state left to them. As James notes:

In practice, the financial world offered little direct opposition to the regime. Instead, confronted by a world that no longer appeared to need them, bankers explained their compliant positions to themselves by saying that they were doing nothing more than facing realities and then trying, however ineffectually, to mould them as best they could.³⁰

In short, shaken by the depression and already highly controlled by the state in January 1933, banks made the purging of 'Jewish influences' much easier. As early as May 1933, leading Jewish members of the board of Deutsche Bank, including Oscar Wassermann, the spokesman of the *Vorstand*, resigned. By 1938, Deutsche Bank, which had a large Jewish cadre in top and middle management in 1933, had lost virtually all its Jewish employees. But Deutsche Bank's 'pact with the Devil' brought limited rewards for its shareholders. Even though revenues increased dramatically in the late 1930s, the use of much of the bank's profit was controlled by the state and realized in an ever more precarious currency subject to significantly higher taxes and dividend restrictions.³¹

Like many areas of Holocaust historiography, revisions to our picture of Aryanization – forced ownership changes from Jews to non-Jews – have highlighted the evolutionary process of removing Jews from the economic life of Nazi Germany.³² It has been recognized for many years that many of the earliest Aryanizations were unorganized attempts by the party to expropriate small Jewish companies for the party faithful as a reward for the loyalty of small- and middle-sized companies. Big business's involvement began tentatively, sometimes at the behest of former business partners who happened to be Jewish. In many of these cases in the mid-1930s, German companies took pains to treat the former owners well and rarely used pressure to force a quick sale or favourable terms. Many deals were brought to them by Jewish bankers and owners. As the party tightened its grip on the economy with what appeared to be its infallible success, and with fewer Jews active in business life in any case, transfers of firms owned by non-Aryans became a 'normal' part of business. Companies were more willing to use their Aryan status and connections with party officials to squeeze target companies. As German military might reached its peak and victory seemed assured, this process of normalizing extortion seems to have reached

its culmination outside Germany in Czechoslovakia and Poland, where even non-Jews were considered to be 'inferior beings'. Unfortunately, in some wider studies about the persecution of Jews, the extent and methods used to remove them from economic life have been neglected.³³

James' new study of Deutsche Bank, published in 2001 simultaneously in German and English, is probably the most up-to-date work on Aryanization.³⁴ James outlines Deutsche Bank's 'room for manoeuvre' in the increasingly dictatorial regime, and how the leaders of the bank moved from denying the dangers inherent in their new political realities during the very early days, to complying cautiously with some of the policies of a regime that had not yet proved its durability in the mid-1930s, to treating 'the political circumstances as part of a general business context, in which profitable business could be generated'.³⁵

In 1937, as Germany stepped up its war preparations, the pace, breadth and intensity of Aryanization also accelerated. Although, according to James, Deutsche Bank did not make a lot of profit from its Aryanization activities, its enthusiasm for these transactions markedly increased as Germany expanded into central Europe. By 1938, Deutsche Bank had been involved in 569 Aryani-zations, of which 363 were completed. Nearly half were in retail or clothing factories.³⁶ In most cases, its involvement was restricted to brokering or financing the transactions; in a few, Deutsche Bank took possession of the assets itself.

Although many companies were much more aggressive than Deutsche Bank had been with Aryani-zations, such as the Flick concerns, among manufacturing companies, and Dresdner Bank, among the financial institutions, the basic outline presented by James has been confirmed by many other studies. Recently both Dresdner Bank and Commerzbank have opened their archives to qualified experts.³⁷ Preliminary findings of the teams of historians working on these projects have found that Aryani-zations were not always at the behest of political orders – as is often argued – but rather arose out of competitive pressures and expansion strategies, and that the timing and methods differed greatly depending on the views of local party officials and branch managers.³⁸ All the studies emphasize these significant differences from branch to branch within the banks, especially for transactions involving smaller Jewish businesses without any business influence, particularly those companies without long-term banking relationships or foreign connections.³⁹ Despite the importance of specific bank relations, and local and sector factors in explaining Aryani-zation, some studies stress the role of bank associations in national coordination of the process of removing Jews from the economic life of the new regime.⁴⁰

Although local factors seem to have played less of a role, among commercial companies there is also a wide range of experiences. It seems generally true, however, that larger, more international companies were less likely to exploit the predicament of their Jewish countrymen, at least before September 1939.⁴¹

Moreover, it is hard to judge to what extent companies wanted to preserve their independence and decency, protect their employees and avoid getting entangled in government projects, because it is not clear whether they voluntarily or by necessity couched their utterances in racist and nationalistic vocabulary as a precondition for survival.⁴² One of the paradoxes of the Third Reich is the degree to which, in many areas, it preserved the trappings of normality in a perverted form to manipulate key figures and erode resistance to its ultimate ends.

Investing in Nazi Germany: the special experience of foreign companies

Although some studies report that foreign-owned companies behaved as badly or worse than German companies, not a single instance of Aryanization of foreign-owned companies operating in the old Reich has been found. By and large, foreign-owned companies, like highly internationalized German companies, behaved better than most firms. The ‘crimes’ of these companies, even those incorporated in countries later allied against Germany, entailed taking advantage of many business opportunities presented by National Socialism and contributing to the regime’s image of respectability during the crucial early years by their public manifestations of support and their aggressive pursuit of new business. The recognition that not only domestic companies but also foreign-owned engaged in embarrassing business conduct is important for our overall understanding of the period and has perhaps led some foreign companies to open their archives to outside researchers. However, in this area of research the scholarship evidenced by some writers has been patchy.

The account of Opel and Ford during the Nazi period, written by a team of historians and journalists without access to the relevant companies’ archives, is a good example of the difficulties foreign firms faced and the tendency of some authors to highlight information in a way that tends to distort business’s actual complicity. It contains a lot of interesting information, but there is little primary source data, a great deal of reliance on political accusations and a poor sense of chronology.⁴³

Opel, General Motors’ (GM) largest foreign investment and the largest American investment in Germany, was run by Americans appointed by GM even after the outbreak of war in 1939. GM’s acquisition was one of the most controversial foreign investments in Germany of the 1920s, evoking a great deal of xenophobia about foreigners buying up German assets and making GM particularly concerned that its new subsidiary appear to be a German firm. Much of the backdrop to the Opel story takes place during the depression, which had catastrophic consequences for the automobile industry. Despite economic and labour difficulties in the early 1930s, thanks to American production and

management techniques, by 1933 Opel accounted for two-thirds of German car exports and one-third of the domestic German market, even though it produced only 31,000 cars in that year. (The whole German market was roughly one-tenth of the American market.) Although the Nazi economic policies of removing the tax on automobile purchases and of creating a motorway system (*Autobahnen*) proved to be a boon for the whole automotive industry, the plan to create a people's car (*Volkswagen*) posed a potential competitive threat to Opel. As the largest carmaker in Germany, Opel was intent on capitalizing on this boom. Within five years of Hitler's assuming power, Opel's unit sales had tripled, a source of chagrin to the fully German and Nazi-favoured Daimler, which received more in the way of military contracts than Opel. With GM committing more funds – much of which were anyway blocked in Germany, a fact the authors fail to mention – to its German subsidiary and sluggish sales in other parts of the world, especially in its largest market, the United States, GM management was particularly anxious to show NSDAP administrators that Opel was as much a German company as its rivals.

With little sympathy for the dilemma of companies with large investments tied up in a country whose politics had 'gone crazy', the authors list all the nefarious activities of the companies, even those during times when the foreign owner had little or no control and about which there was no international objection – for example, using prisoners of war as long as they were treated reasonably well. Relying on accusations made in 1974, US Senate hearings and the memoirs of a senior GM executive, who saw himself as a wandering representative for GM, America and peace among the 'white nations', Anita Kugler, for example, reports that GM management actively sought business, even military business, during the mid-1930s from the German government, was willing to trade its rights for synthetic fuel processes to remain as a company in good status with the authorities (IG Farben was doing the same with Standard Oil) even after the outbreak of war, and in general was willing to participate in Germany's rearmentation. Opel management brought its German personnel together about once a month for compulsory rallies with hours of propaganda from party officials.⁴⁴ By the time Germany declared war on the United States, Opel had already made 200 million aeroplane parts for the Luftwaffe, 21,000 trucks for the German armed forces, and 'high' profits and dividends, which Kugler concedes Opel could no longer remit to the United States.⁴⁵ Whereas Kugler acknowledges that American management left Germany in the spring of 1941, six months before the United States entered the war and long before Opel was participating in forced and slave labour, she also points out that GM-appointed German managers stayed in the company during the war with relatively little administration from the government. It was during this time that management participated in using forced and slave labour. The managers behaved, and probably had to behave to a large extent, like any German

manager during the war or accept the consequences, which meant at the very least dismissal. The evidence that their behaviour was managed from Detroit is shaky at best. Their very survival during the war and after seems to imply a conspiracy among GM's German managers, the head office and the Nazi authorities.

As companies important for the war effort, they, like fully German firms, had been mobilized for the war effort and were subject to the same controls and pressures as German companies. It is unclear what the authors expected. Should GM not have sought business in Germany or adapted to the political, social norms of Nazi Germany? Just when should they have stopped doing business with Nazi Germany? No government required this of them. If they had closed the German company, or if Opel had been expropriated, would this have been moral and would they have been violating their fiduciary responsibilities? Of more surprise and interest were the apparent benefits received by these American companies due to their involvement with the Nazis and their lack of effort to make restitution to Jews and other victims. A sense of the political risk involved and the degree of difficulty (cost) of extricating foreign companies from their German investments in light of management's assessment of an uncertain future is missing from this and many other books about foreign investment.⁴⁶

Neil Forbes' *Doing Business with the Nazis: Britain's Economic and Financial Relations with Germany, 1931–1939* stands out among works dealing with foreign investment in Germany during the period. Whereas Forbes makes no bones about how English credits and raw materials furthered Nazi rearmament, he puts these activities in their appropriate historical context. He gives a great deal of weight to the personal relationships of leading figures, particularly Hjalmar Schacht and Montagu Norman, head of the German Central Bank and the Bank of England respectively, as well as the important role played by the political sympathies of some English businessmen, who were even willing to help finance Hitler in the hope that he would prove an effective barrier to the spread of communism, as factors contributing to economic and political appeasement. Unlike *Trading with the Enemy*, for example, Forbes acknowledges the dilemmas and uncertainties of business and political leaders who had to deal with the Nazi regime. Until 1939, Britain was Germany's most important trading partner. Britain was a major trader with and lender to Germany long before Hitler came to power, business connections that were critical to British workers during the depression years. While those making decisions in Britain about what kind of business to do with Nazi Germany looked to their own economic and political interests first, they did so with the hope that trade and lending would help reduce the worldwide effects of the depression, which were particularly severe in Germany, and assist the more reasonable elements of the party, like Schacht, control the more thuggish. When the Nazis took over the

helm of German economic policy, the world's leading economic nations were in the midst of a series of negotiations that would determine how much and when Germany would pay off its massive public and private debt, and therefore the value of the large amount of bank debt and trade for the developed world. Without the benefit of hindsight, many responsible businessmen and political leaders felt that coaxing Germany to behave responsibly was in their interest as well as the world's. The price for new German commitments to pay outstanding balances was often new commitments for loans and special trading arrangements. With so much in the way of blocked funds and outstanding loans, British business leaders, like those in most countries, were too willing, as we now know, to believe the best. Forbes wisely reminds his readers that those making political assessments in the mid-1930s lacked our unerring hindsight and were dealing with a host of seemingly insurmountable obstacles to jumpstarting the world economy, such as escalating new tariffs and defensive depreciation of currencies.

As Richard Overy points out, Forbes highlights one of the most important issues of our age: should companies be doing business purely on individual economic grounds or should they take into consideration the moral nature of the countries with which they do business? Today, as then, many well-meaning businessmen and politicians believe that the best way to turn dictatorial regimes into liberal democracies is by exposing them to the benefits and norms of unfettered commercial activity. However, our experience with the Third Reich belies the social utility of this tactic, at least with regimes that resemble Germany's under Hitler.⁴⁷

No country has been more criticized for its complicity with Nazi Germany than Switzerland. The focus on Switzerland has spawned a wide range of literature from sensationalized accounts⁴⁸ to sober historical analysis. The Swiss Commission's work has shed a lot of light on Switzerland's role in maintaining Germany's ability to wage war and genocide. The Commission's historians have focused on many areas, including German corporate camouflaging using Swiss holding companies for foreign subsidiaries, clearing transactions and transport through Switzerland, Swiss chemical companies in Germany, Swiss production and sale of war materials for Germany, and trade in stolen securities and gold. The study of Swiss chemical companies operating in Germany, for example, found that these enterprises were exceptionally well informed about the political and economic conditions in Germany and integrated this intelligence into their economic calculations. Like German companies, they maintained good relationships with government bureaucrats and watched their sales climb as Germany's economy rebounded in the mid-1930s and as that country went on a war footing. Instead of being disadvantaged by their foreignness, some government officials saw the Swiss chemical companies as effective counterweights to the huge IG Farben and recognized their scientific acumen,

especially as Germany's had been denuded by purges of Jewish employees and other unwanted elements. Like German companies, the Swiss removed Jews from management. The Swiss Commission concluded that the motives of the chemical companies were not short-term profit, but rather the desire to maximize the value of their long-term investments in Germany. While all Jews had been removed from the management of these Swiss companies by 1938 – by this time, keeping them would almost certainly have entailed the risk of nationalization or 'Aryanization' of the Swiss firms – unlike German companies, none of the Swiss chemical companies participated in Aryanizations of Jewish firms in the old German Reich.⁴⁹

Profiting from conquest and extermination: business in a war economy, 1937–45

Although the broad outline of industrial involvement in German war preparations, the war itself and the suffering of untold millions in the camps scattered over Germany and occupied areas has been known for a long time, the details of business's role in supporting the Nazi regime's activities during the second half of its 13-year rule have elicited extraordinary interest in both the popular and academic press. What is often omitted in these discussions is that the worst crimes were committed by companies when Germany was at war or on a war footing. Ironically, those crimes were committed, as so often is the case, in an atmosphere of 'irrational exuberance' or despair, as many managers moved within a few years from reaping gains from Hitler's seeming invincibility to desperate efforts to save their businesses from collapse. It is for these activities that many businessmen stood in the dock with political leaders at Nuremberg. With the outcome of recent lawsuits hinging not on whether events occurred but rather on the precise amount of gold stolen and melted down, the number and treatment of slave labourers employed or the profits made from deliveries to the SS, historical scholarship has become somewhat skewed towards resolving these important but somewhat atypical historical issues. There is no doubt that virtually all German companies contributed in some way to the war effort and employed forced labour. Many German and non-German companies, to varying degrees, solicited war contracts and coordinated the efforts of other companies, almost as part of government bureaucracies. Many employed slave labourers, concentration camp inmates, as opposed to foreign workers brought to Germany by various means, prisoners of war, and Jews living at home but forced to work during the early war years. Some companies even restructured their business development strategies to make use of the availability of slave labourers. Some knowingly supplied the camps with tools for extermination – capital, insurance, equipment and chemicals. Although it is clear that some of these activities contributed to Germany's post-war recovery, it is hard to establish the managers'

motivation, and whether and by how much the shareholders of individual companies benefited from their companies' participation in conquest and genocide.⁵⁰

Hitler's decision to prepare Germany for war by the early 1940s was a turning point for government–business relations. The work on business's and Germany's preparation for war has suggested two overriding points.

First, in late 1936, with Hitler's decision to go to war and centralize economic power under Hermann Göring in the Second Four-Year Plan (FYP), war preparation became the overriding priority for the German economy. Government/military planning by and large replaced normal business logic for corporate decision-makers. The creation of Hermann Göring's FYP administration in 1936 seemed to institutionalize the mechanisms for a planned economy. Before 1936, the regime, by necessity, was preoccupied with unemployment and the general woes of the German economy. By 1936, Hitler's Germany was enjoying boom times. The government's conciliatory attitude to big business and other segments of Germany's elite, as well as its minimizing of some antisemitic portions of its programme, had had the desired effect of deflecting criticism. Hitler felt sufficiently confident to turn his attention to preparing Germany for war.

Dietmar Petzina was the first to describe in detail the Four-Year Plan and how the connections between it and industry functioned.⁵¹ He argued that the FYP represented Hitler's attempt to create a self-sufficient, independent Germany (*Autarkie*), but Richard Overy's numerous accounts of the FYP have given scholars the most extensive overview of how this government–business bureaucracy functioned.⁵² For Overy, the FYP was Hitler's attempt to overcome economic confusion in Germany. The FYP entailed a major step towards party- and military-centred economic policies, which required autarkic macro-economic planning and detailed coordination of micro-economic inputs.⁵³ It symbolized, more than anything else, the transition in Germany from a conservative strategy for economic revival regulated by 'bourgeois experts' to a massively militarized and regulated economy closely linked to party circles and animated increasingly by a more radical ideological agenda, which was expressed through Aryanization and the drive for living space (*Lebensraum*) to be realized ultimately through war and conquest.⁵⁴

To everyday business it meant that the constellation and balance of interests between businesses and military institutions changed radically within a few months.⁵⁵ Early analyses of the economics of the Third Reich treated the first six years of Nazi rule as one monolithic period.⁵⁶ The Second Four-Year Plan, with its war preparations and its greater economic control and autarchic policies, seemed to confirm the 'primacy of politics' for the whole pre-war period. In fact, the power retained by industry and industrial groups like the *Reichsverband der deutsche Industrie* during the first few years of Nazi rule greatly diminished

in 1937.⁵⁷ The coalescing of government and business interests played a significant role in the development of state enterprises.⁵⁸ By the end of the war, short-sighted military considerations, not economic rationality, dominated business decision-making. Economically viable programmes were sometimes sacrificed for prestigious government contracts.⁵⁹

Second, and somewhat paradoxically in light of the first point, even with the establishment of the Second Four-Year Plan, the organization of German industry cannot be described as a planned economy. Petzina in the West and East German historians like Dietrich Eichholtz almost simultaneously reached the conclusion that Germany in the late 1930s was far from being a command economy.⁶⁰ Government officials were no way near having effective control of all economic planning until well into the war, as the failure to defeat Britain and the Soviet Union rapidly convinced all but the most rabid fanatics that, at the very best, victory was a distant hope. Until 1942, Germany lacked many elements of a planned economy.⁶¹ Although industry was forced to follow the Will of the Dictator after 1936, even Klaus Hildebrand, one of the first to document the loss of industrial self-determination, denied that this development established a form of state capitalism. Many studies have focused on the complex economic structures created by the FYP and the complex interaction of business and party organs, once Germany was put on a war footing.⁶²

According to Ian Kershaw, neither the primacy of economics nor politics can explain the Nazi system. The system was too complex, and both extreme explanations too simplistic. The NS leadership did not have a sole aim, but many, and these were sometimes contradictory. Sufficient chaos among the various power groups within the system allowed for conflicts among proponents of various government policies. Moreover, industry, too, was not homogeneous; it encompassed a large variety of interest constellations that were integrated into the planning process.

One of the main aims of the Four-Year Plan was to address raw material and food shortages.⁶³ While IG Farben took over the planning and personal management of the FYP, the replacement of assets and decisions on new investments were organized by business sectors – for example, minerals, light metals and chemicals – not by companies, which tended to make individual enterprises secondary to the planning process, even though some of the FYP staff came from industry.⁶⁴ Many business people were recruited to help in the planning process, holding positions best characterized as functions between the private and public sectors.⁶⁵

One of the clearest and saddest areas for illustrating the change in relationship between the state and industry were labour practices, especially the use of forced labour (Jews forced out of their normal employment, foreign workers recruited under duress and prisoners of war) and slave labour (concentration camp inmates) by companies during the war. Many aspects of the phenomenon

are beyond doubt. We know the numbers of forced and slave labourers with reasonable certainty and that their day-to-day lives were, by and large, inhumane. About 13.5 million forced and slave labourers worked in areas occupied by the Third Reich. Many of these workers were employed in businesses that before and after the war could be described as normal and law-abiding. In many cases exploiting these workers had limited economic value – they lacked the requisite skills, there were language barriers and their productivity was low, the result of their compromised health – which more than offset savings on wages. Even slave labourers were not cost-free; their ‘wages’ went to the SS. Nevertheless, during the war companies accepted their allocation of such workers and in some cases demanded more. German business’s use of forced and slave labour paralleled, albeit at lagging pace, that of the public and agricultural sectors and reflected the twisted logic of Nazi economic and racial policies. With the German economy on a war footing – male workers in the armed forces and a higher percentage of women working than in England or the United States in 1939 – and its Jewish population economically and politically disenfranchised, and by 1942, ghettoized, using unemployed Jews to work as forced labour in menial jobs for low wages seemed to make economic as well as ideological sense. By 1944, the practice of using forced and slave labour seemed like a normal part of business. Though we do not have a full picture of managers’ motivation, using forced and slave labour seems to be a good illustration of what Peter Hayes called the ‘cumulative radicalisation’⁶⁶ of business at IG Farben during the Nazi dictatorship. Forced labour and its final step, slave labour, seem to have been a natural consequence of a system that incrementally discarded common sense and humanity, and replaced them with the ‘banality of evil’.

Ulrich Herbert laid out the broad dimensions of forced and slave labour in Germany.⁶⁷ Since the publication of his work, well over 100 studies on specific companies, regions or persecuted groups have pointed to the view that no single generalization covers all cases.⁶⁸ These studies, as well as many ongoing ones, tend to focus not on theoretical explanations of the phenomenon of forced and slave labour, but the day-to-day experiences of the people involved. An understanding of why and how companies used forced and slave labour seems, however, to require specific explanations related to the individuals and companies involved. For Mark Spoerer, for example, forced labour was a wartime measure whose contours were shaped by ideology. Unlike many, Spoerer makes an effort to determine the profitability to companies of different kinds of forced labour.⁶⁹ According to his calculations, although the companies paid forced labourers substantially less than normal wages (20–45 per cent less, even with benefits included), malnutrition and other factors reduced their output to such an extent that their loss of productivity more than equalled cost savings. But the initiative to use forced labour had to come from companies, suggesting

that slave or at least forced labour may have been the only way that companies could fulfil their contractual commitments to the government.

Recent studies have probed manager and company motivations for employing forced and slave labourers. Two of the most important are in the automotive sector. Hans Mommsen, in his *Volkswagenwerk* study, describes an enterprise that seemed actively to cooperate with the Nazi state but which, nevertheless, complained bitterly about the problems slave labour caused the firm.⁷⁰ Unlike many other studies of single firms,⁷¹ which attempt to cover the whole history of an enterprise and, therefore, devote limited time and space to slave labour cases, Mommsen's study largely focuses on labour practices and helped inspire other studies that address how employees could psychologically manage the knowledge of their and their companies' involvement in slave labour and mass murder.⁷²

Daimler-Benz was one of the first companies to come to public attention for its employment practices during the Third Reich.⁷³ In 1944, for example, forced and slave labourers made up half Daimler's workforce. Although the number of forced and slave labourers is comparable with other firms of its size, Daimler-Benz used a relatively high number of concentration camp prisoners. This can be explained by its relatively good relationship with the SS and by Daimler's increasing interest in protecting its assets against Allied aerial attacks.⁷⁴ As Neil Gregor has pointed out in his study of Daimler during the Nazi era, when the war seemed lost, Daimler managers became increasingly possessed by the desire to preserve company assets underground, for which slave labour was the only solution at hand, even if that labour meant pushing the human captives beyond endurance.⁷⁵ Daimler's need to maintain good relations with the SS in order to acquire slave labourers points to one of the most important characteristics of the system. It was not a regulatory system with strict rules and well-defined guidelines about the treatment of slave labour, but one in which the personal relationship among the leading members of the enterprises and the party, military institutions or later Albert Speer's organization determined behaviour. Historians have shown that slave labourers' treatment varied widely – from incredibly cruel to solicitous within legal limits, sometimes even beyond. These disclosures suggest both that the degree of management freedom was greater than previously thought and that the importance of maintaining good relations with the authorities, in order to preserve that independence, was paramount.

Moreover, a company's economic interest played a role in determining the fate of slave labourers. As Peter Hayes has noted in some of his provisional pieces from his unpublished work on Degussa, that company actively pursued slave labourers in several of its installations and treated workers who were hard to replace significantly better than those who were not.⁷⁶

The work on German companies' labour practices during the war has been expanded to other countries, not only occupied countries, but neutral states

too. Switzerland, Austria and the Czech Republic have established commissions to research this area. Brought into being by the pressures of claims, financed by the state and industry, and staffed by qualified historians, these commissions have done much to further our understanding of how to deal with the past and business's role in it.⁷⁷ The Swiss Commission studied several large and many small Swiss firms operating in Germany and occupied territories and found, for example, that their experience with forced labour was comparable to that of German firms. Like German companies, the Swiss had many military contracts. Like German companies, too, the Swiss would have been unable to meet production deadlines without the use of forced labour and the treatment of workers was varied. Although the head office management knew of the forced labour, according to the authors, they seemed to be unaware of the living and working conditions of the prisoners and others. Their main concern was that production continued without interruption. There was no evidence that the Swiss firms employed slave labourers.⁷⁸

In short, to date, researchers have not found a single company that did not employ at least forced labourers. With the defeat of the *Wehrmacht* in the winter of 1942, demands on Germany's labour resources became acute. Until then, concentration camp prisoners were used only in the building industry (*Baustoffgewinnung*) – for example, the construction of IG Farben's plant at Auschwitz – and for military equipment, but in 1944, their work was expanded to general armament production,⁷⁹ and from 1944, officially the main task of concentration camps was the deployment and employment of prisoners. But as early as 1942, more than 60 per cent of prisoners died – 57,503 at work sites – attesting to the harshness of working conditions. At many work sites the average lifespan of workers was measured in days. On Speer's initiative, in September 1942 the leasing of concentration camp prisoners was expanded, but the increase in demand relative to supply led only rarely to improvement in working conditions. Only exceptionally qualified workers with specialized skills had any hope of improving their living circumstances.⁸⁰ Though employment of concentration camp prisoners permeated virtually all industries, the main sectors affected were construction, aviation and missile building.⁸¹

Symptomatic of the irrationality of the system, even Jewish workers forced to work in the armament industry as early as 1939 had been transferred to ghettos and camps, leaving key companies with skilled labour shortages and denuded of Jewish workers.⁸² The army administration of many Jewish ghettos in Poland witnessed production in their factories decline, because Jewish workers were deported to extermination camps, while at the same time the Reich was trying to coerce Russians into Germany to work. By spring 1944, Jewish labourers had to be allowed back into the German Reich, from which they had just been deported. From Auschwitz alone about 100,000 Jews, mostly women, were deployed in German enterprises.⁸³ By the end of the

war, there were around 660 satellite concentration camps (*Außenlager*) in operation.

The creation of the SS's own industrial empire, first studied by Walter Naasner, is an excellent illustration of how deeply the party had its tentacles in all phases of commercial life.⁸⁴ As Michael Allen has recently argued, Himmler's SS turned its control of concentration camp inmates into big business, parcelling out at a price slave labourers 'by the thousands for everything from aircraft factories to chain-gang-style construction'.⁸⁵ Most ended up building the tunnels that hid Germany's industrial might. The SS Business Administration Main Office (*Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt*, WVHA) was a peculiar mix of psychotic ideology and cold-blooded managerial efficiency.

Despite public attention in the late 1990s, the investigations into whether and how much companies profited from prejudice, expropriation and, finally, annihilation have not resolved the issue. Nevertheless, they suggest that for some companies profiting from the misery of human beings, at least at some points during the Nazi regime, was a matter of business as usual; other firms preferred to keep their distance from what should have appeared to be an immoral activity that could only damage the firm's long-term international reputation. The studies also suggest that, even within firms, behaviour was not uniform. Progress in this area is blocked not so much by lack of evidence, but by the complexity of economic evaluation and questions about the role of intention, as opposed to result, and pain and suffering, as opposed to profit.

These issues have played an important role in many of the company-sponsored works discussed, such as those on Allianz, Dresdner Bank and Commerzbank. Deutsche Bank, for example, commissioned two follow-up studies to its original 1995 company history, one (as discussed) on Aryanization, the other designed to determine the extent and profits of its activities in stolen gold transactions (*Raubgold*) during the war.⁸⁶

Peter Hayes' forthcoming book on Degussa promises to make a contribution to this evaluation, both because of the breadth of Degussa's culpable activities and the acumen of its author. In preliminary finding published in *Lessons and Legacies*, Hayes found that the current value of Degussa's purely economic damages to Nazi victims amounted to \$28 million from its Aryanization activities, use of slave labour, the melting down of stolen precious metals and its sales of Zyklon B, the gas used to kill Jewish and other victims at two of the death camps. As Hayes points out, all in all and despite some dubious but unavoidable calculations, in light of the suffering, this seems to be a trivial sum. It fails to take into account the degree to which Degussa's relationship to the state and entire business was dependent on performing these 'little services' for the state and the degree to which management actively pursued them with the intention of making a profit.⁸⁷ Moreover, it seems appropriate to ask why their debt for the use of slave labour should be any less because the facilities built

with that labour were liberated by the Soviet army before they could realize their potential and why they have been able to offset their losses against tax.

Dealing with the past: business, National Socialism and social memory

Historical consciousness, especially about as troubled and temporally close an era as the Nazi one, is not easy, particularly for ongoing businesses. Businessmen by the nature of their work focus on the future. Their pasts, their cultures, their personalities and the assets under their control, as Wilhelm Treue reminds us, all help shape their decisions about where and how to invest, but the value of those decisions is determined by future events, the divining of which preoccupies them. While their company's reputation contributes to the value of investments, businessmen are legally and perhaps morally responsible for maintaining the value of the assets under their control, not to expunge their own or their companies' historical guilt by confessing past sins. Moreover, the early reaction of business to the aftermath of the Nazis was set against a period of many arrests of those connected with National Socialism and a nation in ruins, requiring extraordinary concentration on the challenges of rebuilding the country.

Many recent studies about business and National Socialism have started to explore businessmen's coming to terms with participation in the Nazi regime.⁸⁸ Jonathan Wiesen's excellent study, *West German Industry and the Challenge of the Nazi Past*, is devoted to the subject. Wiesen documents how German businessmen in West Germany after the war consistently avoided the 'wrenching confessions of guilt about the Holocaust and the relationship of their companies to mass crimes'.⁸⁹ They had not forgotten the past, but rather reinvented it to put their and their companies' participation in events in the best light possible, by omitting embarrassing activities, in order to remodel and prepare themselves as good corporate citizens in post-war Germany. Many other company studies confirm the basic outline of Wiesen's story. Even businessmen with relatively little to hide preferred to distort their early support and ostensible lack of power, posing as victims rather than enablers of the Nazis.⁹⁰ Businessmen, by and large, preferred to emphasize their minor acts of resistance early on in the regime, while conveniently forgetting how much their companies profited from the control of labour costs and foreign exchange, how much their contributions to Nazi charities added to the regime's respectability, and how little they did in the early 1930s to support liberal democracy.

Historians need, however, to remember some elements of the context of those business reactions. Unlike South Africa after apartheid, for example, Germans were offered no redemption through honesty. Like other Germans, senior managers, with justification in many cases, were denied employment because of their party membership or other affiliation with the regime. Many businessmen

were held in custody by the Allies. The Russians simply carted off countless businessmen and technicians to help rebuild Russian industry.⁹¹ Both main political parties in the nascent West Germany held capitalism partly or wholly responsible for the Nazi dictatorship, a view shared by much of the industrial workforce and clearly by the East German authorities. This was hardly an environment sympathetic to business claims that companies did not make the decision to exterminate a race and to fight a war, which drained business of its normal supply of labour and overheated the economy.

Even in our period, there are tremendous disincentives for transparency and reasoned judgements. With lawsuits pending, admitting any sort of guilt has financial and other consequences. Victims and their lawyers understandably have little sympathy for discussions about the low productivity of camp workers, overcapacity caused by war production and the loss of business control over priorities caused by the war effort, all explanations that for businessmen are meant to show that their participation in atrocities was not a commercial decision but rather an inevitable consequence of functioning in a totalitarian state during war. For some, reminders of business and other aspects of the Holocaust are not only used to enrich lawyers but are regularly manipulated to further present political causes.⁹² Few writers acknowledge that German society in general and German business in particular have been much more forthcoming financially and otherwise than other countries and enterprises involved in even less shocking activities than in Germany during the Nazi regime. Indeed, for some, mentioning companies that behaved relatively well before the Nazis had consolidated their hold on power is often dismissed in some circles as 'whitewashing' the past.

Perhaps the most controversial and interesting discussions about post-war managers are those that deal with the former president of Deutsche Bank, Hermann Abs, whose ambition, extensive network of contacts and willingness to work with ardent Nazis and the people they were persecuting made him an excellent foot soldier in the war against Jewish property.⁹³ Unfortunately, many of the moral and business lessons about him and his colleagues are ambiguous. Some of his efforts, for example, helped Jews escape Germany with at least some of their funds. Moreover, as both the institutions and many of the characters involved thrived in the post-war environment, we may never know whether the commercial interests of the individuals and businesses were better served by those who conformed or by those who resisted the spirit of their times. Since the war, on a number of occasions there has been an unfortunate rush to condemn or rush to forgive without any detailed knowledge of the actions and historical context in which they were committed.

There is no doubt that corporate entities utilized forced and slave labour, and produced goods and services vital to Germany's war effort and the extermination of millions. While the magnitude of crimes increased as war preparations

grew and government control over the economy tightened, and the managers' degree of freedom to act in line with 'corporate' conscience and commercial interest diminished, the precise room for manoeuvre at various times and the motives of those making decisions about where to 'draw the line' are still at issue and may never be resolved. Some businesses and businessmen behaved better than other German institutions and some professional organizations; some were clearly worse. We are still struggling to understand the motivations for managerial choices, what parts opportunism, fear, moral imperatives, intellectual and ethical laziness or business judgement – or some combination of all five – played in the multifaceted reactions of management to National Socialism.

What should perhaps be most embarrassing for business is its role in the consolidation of Nazi power, not the atrocities that followed when only saints and madmen risked their lives and those of their families to oppose the regime. As this 'moral' guilt is neither actionable nor sensational, it tends to be ignored. While we should recognize that businessmen in 1933 lacked our hindsight and that the Nazis cleverly disguised many of their measures in the guise of long-standing practices and patriotic slogans, many businessmen, even those who had few sympathies with the 'Movement', were all too often willing to believe the best and ignore the worst about the Nazis, in part because of their unwillingness to adapt to modern economic and social challenges. Counterfactual questions can be dangerous, but fruitful historical games. Perhaps we can allow ourselves a few. What would have happened in Germany if businessmen, by and large, had not believed in maintaining economically marginal businesses and that controlling labour, capital and other markets was an urgent economic necessity for their firms and their country, one for which the sacrifice of some political liberty and a few individuals' well-being was a small, innocuous price to pay? Would they have been willing to pay homage to an 'Austrian corporal', allow Nazi rallies and slogans in the workplace, to permit Nazi unions to replace all others, to give generously to Nazi charities and, by and large, to submit docilely to the ostracism and flight of their Jewish colleagues? Although there are some isolated examples of company managers who strenuously resisted these trappings of power which helped the regime establish its position, collectively, business was eager to profit from Nazi economic salvation.

This kind of thinking contributed to another interesting line of inquiry in the 1990s about the effects of National Socialism on German modernization.⁹⁴ These studies have questioned the degree to which Germany's post-war boom was dependent on economic reforms made during the Nazi era. It is argued by some that the Nazi regime forced reluctant businessmen to consolidate their businesses and accept modern manufacturing techniques necessary for commercial success in light of twentieth-century international competition. In some sense, these discussions hark back to 70-year-old debates about the nature and extent of Germany's industrial rationalization after the First World War. They involve

complex questions of industrial organization and matters of fact regarding the amounts and types of assets left in the hands of German industry after the Second World War. Some recent studies use post-war continuity as possible explanations for the success or failure of individual firms based on pre-1945 actions.⁹⁵ Much modern scholarship is convinced that post-war German business fared better because of the Nazis, despite the terrible bomb damage inflicted in the closing years of the war. Both in terms of its equipment and organizational know-how, West German industry emerged from the Second World War purged of investments and mindsets that had held it back after the First. For many businessmen, this may be the hardest part of historical memory to accept.

Notes

- 1 See H. James and J. Tanner, eds., *Enterprise in the Period of Fascism in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) for a comprehensive collection of articles on business in occupied and fascist countries. Several studies have laid to rest the notion that Austrians in business and other spheres of activity were Hitler's first victims. See, for example, D. Stiefel, ed., *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust: Zur Wirtschaftlichen Logik von Verfolgung und 'Wiedergutmachung'* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2001).
- 2 P. Hayes, 'Industry under the Swastika', in *Enterprise in the Period of Fascism in Europe*, eds. James and Tanner, p. 26.
- 3 See B. Eggenberger, M. Rappl and A. Reichel, 'Der Bestand Reichswirtschaftsministerium im Zentrum für die Aufbewahrung historisch-dokumentarischer Sammlungen (Sonderarchiv) in Moskau', *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* 2 (1998), 227–36 and G. Aly and S. Heim, *Das Staatsarchiv Zentrale in Moskau (Sonderarchiv): Rekonstruktion und Bestandsverzeichnis verschollen geglaubten Schriftgutes aus der NS-Zeit* (Düsseldorf: Hans-Böckler Stiftung, 1993).
- 4 It should be remembered that, while clearly associated with the Nazi government, Deutsche Bank invested in a complete history of its activities before it was involved in any legal actions. Among the chapters written for its 125-year history was Harold James' essay on the bank in the Nazi period. In addition, former IG Farben companies, such as Hoechst and BASF, opened their archives before any public pressure was exerted. Schering AG, for example, stands out as a firm that, despite little connection to Nazi atrocities and without any threat of legal actions, also chose to open its archives to professional historians.
- 5 See P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 612–20 for a multifaceted, though not dispassionate, account of the so-called Abraham Affair and its relationship to historical scholarship. Novick was on Abraham's PhD committee at the University of Chicago and identifies himself as a friend. Leaving aside the personal attacks on the participants, one of the main issues for both sides was the importance of interpretation versus facts in historical writing. For many of Abraham's supporters, the overall interest of his argument – his revival of the Marxist argument that the contradictions in the Weimar economic system became so overwhelming that big business had to turn to authoritarian government – overrode whatever errors of fact, intentional or unintentional, he made. This structuralist interpretation of the behaviour of some of Germany's elite and the demise of Weimar was deemed to be interesting and

worthy of historical intention, even though no direct link between big business and the Nazis has been found. For Abraham's critics, the 'facts' are an indispensable part of good historical interpretation; without them (that is, a body of information whose substantial correctness can be verified by other historians) one is, in a sense, not writing history at all.

- 6 More traditional business historians find that some studies of German business in the twentieth century neglected economic issues and missed the opportunity to learn more about the strategies and structures of German firms. On the other hand, despite these significant issues for business leaders, many business historians in the Chandlerian tradition ignore politics in the formation of business strategies. Alfred Chandler himself in his largest work, *Scale and Scope*, one third of which deals with the organizational development of German business in the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth, has only a few references to Hitler and Nazism, and those in passing, without any hint that they may have affected the organizational and strategic development of Germany (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 7 Some writers have argued that attempts by companies to avoid government rules were a form of resistance or, at least, passive resistance. Examples of businessmen who used their offices for anything that resembled resistance are very rare. See J. Scholtyseck, *Robert Bosch und der liberale Widerstand gegen Hitler 1933–1945* (Munich: Beck, 1999).
- 8 This view was widespread and held across a wide spectrum of political orientations. See, for example, Joachim Fest's 1973 biography of Hitler in which he goes into a fair amount of detail about the extent of business support for Hitler as early as 1922. *Hitler* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 166–7.
- 9 This view persists in textbooks for children. In 1993, as I (CK) began my studies of big business and the Third Reich, I was startled to find in the history of my then 12-year-old stepson a caption under a picture of Hitler which read: 'In January 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany with the help of agricultural interests and big business'.
- 10 This interpretation of business and National Socialism runs through the Office of Military Government of the United States (OMGUS) reports, which were put together shortly after the war by the US authorities. These analyses of several sectors were published and included a lot of useful information, but also many conclusions that did not follow from the data presented. They, like the proceedings of the Nuremberg Trials, were the basis of several post-war books about business and focused on the anti-competitive practices of German companies, as defined by American standards, and business complicity with slave labour and war production. See also J. Borkin, *The Crime and Punishment of I.G. Farben* (New York: Free Press, 1978). His subtitle is indicative: *The Unholy Alliance of Adolf Hitler and Germany's Great Chemical Combine*. For Borkin, business's camouflaging of foreign companies and other activities were done for the good of the Nazi state and business's own pecuniary interests, which were virtually one and the same.
- 11 See E. Hennig, 'Materialien zur Diskussion der Monopolgruppentheorie', *Neue Politische Literatur*, 18 (1973), 170–93.
- 12 C. Bettelheim, *L'Économie allemande sous le Nazisme: Un aspect de la decadence du capitalisme* (Paris, 1946), p. 273.
- 13 R. Wagenführ, *Die deutsche Industrie im Kriege* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1954); D. Eichholz, 'Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft 1933–1945' (unpublished dissertation, Humboldt University, 1968); H.E. Volkmann, 'Zum Verhältnis von

- Großwirtschaft und NS-Regime im Zweiten Weltkrieg', in K.D. Bracher, M. Funke and H.-A. Jacobsen (eds), *Nationalsozialistische Diktatur 1933–1945, Eine Bilanz* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1986), pp. 480–508.
- 14 M. Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, 11th edition (Munich: dtv, 1986), p. 218.
 - 15 In English, K.D. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Praeger, 1971). Bracher's index contains no references to business, big business, industry or commerce. IG Farben, for example, is mentioned just three times, and then only in passing.
 - 16 K.D. Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur, Entstehung, Strukturen, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd edition (Cologne: Ullstein, 1969).
 - 17 See also Kershaw's summary of Ernst Nolte's views. I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), pp. 26–7, 44. Kershaw's chapter, 'Politics and Economics in the Nazi State', provides a very useful discussion of the different perspectives on business's role in the new political order.
 - 18 W. Carr, *Arms, Autarky, and Aggression*, 2nd edition (London: Edward Arnold, 1979).
 - 19 K. Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich*, 3rd edition (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1987), p. 45.
 - 20 Although part of the Institute for Social Research's overall analysis of fascism, Neumann alienated some of his colleagues at the Institute for his lack of interest in psychology and over-reliance, in their view, on legal institutions. He shared with his colleagues the view that capitalism and fascism were related, but they had differences as to what that relationship was. The attitudes of the members of the Institute were perhaps best summed up by Max Horkheimer's pithy, but vague, aphorism, which became a popular rallying cry: '[H]e who does not wish to speak of capitalism should also be silent about fascism.' *Behemoth* was one of the first works to outline the institutional arrangements in Nazi Germany and remains a classic. F. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963, first published 1942).
 - 21 R. Grunberger, *The 12-Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 167–84.
 - 22 T. Mason, 'The Primacy of Politics', in *Nazism, Fascism, and the Working Class: Essays by Tim Mason*, ed. J. Caplan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 53.
 - 23 R. Erbe, *Nationalsozialistische Wirtschaftspolitik*, quoted in A. Barkai, *Nazi Economics, Ideology, Theory and Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 6.
 - 24 Barkai, *Nazi Economics*, p. 17.
 - 25 H.A. Turner Jr, *German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 349.
 - 26 P. Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
 - 27 C. Kopper, *Zwischen Marktwirtschaft und Dirigismus. Bankenpolitik im 'Dritten Reich'* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995); G. Feldman, *Allianz and the German Insurance Business, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); H. James, *The Deutsche Bank* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995).
 - 28 Foreign exchange transactions are an excellent illustration. Building on controls already in place when they came to power, Nazi officials created a system of foreign exchange subsidies for international firms to offset the impact of an overvalued Reichsmark. Satisfying the documentary and political demands of the bureaucracy on a transaction-by-transaction basis became a complicated business necessity for firms, which ordinarily would have little desire to placate thuggish bureaucrats. This control gave the government added leverage in all sorts of company planning, which helps to explain the passivity of business shortly before and after the Nazi

- takeover. See, for example, C. Kobrak, 'The Foreign-exchange Dimension of Corporate Control in the Third Reich', *Contemporary European History*, 12 (2003), 33–46.
- 29 Some authors have argued that there was little factionalism among German industrial sectors. This may have been due to the structure of German industry, which left few clear winners and losers from biting the political hand that was feeding them. See discussion in P. Hayes' response to V. Berghahn, 'Industrial Factionalism in Modern German History', *Central European History*, 24 (1991). See also G. Stolper, *The German Economy* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1967); H. James, *The German Slump* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); and C. Kobrak, *National Cultures and International Competition: The Experience of Schering AG, 1851–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 30 James, *The Deutsche Bank*, p. 283.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 276–356.
- 32 P. Hayes and I. Wojak, eds., '*Arisierung*' im Nationalsozialismus. *Volksgemeinschaft, Raub und Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2000).
- 33 S. Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden: die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998).
- 34 *The Deutsche Bank and the Nazi Economic War against the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 35 James, *Nazi Economic War against the Jews*, p. 31.
- 36 Ibid., p. 65.
- 37 D. Ziegler, 'Die Verdrängung der Juden aus der Dresdner Bank 1933–1938', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 47 (1999), 187–216.
- 38 B. Lorenz, 'Die Commerzbank und die "Arisierungen" im Altreich', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 50 (2002), 237–69.
- 39 L. Herbst, 'Das nationalsozialistische Herrschaftssystem als Vergleichsgegenstand und der Ansatz der Totalitarismustheorien', in *Totalitarismus: Sechs Vorträge über Gehalt und Reichweite eines klassischen Konzepts der Diktaturforschung*, ed. K.-D. Henke (Dresden: Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung, 1999), p. 267f.
- 40 H. James, *Verbandspolitik im Nationalsozialismus. Von der Interessenvertretung zur Wirtschaftsgruppe. Der Centralverband des Deutschen Bank- und Bankiersgewerbes 1932–1945* (Munich: Piper, 2001).
- 41 See Hayes' study of Degussa, which had virtually no business outside of Germany, and Kobrak's study of Schering AG, whose sales were around 50 per cent from outside Germany, for a contrast between two companies of roughly the same size in the same industry. P. Hayes, *Degussa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
- 42 See G. Feldman, 'German Private Insurers and the Politics of the Four Year Plan', *Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte, Arbeitskreis Unternehmen im Nationalsozialismus*, Working Papers, no. 4 (1998).
- 43 R. Billstein, K. Fings, A. Kugler and N. Levis, *Working for the Enemy: Ford General Motors and Forced Labor in Germany during the Second World War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).
- 44 N. Levis, Preface to *Working for the Enemy*. Levis mixes some detail about what Opel ostensibly did with general statements about what all companies did, with few footnotes to substantiate the claims.
- 45 'Airplanes for the Führer', in *Working for the Enemy*, p. 45.
- 46 One of the most notorious of the popular books about foreign business in Germany is E. Black, *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation* (New York: Little, Brown, 2001). The misstatements in the title are sufficient for understanding the bias that runs through the book.

Black presents no evidence that there was a strategic alliance between IBM and Nazi Germany in any meaningful sense of the expression, and IBM was nowhere near the most powerful company in America at the time. If it held this position, whatever 'powerful' means in this context, it might have been so considered for a few years in the 1970s or early 1980s.

- 47 R. Overy, Foreword to *Doing Business with the Nazis* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).
- 48 See T. Bower, *Nazi Gold* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).
- 49 L. Straumann and D. Wildmann, *Schweizer Chemieunternehmen im 'Dritten Reich'* (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2001).
- 50 Some of the early attempts to address these issues were made by P. Erker and T. Pierenkemper, eds., *Deutsche Unternehmer zwischen Kriegswirtschaft und Wiederaufbau: Studien zur Erfahrungsbildung von Industrie-Eliten* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998) and A. Gehrig, *Nationalsozialistische Rüstungspolitik und unternehmenerischer Entscheidungsspielraum* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996).
- 51 D. Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich: Der nationalsozialistische Vierjahresplan* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1968).
- 52 See R. Overy, *War and Economy in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); idem, *The Nazi Economic Recovery, 1932–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and idem, 'The Four-Year Plan', *European Yearbook for Business History*, 3 (2000), 87–106.
- 53 Overy, 'The Four-Year Plan', 87f.
- 54 Ibid., 103. In the beginning, industry saw potential profits from armaments. See L. Gall, ed., *Krupp im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Siedler, 2002).
- 55 Overy's views were confirmed by Lutz Budraß, who traced this development in the aviation industry, especially for production of Junker aircraft. The altered agenda was reflected in the change in the means of cooperation between companies and the government in other branches and highlighted by the development of state enterprises. L. Budraß, *Flugzeugindustrie und Luftfistung in Deutschland 1918–1945* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998).
- 56 Wagenführ, *Die deutsche Industrie im Kriege*; Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*; H.E. Volkmann, 'Zum Verhältnis von Großwirtschaft und NS-Regime im Zweiten Weltkrieg'.
- 57 Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, p. 218.
- 58 M. Pohl, in cooperation with A. Schneider, *VIAG-Aktiengesellschaft 1923–1998: Vom Staatsunternehmen zum internationalen Konzern* (Munich: Piper, 1998).
- 59 A. Schneider, 'State-owned Enterprises: Hitler's Willing Servants? The Decision-making Structures of VIAG and RKA', *European Yearbook of Business History*, 3 (2000), 107–24 and A. Schneider, 'Die Vereinigte Industrieunternehmungen AG (VIAG) und der Vierjahresplan', in *Arbeitskreis 'Unternehmen im Nationalsozialismus'*, ed. G.D. Feldman (Frankfurt am Main: GUG, 1999).
- 60 Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich*, and Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*.
- 61 This point is very effectively made by Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, pp. 59–79. Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich*, and Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*.
- 62 Carr, *Arms, Autarky, and Aggression*.
- 63 This Second Four-Year Plan replaced the Four-Year Plan established in the early 1930s to overcome unemployment.
- 64 Hayes, *Industry and Ideology*, p. 175f.
- 65 R.-D. Müller, *Der Manager der Kriegswirtschaft. Hans Kehrl: Ein Unternehmer in der Politik des Dritten Reiches* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 1999).

- 66 P. Hayes, 'Die I.G. Farbenindustrie', in *Unternehmen im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. L. Gall and M. Pohl (Munich: Beck, 1998), pp. 107–16.
- 67 U. Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter, Politik und Praxis des 'Ausländer-Einsatzes' in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Bonn: Dietz, 1985).
- 68 B. Vögel, ed., *System der Willkür: betriebliche Repression und nationalsozialistische Verfolgung am Rammelsberg und in der Region Braunschweig* (Goslar: Verlag Goslarsche Zeitung, 2002); T. Urban, *Überleben und Sterben von Zwangsarbeitern im Ruhrbergbau* (Münster: Ardey-Verlag, 2002); T. Kraus and P. Thomes, eds., *Zwangsarbeit in der Stadt Aachen: Ausländereinsatz in einer westdeutschen Grenzstadt während des zweiten Weltkrieges* (Aachen: Mayer, 2002); Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Archivarinnen und Archivare im Erftkreis, eds., *Gezwungenemaßen: Zwangsarbeit in der Region Rhein-Erft-Rur* (Bergheim/Erf: Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Archivarinnen und Archivare im Erftkreis, 2002); H.-J. Kühne, *Kriegsbeute Arbeit: der 'Fremdarbeitereinsatz' in der Bielefelder Wirtschaft 1939–1945* (Bielefeld/Gütersloh: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2002); C. Seichter, *Zwangsarbeit in Ostwestfalen und Lippe 1939–1945: Stand der Forschung, Spurenreise vor Ort, Umsetzung im Unterricht* (Essen: Klartext, 2002); S. Held and T. Fickenwirth, *Fremd- und Zwangsarbeiter im Raum Leipzig 1939–1945: archivalisches Spezialinventar und historische Einblicke* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitäts-Verlag, 2002); W. Reininghaus, ed., *Zwangsarbeit in Deutschland 1939–1945: Archiv- und Sammlungsgut, Topographie und Erschließungsstrategien* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2001); W. Meyer, ed., *Zwangsarbeit während der NS-Zeit in Berlin und Brandenburg: Formen, Funktion, Rezeption* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2001); F. Baranowski, *Die verdrängte Vergangenheit: Rüstungsproduktion und Zwangsarbeit in Nordthüringen* (Duderstadt: Mecke, 2000); U. Jungbluth, *Wunderwaffen im KZ 'Rebstock': Zwangsarbeit in den Lagern 'Rebstock' in Dernau/Rheinland-Pfalz und Artern/Thüringen im Dienste der V-Waffen* (Breidel/Mosel: Rhein-Mosel-Verlag, 2000); J. Anschütz and I. Heike, *Feinde im eigenen Land: Zwangsarbeit in Hannover im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 2nd edition (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2000); B.C. Wagner, *IG Auschwitz: Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung von Häftlingen des Lagers Monowitz 1941–1945* (Munich: Saur, 2000); F.-U. Betz, *Zwangsarbeit in Schwetzingen: Lager für ausländische Arbeiter zur Zeit des NS-Regimes* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998). A sample of literature before 1998 is presented by Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p. 529, n. 12.
- 69 M. Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz, Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001). W. Gruner, *Zwangsarbeit und Verfolgung: Österreichische Juden im NS-Staat, 1938–45* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2000); S. Posta, *Tschechische 'Fremdarbeiter' in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft* (Dresden: Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung, 2002).
- 70 H. Mommsen with M. Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: ECON, 1996) and H. Mommsen, 'Erfahrungen mit der Geschichte der Volkswagen GmbH im Dritten Reich', in L. Gall and M. Pohl, eds., *Unternehmen im Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1998), 45–72. A newer and detailed study, albeit local and limited, is offered by A. Heusler, *Ausländereinsatz. Zwangsarbeiter für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft 1939–1945* (Munich: Hugendubel, 1996); R. Peter, *Rüstungspolitik in Baden. Kriegswirtschaft und Arbeitseinsatz in einer Grenzregion im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995).
- 71 See, for example, M. Stürmer, G. Teichmann and W. Treue, *Wägen und Wagen, Sal. Oppenheim jr. u. Cie. Geschichte einer Bank und einer Familie*, 3rd edition (Munich: Piper, 1994); M. Wolf, *Im Zeichen von Sonne und Monde. Von der Frankfurter Münzscheiderei*

- zum Weltunternehmen Degussa AG (Frankfurt am Main: Degussa, 1993); L. Gall, G. Feldman, H. James, C.-L. Holtfrerich and H. Büschgen, *Die Deutsche Bank, 1870–1995* (Munich: Beck, 1995); W. Feldenkirchen, *Siemens. Von der Werkstatt zum Weltunternehmen* (Munich: Piper, 1997).
- 72 K. Hildebrand, 'Die Deutsche Reichsbahn 1933–1945', in *Unternehmen im Nationalsozialismus*, pp. 73–90, and K. Hildebrand, 'Die Deutsche Reichsbahn in der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur 1933–1945', in *Die Eisenbahn in Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. L. Gall and M. Pohl (Munich: Beck, 1999). Hildebrand's point was their sense of bureaucratic duty (*Beamtenpflicht*), which served as a protective shield (*Schutzschild*) against acknowledging the cruelty of their actions.
- 73 Hamburger Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, ed., *Das Daimler-Benz Buch. Ein Rüstungskonzern im 'Tausendjährigen Reich'* (Nördlingen: Greno, 1988); H. Pohl, S. Habeth, B. Weitz and B. Brüninghaus, *Die Daimler-Benz-AG in den Jahren 1933 bis 1945* (Stuttgart: Franz-Steiner-Verlag, 1986); B. Hopmann, M. Spoerer, B. Weitz and B. Brüninghaus, *Zwangsarbeit bei Daimler-Benz* (Stuttgart: Franz-Steiner-Verlag, 1994); and N. Gregor, *Stern und Hakenkreuz: Daimler-Benz im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1997).
- 74 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p. 420.
- 75 English translation: N. Gregor, *Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
- 76 'The Degussa AG and the Holocaust', in *Lessons and Legacies V: The Holocaust and Justice*, ed. R. Smelser, 140–77.
- 77 C. Ruch, M. Rais-Liechti and R. Peter, *Geschäfte und Zwangsarbeit: Schweizer Industrieunternehmen im 'Dritten Reich'* (Zürich: Chronos, 2001); L. Straumann and D. Wildmann, *Schweizer Chemieunternehmen im 'Dritten Reich'* (Zurich: Chronos, 2001); M. König, *Interhandel. Die schweizerische Holding der IG Farben und ihre Metamorphosen – eine Affäre um Eigentum und Interessen (1910–1999)* (Zurich: Chronos, 2001).
- 78 C. Ruch, M. Rais-Liechti and Roland Peter, *Geschäfte und Zwangsarbeit: Schweizer Industrieunternehmen im 'Dritten Reich'* (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2001).
- 79 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p. 424.
- 80 Ibid., p. 426.
- 81 L. Budraß, *Flugzeugindustrie und Luftrüstung in Deutschland 1918–1945* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998); M. Pohl, *Philipp Holzmann: Geschichte eines Bauunternehmens, 1849–1999* (Munich: Beck, 1999); M. Pohl, *Die Strabag 1923 bis 1998* (Munich: Piper, 1998).
- 82 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p. 427.
- 83 Ibid., p. 429.
- 84 W. Naasner, *SS-Wirtschaft und SS-Verwaltung: Das SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungsamt und die unter seiner Dienstaufsicht stehenden wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1988).
- 85 M.T. Allen, Preface to *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
- 86 J. Steinberg, *Die Deutsche Bank und ihre Goldtransaktionen während des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Beck, 1999). Dresden Bank also commissioned a study of its gold transactions: J. Bähr, *Der Goldhandel der Dresdner Bank im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Gustav Keipenheuer Verlag, 1999). Some new studies have tackled the controversial area of armament production. Gregor Schöllgen's study of Diehl is very reserved in its findings, but lacks evidence and references: *Ein Familienunternehmen in Deutschland 1902–2002* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002).
- 87 Hayes, 'The Degussa AG and the Holocaust', in *Lessons and Legacies, V*, ed. Smelser.
- 88 See, for example, Feldman, *Allianz*; James, *Nazi Economic War*; and Kobrak, *Schering AG*.

- 89 S.J. Wiesen, *West German Industry and the Challenge of the Nazi Past* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001), p. 5.
- 90 Feldman, *Allianz*, conclusion, and Kobrak, *Schering*. chapter 12 and Epilogue.
- 91 Wiesen, *West German Industry*, p. 28.
- 92 See P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
- 93 L. Gall, 'A Man for All Seasons? Hermann Josef Abs im Dritten Reich', *Zeitschrift für Gesellschaft*, 43, 2 (1998), 123–75. Gall argued that Abs acted in an economically rational way without any ideological sympathy with Nazism and that he helped some Jews.
- 94 A. Ritschl, 'Die NS-Wirtschaftsideologie – Modernisierungsprogramm oder reaktionäre Utopie?', in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. M. Prinz and R. Zitelmann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), pp. 48–70. See also Allen, 'Introduction', and Kobrak, 'Politics, Corporate Governance and the Dynamics of German Managerial Innovation', *Enterprise and Society*, 3 (2002), 429–61.
- 95 See, for example, W. Abelshauser, 'Die NS-Kriegswirtschaft und das westdeutsche Wirtschaftswunder nach 1945', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 47 (1999), 503–38.

8

The Decision-Making Process

Christopher R. Browning

For more than two decades I have been a participant in the debates among historians over the decision-making process that shaped Nazi Jewish policy and culminated in the 'Final Solution'. In my analysis of the historiography of this issue, therefore, I have decided openly to use the first person rather than third person to avoid both stylistic infelicity and any pretence that I am transcending my own involvement and offering an unengaged view. I have tried, of course, to be fair in summarizing and evaluating the contributions of others, but what follows, none the less, is an inextricable mix of analysis, academic memoir and advocacy.

In the earliest general studies of the Holocaust, before the term itself was in wide use, the issue of the decision-making process was not a central concern. However, many key issues of the subsequent debate – Hitler's role, the dating of the decision for the 'Final Solution', the degree of premeditation and the situational context and motive for a presumed decision – were at least touched on. Leon Poliakov, Gerald Reitlinger, Wolfgang Scheffler and Helmut Krausnick all agreed on two basic conclusions, namely that Hitler made 'the decision' and gave 'the order' for the 'Final Solution', and he did so sometime in the months immediately prior to the attack on the Soviet Union.¹ Scheffler and Krausnick emphasized the antisemitic core of Nazi ideology as the fundamental driving force.² Only Poliakov probed further, asking: 'Why, then, was this irrational decision made, and why was it made at this particular time?' Conceding that the answer must be 'entirely speculative in the absence of any concrete documents', he hypothesized that, faced with the prospect of a long war with the Soviet Union, Hitler did so in order to burn the bridges behind the German people and give them 'no possibility of turning back'.³ Concerning premeditation, the early historians covered the spectrum. Poliakov was most emphatic in asserting that Hitler had not contemplated mass extermination from the beginning, and that the 'Final Solution' was not part of a long-held 'exact plan'.⁴ Scheffler also accepted that it was not planned ahead of time but emphasized

that Nazi Jewish policy none the less followed a 'logical path' (*logischer Weg*) to the mass destruction of the European Jews.⁵ Krausnick speculated that Hitler 'privately visualized a much more extreme solution' even while tolerating emigration because 'for the time being it was the only practical way', and that he had been 'toying' with the idea of exterminating the Jews 'for a long time' before 'he openly declared his intention'.⁶

In the 1961 first edition of *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hilberg was the first to suggest that there was not a single killing order but rather a sequence of decisions. 'Basically, we are dealing with two of Hitler's decisions,' he argued; one in the spring of 1941 for the 'mobile killing operations' in the Soviet Union, and a second shortly after the invasion that 'doomed the rest of European Jewry'.⁷ Hilberg was also the first to offer an analysis of the decision-making process behind Nazi Jewish policy which went beyond the dating and circumstance of the key Hitler decisions for killing and encompassed the entire persecutory process. For Hilberg, the annihilation of European Jewry was above all 'an administrative process' or 'bureaucratic destruction process'.⁸ This German bureaucracy was 'a very decentralized apparatus' made up of four components or hierarchies – party, civil service, industry and military – whose cooperation was none the less 'so complete that we may truly speak of their fusion into a machinery of destruction'.⁹ It had 'no master plan, no basic blueprint', but 'found the shortest road to the final goal' with 'an uncanny pathfinding ability' because a destruction process has 'an inherent pattern' – definition, concentration, confiscation and annihilation.¹⁰

But a bureaucracy is also subject to inertia; 'it has to be started'. 1933 provided the crucial impetus, but Hilberg was emphatic in rejecting a top-down model of the dictatorship micro-managing its bureaucracy. 'The German bureaucracy was so sensitive a mechanism that in the right climate it began to function almost by itself.... the bureaucracy was given only a bare signpost of its first step. For subsequent measures, the bureaucrats had to rely on their own imagination.'¹¹ Hilberg was most vague concerning motivation. For Hitler, he acknowledged that 'the destruction of the European Jews had meaning', but he made no attempt to explain how Hitler's view of the world made it meaningful. As for the bureaucrat, he 'beckoned to his Faustian fate' and 'had to attempt the ultimate'.¹² Clearly, structure and process, not ideology and motivation, were at the centre of Hilberg's work.

Throughout the 1960s Holocaust debates focused on the issues of Jewish resistance and Jewish councils, in response to Hannah Arendt's controversial report on the Eichmann trial. Then the publication of two landmark books – Karl Schleunes' *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* in 1970 and Uwe Adam's *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* in 1972 – laid the foundation for approaching the decision-making process as a product of the polycratic nature of the Nazi regime. Focusing only on the pre-war years, Schleunes concluded that 'the figure of Adolf Hitler

during these years of search is a shadowy one. His hand appears only rarely in the actual making of Jewish policy between 1933 and 1938.¹³ Because there was no 'grand design' and little direction from above, Nazi Jewish policy followed a 'twisted road' as competing interests – party radicals, SS specialists, ministerial bureaucrats and economic managers – struggled to impose their own agendas. Hitler's failure to provide a clear and consistent policy while simultaneously insisting on a 'total' solution to an ill-defined problem was a recipe for both 'failure' and radicalization. The driving dynamic behind Nazi Jewish policy was therefore twofold: 'The search for a solution to the Jewish problem had been set into motion by the anti-Semitic energies which constituted the heart of Nazism; it was driven forward by the frustrations of each successive failure.'¹⁴

Uwe Adam was even more explicit in arguing that Nazi Jewish policy could be understood only as the product of the regime's polycratic structure and as the reflection of a 'mosaic' of contradictory and antagonistic interests.¹⁵ Given the number of institutions and agencies involved with Jewish policy, no unified conception was possible. 'Thus a power struggle between institutions had to determine which agency together with its conceptions of Jewish policy would prevail.'¹⁶ Rather than searching with hindsight for the 'red thread' that would explain Nazi Jewish policy through continuity, the historian had to evaluate each of the 'competing interests and intentions' (p. 229) in its own right. The result was a complex study of the origins of the different persecutory measures that emerged in the pre-war period.

Unlike Schleunes, Adam carried his study into the war years and openly challenged the prevailing views concerning the decision(s) for the Final Solution. 'A Hitler decision over the "Final Solution of the European Jewish Question" in the sense of a comprehensive, organized, and technically pursued murder obviously was not taken before or during the first phase of the Russian war.' The *Einsatzgruppen* massacres constituted a 'gruesome copy' of similar events in Poland on a 'new dimension', and Göring's authorization to Heydrich of 31 July 1941 was only an expansion of the legal basis of the latter's jurisdiction over Jewish affairs. Having rejected the spring and summer of 1941 as key turning points, Adam became the first historian to sort through the confusing and ambiguous evidence from the autumn of 1941, and concluded that Hitler's decision must have been taken between September and November.¹⁷

At almost exactly the same time as Schleunes and Adam published their books focusing on the polycratic, unplanned nature of and minimal role of Hitler in the decision-making process for Nazi Jewish policy, two other scholars – Eberhard Jäckel and Andreas Hillgruber – published fundamental studies of Hitler's ideology, focusing in no small part on what gave the destruction of the European Jews meaning in Hitler's mind. For Jäckel, the Jew stood for everything Hitler opposed, and solving the 'Jewish Question' became the 'central motivating force of his political mission'. Tracing the emergence of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*,

Jäckel concluded that vis-à-vis the Jews an ‘enormous radicalization’ occurred in the mid-1920s. While he often used brutal and murderous language rhetorically, henceforth his threats against the Jews should be understood quite literally. Even during the policies of persecution in the 1930s and the plans for deportation (to Madagascar) after the war broke out, Hitler had ‘already decided on a much more radical solution’. Not surprisingly, therefore, Hitler’s two ‘blueprints’ for foreign policy and racial policy climaxed simultaneously with the war against the Soviet Union.¹⁸

Andreas Hillgruber likewise argued that Hitler’s ‘radical universal antisemitism’ and drive for *Lebensraum* were indissolubly connected in a comprehensive, Social Darwinist ideology. The attack on the Soviet Union therefore meant both conquest of *Lebensraum* and the destruction of the Jews. Together they constituted the ‘nucleus’ of the ‘racial-ideological programme of National Socialism’. And when Hitler thought in July 1941 that he had won in Russia, he turned to destroy the rest of the Jews of Europe to consolidate his victory.¹⁹

By the early 1970s, therefore, two distinct approaches to an historical explanation of decision-making in Nazi Jewish policy had emerged. One focused on the structure of the Nazi regime and how it functioned; the other focused on Hitler, his ideology and his intentions. The first portrayed a ‘twisted road to Auschwitz’, in which the Final Solution emerged through the interplay of a vague Hitler insistence on solving the Jewish question, internal rivalry and struggle for power, and changing situation. The latter portrayed the Final Solution as the conscious, premeditated goal of a specific Hitler ‘programme’ or ‘blueprint’. A focused debate on these two contrasting approaches did not yet take place, however, because there were as yet no academically recognized field of Holocaust studies and no academic infrastructure of conferences and journals to provide the legitimacy and platform for such a debate.

Meanwhile advocates of the two different approaches moved even further apart. In 1975 Lucy Dawidowicz published *The War against the Jews*. She argued, as others had, that ‘Hitler’s ideas about the Jews were at the centre of his mental world’ and formed ‘the ineradicable core of National Socialist doctrine’. But she went beyond others both in dating and in describing Hitler’s mode of operation. It was ‘likely’ that as early as 1918 or 1919 Hitler had conceived of killing the Jews. Henceforth, the ‘grand design was in his head’. ‘He had long-range plans to realize his ideological goals, and the destruction of the Jews was at their centre.’ Because the ‘implementation of his plans was contingent on the opportunism of the moment’, however, Hitler could remain indifferent ‘to the unregulated pluralism with regard to the Jews that then flourished within the state and party’. But Hitler’s ‘toleration’ for such ‘assorted’ solutions ‘extended only until he was ready to put his war plans into operation’. On 30 January 1939, Hitler ‘made his declaration of war against the Jews’, after which ‘the Final Solution entered the stage of practical planning for implementation’.

By February 1941 Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich had decided on a 'two-pronged attack' – *Einsatzgruppen* and death camps. 'All the decisions had been taken. The rest was a matter of technology, administrative clearance, and efficient operation.'²⁰

Just two years later Martin Broszat articulated a scenario for the decision-making process that led to the Final Solution, which could not have stood in greater contrast. Broszat was not responding to Dawidowicz, but rather to the apologetic assertion by David Irving that Hitler not only had not ordered the Final Solution but also did not even know what his underlings were doing until the autumn of 1943.²¹ Broszat refuted Irving's argument and offered his own thesis that there was no single comprehensive decision to kill, but rather the destruction programme developed 'bit by bit and little by little' (*stück- und schubweise*) out of a series of separate killing actions in late 1941 and early 1942. The combination of Hitler's fanatical determination to create a *judenrein* Europe through expelling the Jews and the military failure on the eastern front, which caused a lack of both rail transportation and reception areas for the Jews who were to be uprooted, had led the Nazi regime into a 'blind alley' (*Sackgasse*) by November 1941. Local massacres were improvised responses to relieve pressure rather than part of a plan tracing back to a 'comprehensive secret order for the destruction of the Jews in the summer of 1941'. But once underway, the individual killing actions gradually became institutionalized and by the spring and summer of 1942 took on a comprehensive and distinctive character.²²

By the late 1970s historians of Nazi Germany had increasingly polarized into two camps, one of which explained what made things happen in the Third Reich in terms of Hitler's intentions derived from a coherent and consistent ideology and his role as key decision-maker, and the other in terms of the anarchical nature and polycratic structure of the Nazi state, its internal competition and a chaotic decision-making process characterized by improvisation and radicalization. To designate these polarized interpretational approaches, the British historian Tim Mason coined the terms 'intentionalism' and 'functionalism'.²³ But up to this point the so-called 'intentionalist/functionalist' debate focused mainly on issues of Hitler's foreign, armaments, economic and domestic, not Jewish or racial, policies, even though the same interpretational divide had characterized studies of Nazi Jewish policy for nearly a decade.

However, the academic standing of what has become known as 'Holocaust studies' in general and the debate on decision-making in particular now changed dramatically. The first national and international academic conferences in the US devoted primarily to the Holocaust had taken place in New York in 1975 and San Jose in 1977 and 1978, but had not yet focused on decision-making.²⁴ More in response to Broszat's stimulating thesis than to the apologetics of Irving, the floodgates opened. Gerald Fleming and Andreas Hillgruber reiterated the intentionalist line of interpretation, emphasizing the programmatic nature of

Hitler's ideology as well as his pivotal role as decision-maker.²⁵ Hans Mommsen joined Broszat's position that though Hitler was the 'ideological and political author' of the Final Solution, he did not set it in motion through a formal or even verbal order. Hitler took refuge in propagandistic sloganeering and vague prophecies, while others sought to 'transform the millennium into reality in the lifetime of the dictator' and thereby made him the 'slave of his own public prophecies' about the Jews.²⁶ Sebastian Haffner and Shlomo Aronson, arguing within the context of Hitler's global strategy and in particular his dashed expectations vis-à-vis the western powers, placed his decision to murder the European Jews in late 1941. Haffner opted for December 1941, when the Russian counteroffensive dashed Hitler's hopes for a rapprochement with England following a rapid victory in the East. No longer having to remain an acceptable negotiating partner with the West, he switched priorities and now sought an irreversible racial victory over the Jews.²⁷ Shlomo Aronson opted for 'late fall 1941' when American Lend-Lease to Russia (1 October) convinced Hitler that the extent of alleged Jewish domination over the western democracies precluded any ultimate hope on his part for their acceptance of German hegemony in Europe. This removed not only the last restraint to mass murder, but added the spur of revenge.²⁸

A number of historians, myself included, argued that the Final Solution emerged from a series of decisions taken between spring and autumn 1941.²⁹ My contribution to the debate began with a 'reply' to Martin Broszat, which he graciously published in the journal he edited,³⁰ and was expanded in the paper I presented at a colloquium organized by François Furet, Raymond Aron and Saul Friedländer, and sponsored by the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris in July 1982.³¹ Applying Tim Mason's terms of 'intentionalism' and 'functionalism' to the debate, I identified myself as a 'moderate functionalist'. I argued that while antisemitism was clearly central to Hitler's ideology, the intention of systematically murdering the European Jews was not fixed in his mind before the war, but crystallized in 1941 after previous solutions proved unworkable and the imminent attack on the Soviet Union raised the prospect of yet another vast increase in the number of Jews within the growing Nazi empire. In the spring he ordered preparations for the murder of Soviet Jews who fell into German hands. That summer, confident of military victory, he instigated or incited the preparation of a plan to extend the killing process to European Jews (which was the origin of the Goering authorization to Heydrich of 31 July). And in October he approved the rough outline of a plan for deporting Jews to killing centres that used poison gas. In short I argued that Hitler was the key decision-maker who made not just one but rather a series of key decisions. The Final Solution was not the concluding phase of a premeditated, long-held plan waiting the opportune moment for implementation, but rather emerged in the particular circumstances of 1941.

The ‘intentionalist/functionalist’ debate reached its apogee – some might say its nadir – in May 1984, when most of the protagonists assembled in Stuttgart at a conference organized by Eberhard Jäckel.³² By then the lines had been drawn and virtually everyone – with the significant exception of Eberhard Jäckel himself³³ – reiterated his now familiar and finely honed position. In addition, however, a new front in the debate over the decision-making process, focusing exclusively on the origins of the genocidal assault against Soviet Jews, surfaced. In 1981 Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm had published their massive study of the *Einsatzgruppen*. Citing both the testimony of various *Einsatzgruppen* officers, especially Otto Ohlendorf, and documents like the Stahlecker report of October 1941, Krausnick articulated a position that was at the time virtually taken for granted by everyone but Uwe Adam, namely that the *Einsatzgruppen* had received orders for the systematic destruction of Soviet Jewry sometime before the invasion on 22 June 1941.³⁴ Three years earlier, Christian Streit had published his pioneering work on the German treatment of Soviet POWs. Without fanfare he briefly argued that prior to the invasion the Nazi goal was indeed to achieve (quoting Stahlecker) the ‘most comprehensive as possible removal’ (*möglichst umfassenden Beseitigung*) of the Jews, but that this meant in initial expectation and practice what Heydrich relayed on 2 July 1941, namely all Jews in state and party positions. Only stupendous military success on the one hand, and the unexpected degree of military cooperation with the SS on the other, opened up the hitherto unforeseen possibility of killing *all* Soviet Jews.³⁵

Alfred Streim, who had earlier prepared the preliminary judicial case against the notorious *Einsatzkommando* 4a for the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen*, also published a book on the treatment of Soviet POWs in 1983. On the basis of his work on *Einsatzgruppen* cases, he added an ‘excursus’ to his book exploring what orders had been given by whom and when to the *Einsatzgruppen*. Examining the testimonies of witnesses for later German trials, he concluded that the Nuremberg testimony of Ohlendorf and others, claiming that an order from Hitler to kill all Soviet Jews had been relayed to the *Einsatzgruppen* by Heydrich’s chief of personnel, Bruno Streckenbach, prior to the invasion, was contrived as a defence strategy to hide behind superior orders. Given the ambiguous and conflicting testimony of different witnesses, Streim concluded that there had never been a single, comprehensive *Führerbefehl* either before or after the invasion, but rather a series of escalating instructions to incite pogroms, kill Jews in state and party positions, kill Jews who were potential threats and finally kill Jewish women and children, which, taken together, constitute what we now understand as the Hitler order.³⁶ Krausnick and Streim went head to head with their contrasting interpretations at Stuttgart and carried on their exchange even after.³⁷

One year after the Stuttgart conference, Raul Hilberg published the revised and expanded edition of *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Standing aloof

from the specifics of the ‘intentionalist/functionalist’ controversy, Hilberg excised all references to a Hitler decision for the Final Solution, except for one solitary footnote: ‘Chronology and circumstances point to a Hitler decision before the summer ended.’³⁸ If Hitler’s role was diminished, that of the bureaucrats was emphasized even further. As the formal structure of public laws and written regulations dissolved into an increasingly opaque and formless network of secret directives, vague authorizations and ‘basic understandings of officials resulting in decisions not requiring orders or explanations’, the ‘experienced functionary was coming into his own. A middle-ranking bureaucrat, no less than his highest superior, was aware of currents and possibilities. In small ways as well as large, he recognized what was ripe for the time. Most often it was he who initiated action.’ Ultimately, Hilberg concluded, ‘the destruction of the Jews was not so much a product of laws and commands as it was a matter of spirit, of shared comprehension, of consonance and synchronization’.³⁹ Hitler did not disappear entirely. ‘Pivotal to this crystallization was the role of Adolf Hitler himself, his stance before the world and more specifically, his wishes or expectations voiced in an inner circle.’ But it was left to others to cite his promises and invoke his authority.⁴⁰

Hilberg thus straddled the ‘intentionalist/functionalist’ controversy. Like the functionalists, he de-emphasized the role of Hitler and his ideology. On the other hand, like the intentionalists, he emphasized ‘continuity’.⁴¹ The radicalization of Nazi Jewish policy was not driven by chaos, anarchy, internal competition and improvisation. Rather, it was characterized by ‘consonance’, ‘synchronization’, ‘crystallization’ and an ‘inherent pattern’. The driving force behind bureaucratic behaviour was neither Hitler’s ideology, which sanctioned what they wanted to do anyhow, nor frustration over any blind alley into which they had haplessly manoeuvred themselves. For the perpetrators, the Final Solution was ‘an undertaking for its own sake, an event experienced as *Erlebnis*’. They ‘all shared this experience’ and they ‘could sense the enormity of the operation’.⁴² Driven by a kind of hubris, intoxicated by daring to do what no one had done before, the machinery of destruction was self-propelled.

The ‘intentionalist/functionalist’ controversy, unresolved at Stuttgart, was soon eclipsed by the *Historikerstreit*, whose polemics absorbed the attention and energy of historians of National Socialism in Germany and abroad. Behind the fireworks of the *Historikerstreit*, however, several new approaches to contextualizing the decision-making process that led to the Final Solution were explored. One focused on economics and overpopulation, the other on demographics and race. Concerning the former, in 1987 Götz Aly and Susanne Heim published a long article on ‘the economics of the “Final Solution”’.⁴³ They argued that a homogeneous group of young technocrats in the General Government, transcending the rivalries that permeated the higher echelons, held a common view that eastern Europe was trapped in a vicious circle of poverty, low productivity

and overpopulation that blocked modernization. By dominating the pre-industrial handicraft sector, the Jews prevented both a rationalization of industrial production and the movement of non-Jewish population from the countryside into the cities which was the only possibility for modernizing the agricultural sector as well. Thus the elimination of the Jews was necessary to break the vicious circle and open the path to economic modernization of the occupied East. In short, these planners 'longed for the Final Solution for reasons that appeared logical to them at the time and...they prevailed'. Without them, the race hatred of the regime would have led to pogroms and massacres, but not to systematic genocide.

Just one year earlier, I had published an article on Nazi ghettoization policy in Poland prior to the Final Solution, including the economics of ghetto maintenance.⁴⁴ I argued that ghettoization was not the product of a common policy imposed from above; rather, ghettoization took place in different places at different times for different reasons. Faced with the hunger, epidemics and skyrocketing death rates that resulted from ghettoization, local Germans disagreed on what to do next. Some argued for a conscious policy of attrition, welcoming a 'dying out' of the Jews. Others argued for a policy of production, harnessing Jewish labour to cover the costs of maintaining the ghetto and simultaneously to produce for the German war effort (and not incidentally to line the pockets of ghetto managers). Left without direction from Berlin, the 'productionists' usually prevailed over the 'attritionists', though all were aware that the ghettos were only a temporary phenomenon which in fact ended abruptly when the central authorities intervened with a policy of systematic ghetto liquidation.

On the basis of this article, as well as Ulrich Herbert's recent work on economic interests and Nazi ideology,⁴⁵ I responded to Aly and Heim. Where they saw consensus, I saw factionalism between 'attritionists' and 'productionists'. Where they saw local initiative and planning from below shaping the fundamental decisions from above, I saw intermittent signals and impulses emanating from the centre that met with receptivity and accommodation on the periphery. Where they saw economic calculation as the prime mover of the Final Solution, I saw racial policy ultimately carried out in spite of its economic irrationality.⁴⁶

In 1986 I also published an article on Nazi 'resettlement' policy and the search for a solution to the Jewish Question before 'Operation Barbarossa', in which I argued that at that time 'Nazi Jewish policy was part of a wider demographic project that aimed at the racial restructuring of eastern Europe'. The Nazis had not only a self-imposed 'Jewish problem' but also a Polish and a *Volksdeutsch* problem, as they struggled to redraw the demographic map of eastern Europe through uprooting, expelling and 'resettling' millions of people. The cumulative frustration of being unable to solve their self-imposed Jewish problem amidst the conflicting priorities of both their vast schemes for racial restructuring and the economic exigencies of wartime helped set the stage for the Final

Solution.⁴⁷ Two years later, Michael Burleigh published *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich*, in which he documented the full extent to which the German academic establishment had bought into the vision of racial demographic restructuring in eastern Europe. Academic experts and Nazi racists were not distinct and separate categories.⁴⁸

While Aly and Heim increasingly recognized that economic experts dealing with overpopulation and demographic experts operating on racial criteria were ‘two sides of the same conception’, in their massive work on the ‘pioneers of genocide’ (*Vordenker der Vernichtung*), the former still had primacy. In their view the people they studied were primarily ‘young academics, who did not fit the cliché stereotype of demagogic, narrow-minded ideologues, but more often – aside from occasional racist observations – argued pragmatically and rationally’. For Aly and Heim, clearly, the ‘overpopulation problem’, not the Jewish problem, was still the key factor in the Nazi drive to modernize and ‘cleanse’ eastern Europe, to which the Final Solution was in effect a byproduct. ‘Population policy was not pursued for its own sake, rather conceived of as a means to rationalize the economy.’⁴⁹

The Final Solution as by-product was also the upshot of Arno Mayer’s *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?*, published in 1989. In stark contrast to Aly and Heim, however, the driving force for Mayer was not for modernization but against it, the dominant emotion was rage and fear, not rational calculation. ‘If Hitler’s worldview had an epicentre, it was his deep-seated animosity toward contemporary civilization, and not its hatred for Jews, which was grafted onto it.’ The anti-modernist fears of Hitler, the old elites and the lower middle class above all found their deepest expression in the anti-communist crusade against the Soviet Union, but with the ‘derailment’ of Barbarossa in autumn 1941, they began ‘venting their rage’ on Soviet Jews. The rest of European Jewry was then swept into the maelstrom by the hyper-exploitation of labour that accompanied Germany’s declining military fortunes.⁵⁰

While starkly opposed to one another in their views about the relationship between National Socialism and modernization, Aly and Heim on the one hand and Mayer on the other shared a reluctance to conceive of racist ideology as other than a superficial veneer distracting historians from the real forces behind Nazi imperialism and genocide. In a field perhaps noted even more than others for the rigidity with which protagonists clung to their positions in unremitting academic trench warfare, a rare and startling turnaround occurred with the publication of Götz Aly’s 1995 book on Nazi expulsion and resettlement policy and its relationship to the Final Solution. Himmler and his racial demographers, not the allegedly non-ideological, rational and pragmatic, low echelon economic planners, now took centre stage. Race, not overpopulation and modernization, was now the key to understanding Nazi demographic policies and the Final Solution.⁵¹

While much of the controversy in the late 1980s and early 1990s between historians of Nazi Jewish policy focused on issues related to contextualizing Nazi decision-making (economics, demography, and anti-communism, as well as eugenics and 'euthanasia'⁵²), the tightly focused examination of the decisions themselves resumed after a brief hiatus. Several historians sought to get beyond the hardened dichotomies by offering modifications and syntheses. In 1989 the Swiss historian Philippe Burrin offered an approach he described as 'conditional intentionalism'. In the 1920s Hitler saw a solution to the Jewish Question in terms of expulsion, not extermination, but by the mid-1930s he envisaged another alternative. In case of war 'on all fronts', he confided that he was ready for 'all the consequences'. Thereafter Hitler followed a consistent policy. As long as he was successful, the Jews faced expulsion; once his expansionary goals were checked, the Jews faced extermination. Those were precisely the alternatives he posed in his Reichstag speech of January 1939. The conditions for the latter alternative were realized, first when the German offensive stalled in August and second in mid-September when Hitler realized he faced a prolonged war on all fronts because Russia would not be defeated by the end of the year and the US's entry into the war was imminent. Burrin's synthesis accepted: the existence of a long-held Hitler plan, albeit a conditional one; the expulsion plans of 1939–40 as reality, not camouflage; and a comprehensive Hitler decision, though only in the autumn of 1941 and triggered by frustration.⁵³

Two years later, Richard Breitman published *Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution*. Admitting the deficiency of previous intentionalists in not assembling precise evidence connecting Hitler's ideological views with the actual decisions and preparations for mass murder, he sought to remedy this deficiency by tracing the key role of Heinrich Himmler in the decision-making process. But he also felt the truth lay hidden behind the 'carefully marked trail of neatly filed documents' that had deceived other historians. Conceding that there was no pre-war plan to murder all German, much less all European Jews, Breitman still dismissed resettlement plans such as Madagascar as 'a cover' for 'disposing of large numbers of Jews in the East'. The 'fundamental decision to exterminate the Jews' was taken in early 1941, after which 'the Final Solution was just a matter of time – and timing'. Subsequent planning constituted 'operational decisions' of implementation.⁵⁴

Stimulated by Burrin's and Breitman's contributions, I re-entered the fray with what I termed a position 'beyond "intentionalism" and "functionalism"'.⁵⁵ I still held to a 'two-decision' model, but now accepted the Streit-Streim thesis that the decision to kill all Soviet Jews was not finalized until summer 1941. I suggested that we should look less at what the perpetrators testified to having been told before 22 June, and more at what they did after that date. I argued that after mid-July, and indeed immediately after Hitler's 'victory' speech of 16 July, Himmler's numerous trips to the East, the manpower build-up beyond

the scant 3,000 men of the *Einsatzgruppen*, and the retargeting from adult male Jews to women and children all indicated a decisive turning point. A decision-making process that had begun in the spring with Hitler's exhortations to destroy Jewish-Bolshevism in a war of destruction had reached closure in a specific programme to kill all Soviet Jews.

Linking what virtually everyone now accepted as the crucial year of 1941 to the immediate past, I argued that a significant pattern emerged. In September 1939, flushed with victory over Poland, Hitler had approved plans for a vast demographic reorganization of that country, including the Lublin Reservation for the Jews. In late May 1940, when victory over France seemed assured, he approved Himmler's suggestion about expelling the Jews to some territory overseas, perhaps Africa, which soon took the form of the Madagascar Plan. In mid-July 1941, expecting imminent victory over the Soviet Union, Hitler gave the green light for the destruction of Soviet Jewry. And in late September/early October, in the wake of the fall of Kiev and the initial victories at Vyazma and Bryansk, which once again raised the expectation of quick victory in the East, he approved the Final Solution. Not frustration but 'the euphoria of victory' had been the context for each of the four successive radicalizations of Nazi Jewish policy.

In short, by the early 1990s, those doing specific research on the decision-making question accepted Hitler's key role as a decision-maker. They had narrowed the debate over dating to 1941, though they still disagreed as to which month(s). They had accepted that Hitler's decisions were related to the war, but disagreed on which aspect – preparation for Barbarossa, euphoria of victory or frustration of failure – was most crucial. At the same time two major developments took place that would change the entire landscape of Holocaust studies. The first was, of course, 1989 and the collapse of the communist regimes in eastern Europe, which led to the opening of hitherto closed or limited-access archives. Second, a new generation of young historians, many of them Germans, leapt at this opportunity, utilized the new documentation and produced a series of monographs on the Holocaust in regions and localities of eastern Europe, as well as on key institutions, episodes and policies, about which little or nothing had previously been known.⁵⁶ The result has been an explosion of scholarly literature with which even the most dedicated professional can scarcely stay abreast.

Out of this explosion, some directly and much only indirectly touching on the historiography of decision-making, I would extract four areas of general consensus, while also pointing up which issues within the broad consensus are still being contested. First, most historians now agree that there is no 'big bang' theory for the origins of the Final Solution, predicated on a single decision made at a single moment in time. It is generally accepted that the decision-making process was prolonged and incremental. The debate is really about the

nuances of weighting and emphasis. Which in a series of decisions should be considered more important, more pivotal, than others?

Second, there has been a shift towards emphasizing continuity over discontinuity in the decision-making process. The events of 1941 did not represent a sharp break with those of 1939–40. The Nazis' expulsion plans and visions of demographic engineering are taken more seriously than before and are also seen as policies of destruction in their own right. As Magnus Brechtken has aptly concluded, the Madagascar Plan amounted to a 'death sentence' for European Jewry which differed from Auschwitz only in the place and method of murder.⁵⁷ If scholars increasingly appreciate the importance of Nazi policies and decisions preceding 1941, many also now accept that important decision-making continued after 1941. Peter Witte and Peter Longerich have both noted the importance of decisions taken in the spring of 1942.⁵⁸ I sketched out the importance of July 1942 as the point of a 'final decision' for the Final Solution.⁵⁹ And Christian Gerlach has developed a much more detailed argument concerning the 'acceleration' of the mass murder in the summer of 1942, focusing in particular on the murder of Jewish labour in connection with the Reich's crisis in food production.⁶⁰ Even with the construction of the gas chambers and the onset of deportations and ghetto liquidations, the decision-making process did not stop.

Third, most – though certainly not all – scholars in the field have gravitated towards the Streit-Streim position that the decision and dissemination of orders for the murder of all Soviet Jews did not occur before the invasion.⁶¹ Beginning in late July – at different times in different places at different rates – the killing was gradually expanded from adult male Jews to encompass all Jews except indispensable workers – a process nearly complete in the Baltic by the end of 1941, but not yet elsewhere on occupied Soviet territory until 1942. There is still considerable disagreement concerning the relative roles of regional and local authorities on the one hand and Hitler and central authorities on the other, as well as disagreement on the historical context of euphoria of victory or growing frustration and desperation.

Finally, there is a growing awareness among historians that the Final Solution was based on a form of consensus politics. In the 1970s much emphasis, at least among 'functionalists', had been placed on the polycratic nature of the Nazi regime and its internal rivalries. Nazi Jewish policy was seen as simply one more arena in which Nazis competed with one another, and this rivalry was a source of radicalization. In line with Hilberg's conclusions in his revised edition of 1985 about 'consonance and synchronization' within a far-flung and decentralized machinery of destruction, recent scholarship has placed greater emphasis on what united rather than what divided German policy-makers. Dieter Pohl noted the importance of consensus politics behind the Final Solution in his pioneering 1993 regional study of the Lublin district. Subsequent studies have emphasized

the need to study the role of a wide array of regional and local authorities as well as central authorities in decision-making. They have also emphasized the need to look at the broad participation of different institutions – the military,⁶² civil administration,⁶³ Order Police⁶⁴ and economic managers⁶⁵ as well as local collaborators and police auxiliaries⁶⁶ – alongside the *Einsatzgruppen*, the Security Police, Eichmann's *Judenreferat* in the Gestapo and other agencies of the SS. As is often the case when scholars become immersed in their own discoveries, there has been a tendency in my opinion to exaggerate somewhat the importance of regional and local initiatives in the emergence of the Final Solution and insufficient attention to the counter-examples in which local authorities dragged their feet until brought into line.⁶⁷ None the less, these numerous case studies have made an invaluable contribution in filling in blank spaces in our knowledge.

Amid the sudden access to new archives and documents and this outpouring of new scholarship – in which standing among so many new trees makes it difficult to discern the outline of the forest – one scholar has had the courage to attempt a new overview of the evolution of Nazi decision-making on Jewish policy. In his 'comprehensive portrayal' (*Gesamtdarstellung*) of Nazi 'annihilation policy' (*Politik der Vernichtung*), Peter Longerich rejects a simple, linear, top-down model of decision-order-implementation in favour of a triangular model of vaguely worded orders or exhortations requiring intuitive comprehension according to the political climate, personal initiative of local authorities who possessed considerable latitude, and subsequent formulation into uniform policy by higher echelons. The result was a dialectical interaction between central and local authorities that produced mutual radicalization. Here I think Longerich has struck a reasonable balance between too great emphasis on decisions taken at and orders disseminated from the centre on the one hand, and too great emphasis on the improvisations and initiatives of go-getters on the periphery on the other.⁶⁸

Concerning the debate over the decisions for the Final Solution, Longerich argues for a sequence of 'stages of escalation' from 1939 to 1942, all of which constituted different forms of attempted annihilation. The last of these 'stages of escalation' came in April/May 1942, when a cluster of decisions (to murder the Reich Jews deported to Łódź, Lublin and Minsk; to clear the Polish ghettos of all but a remnant of workers; to deport whole families from Slovakia and western Europe, with the bulk of the deportees killed immediately on arrival after selection on the ramp) cast Nazi 'annihilation policy' in the form of the Final Solution as we now understand it. The significance of two other stages, summer and autumn 1941, is in turn somewhat sidelined by Longerich. His approach, in which Hitler approved initiatives of those 'working toward the Führer' in a series of incremental decisions culminating without clear and decisive turning points in the Final Solution, was shared by Ian Kershaw in his major new Hitler biography.⁶⁹

Hans Safran,⁷⁰ L.J. Hartog⁷¹ and Christian Gerlach⁷² have offered a different interpretation, one that places the key decision in December 1941. Safran argued that the Soviet counter-offensive in early December foreclosed the expulsion of Jews deep into the Soviet Union, and hence the Wannsee Conference, originally scheduled for 9 December, was postponed to 20 January to allow the Nazis time to consider a different option. Hartog argued that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, bringing the US into the war, ended the usefulness of European Jews as hostages for US neutrality, fulfilled the conditions of Hitler's January 1939 Reichstag prophecy and freed him to carry out the mass murder he had long desired but pragmatically postponed. Gerlach argued that regional decisions had already sealed the fate of first Soviet and then Polish Jews, but that the fate of central and western European Jews was as yet undetermined. Pearl Harbor deprived these Jews of their value as hostages and realized the conditions of Hitler's January 1939 prophecy, and thus on 12 December 1941, one day after his declaration of war on the US, he informed top party leaders (as paraphrased by Goebbels in his diary): 'The world war is here, the destruction of the Jews must be the necessary consequence.' With that, systematic planning for the destruction of all European Jews could begin.

One other scholar, Tobias Jersak, has also argued that the US was decisive in Hitler's decision for the Final Solution, but places this decision in mid-August 1941 in reaction to the announcement of the Atlantic Charter rather than in December in reaction to Pearl Harbor.⁷³ Two others, Saul Friedländer and Mark Roseman, have split the difference between December and September/October. Mark Roseman speaks of a 'policy drift', perhaps deliberately cultivated from above, whereby the gap between deportation and extermination had closed to nothing by November 1941.⁷⁴ Friedländer writes that 'it was probably between mid-October and mid-December 1941 that the final decision regarding the murder of the whole of European Jewry was made'. He cites the hardening rhetoric of Hitler during this period in conjuncture with Germany's deteriorating military prospects and Hitler's 'redemptive antisemitism'.⁷⁵

I am not persuaded by either Longerich's or Gerlach's thesis. Because Longerich deems both earlier expulsion plans and the ultimate Final Solution to be policies of annihilation, he makes no attempt to locate the point at which the Nazis crossed the line from envisaging a solution to the Jewish Question through policies of expulsion (with concomitant population decimation) to a policy of systematic and total mass murder. In my opinion this is the key question, far more important to determine than details about when the Final Solution took on its ultimate form in practice. I think December 1941 was an important month in the decision-making process, but not the most important. Throughout the autumn of 1941, the Nazis had referred to the commencement of the Final Solution as both 'after the war' and 'next spring', two terms for the same point in time. After the Soviet counter-offensive and the American entry

into the war this was no longer the case, and in December 1941 Hitler made clear that the Final Solution would proceed 'next spring' even though the end of the war was no longer in sight.

In my opinion, the decisive point to be determined is this: when did the Nazi regime cross the watershed from conceiving of a solution to the Jewish Question through some genocidal combination of expulsion, starvation and execution at some indefinite time in the future to conceiving of the Final Solution as the attempt to murder every last Jew within the German grasp in the near future, and when did Himmler and Heydrich understand that 'working toward the Führer' meant solving all the problems and overcoming all the obstacles that lay in the way of turning this utopian fantasy into reality? In my opinion, the Nazi regime crossed this watershed between 16 September and 25 October 1941.⁷⁶

In early September a close associate of Adolf Eichmann, Rolf-Heinz Höppner, complained that he could not make detailed plans concerning reception areas in the East for 'undesired ethnic elements' to be deported from the German sphere 'because first of all the basic decisions must be made. It is essential in this regard...that total clarity prevails about what finally shall happen to those undesirable elements.... Is it the goal to ensure them a certain level of life in the long run, or shall they be totally eradicated?'⁷⁷ When was the 'basic decision' finally made? When did 'clarity' finally prevail? After meeting Hitler on 16 September, Himmler informed Gauleiter Greiser on the 18th of Hitler's wish to empty the Reich of Jews as soon as possible, and thus 'as a first step' he was deporting Jews to Łódź that autumn 'in order to deport them yet further to the east next spring'.⁷⁸ In a meeting with Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich on 23–24 September, Goebbels learned from Heydrich that deportations would begin as soon as there was a 'clarification of the military situation in the East' and from Hitler that he expected that 'great victories' would crush serious Bolshevik resistance by 15 October.⁷⁹ Kiev fell on 26 September and German troops launched 'Operation Typhoon' on 2 October, quickly winning the dual encirclement victories of Vyazma and Bryansk, which seemed to open the road to Moscow. On both 4 and 7 October, Goebbels again reported on Hitler's 'exuberantly optimistic frame of mind' and his expectation that the Soviet armies would be destroyed within two weeks.⁸⁰ On 10 October Heydrich announced the impending deportation of Jews to Riga and Minsk in addition to Łódź.⁸¹ And on 15 October, the very date that Hitler had mentioned three weeks earlier, the first deportation transports of Reich Jews departed for Łódź.

But if the deportation of Reich Jews was connected to Hitler's soaring confidence about the eastern campaign, was it also connected to a 'basic decision' about their ultimate fate when deported 'further east next spring'? On 1 October Himmler's SS and Police Chief in the Lublin district of the General Government, Odilo Globocnik, wrote to Himmler to request an urgent meeting. The topic

was the Germanization of Polish territories and the removal of alien populations. The meeting took place on 13 October, and both the experts on the Lublin district – Dieter Pohl and Bogdan Musial – concur that this was the point at which Himmler approved the construction of the death camp at Belzec, which began on 1 November.⁸²

This was not an isolated event. Over the next two weeks the Nazis explored the possibility of establishing camps with gassing facilities in at least three and possibly four other places. According to the chauffeur of Herbert Lange, the head of the euthanasia commando in Posen which had been operating with a gas van since 1940, he drove Lange around the Warthegau in search of a site, then drove to Berlin for consultations and finally returned to the village of Chełmno in late October or early November to commence construction of the death camp.⁸³ On 23–25 October Himmler was in Mogilew, where he discussed killing by gas. By mid-November the construction of crematoria had been commissioned for Mogilew, the same crematoria that were later diverted to Auschwitz.⁸⁴ On 25 October Viktor Brack of the Führer Chancellery, a man deeply involved in the gassing of the handicapped, met with Wetzel of Rosenberg's Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories and declared himself ready to aid in the construction of 'gassing apparatuses' in Riga. After conferring with Eichmann about the Reich Jews destined for Riga, Wetzel noted that those capable of labour would be sent 'to the East' later, but under the circumstances there would be no objections 'if those Jews who are not fit for work are removed by Brack's device'.⁸⁵ And according to Jan Piwonski, the stationmaster at Sobibor, a group of SS officers arrived there sometime in the autumn of 1941 to measure the track and ramp.⁸⁶

On 23 October, Eichmann met a number of Gestapo men, from police stations around Germany as well as from the East.⁸⁷ On that very day the foreign editor of *Der Stürmer* noted: 'On my return trip from Berlin I met an old party comrade, who works in the east on the settlement of the Jewish question. In the near future many of the Jewish vermin will be exterminated through special measures.'⁸⁸

How wide was the net to be cast? Were these places to be regional death camps targeting only Soviet and Polish Jews? Two examples are revealing. In late October the Foreign Office expert on Jewish affairs, accompanied by Eichmann's assistant Friedrich Suhr, travelled to Belgrade to deal with the Jewish Question in Serbia. Rademacher subsequently reported that the adult male Jews were going to be shot by the army. As for the women, children and elderly, whom the military would not shoot, he noted: 'Then as soon as the technical possibility exists within the framework of a total solution to the Jewish Question, the Jews will be deported by waterway to the reception camps in the East'.⁸⁹

A number of Spanish Jews had been arrested and interned in France, which led the Spanish government to suggest the possibility of evacuating all Spanish

Jews (some 2,000) in France to Morocco if the interned Spanish Jews were released. On 13 October, the very day Himmler was meeting Globocnik, Foreign Office Under-Secretary Martin Luther urged negotiations in that direction – a position fully in line with the hitherto prevailing policy of achieving a *judenrein* Europe through expulsion. Four days later (and just three days after Heydrich had had a five-hour meeting with Himmler), Heydrich's RSHA informed Luther of its opposition to the Spanish proposal, as the Spanish government had neither the will nor the experience to guard the Jews in Morocco. 'In addition these Jews would also be too much out of the direct reach of the measures for a basic solution to the Jewish question to be enacted after the war.'⁹⁰ That this signalled a fundamental shift in Nazi policy can be seen in the note Himmler made of a telephone conversation with Heydrich just one day later. 'No emigration by Jews to overseas.'⁹¹ The object now was to keep Jews within the German grasp, not to expel them.

By the last week of October, Höppner's question of early September – should the deportees enjoy 'a certain level of life in the long run, or shall they be totally eradicated' – had been answered. The close circle around Hitler, and gradually others as well, knew what Hitler expected of them and in what general direction they were to proceed. They were now aware that no European Jews, not even the women and children of Belgrade or the Spanish Jews in Paris, were to escape the 'measures for a basic solution to the Jewish Question to be enacted after the war'. Rather, they were to be sent to 'reception camps in the East' and 'exterminated through special measures' such as Brack's 'gassing apparatuses'. The vision was there, the watershed had been crossed, the decision had been taken.

Notes

- 1 L. Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1954), pp. 108–12 (translated from *Bréviaire de la haine: la IIIe Reich et les juifs* [Paris, 1951]); G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939–1945*, 1st American edition (New York: Beechurst Press, 1953), pp. 80–2; W. Scheffler, *Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich 1933 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1961), p. 49; H. Krausnick, 'The Persecution of the Jews', in *Anatomy of the SS State* (New York: Walker and Co., 1968), pp. 3–124, esp. pp. 59–68 (translated from *Anatomie des SS-Staates* [Freiburg: Walter Verlag, 1965]).
- 2 Scheffler, *Judenverfolgung*, p. 60; Krausnick, 'The Persecution of the Jews', pp. 3, 20.
- 3 Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, p. 110.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 2–3, 18, 31.
- 5 Scheffler, *Judenverfolgung*, p. 60.
- 6 Krausnick, 'Persecution of the Jews', pp. 45, 60.
- 7 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), p. 177.
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- 13 K. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews 1933–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 258.
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9

Historiography and the Perpetrators of the Holocaust

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Within the flood of publications on Holocaust history that has been rising since the 1990s, studies on the perpetrators received and continue to receive special attention. Seen from a wider perspective, this interest is not new: the executors of the so-called ‘Final Solution’ have been the subject of criminal investigations, scholarly discourse and public debate for decades. Even when the agents of genocide – as a result of deliberate oversight as in the case of post-war Germany or due to placing the emphasis on the victims – were not explicitly mentioned, the consequences of their deeds remained all too visible to ignore them. Yet historians, that is to say those who define it as their job to find out ‘what really happened’, over an extended period of time left it to others to deal with the issue of perpetration. This chapter is neither a comprehensive overview of historians’ dealings with the Holocaust at large nor an account of the perpetrators’ acts.¹ Rather, it highlights key questions of perpetrator-oriented historical research and its context up to the present. How did the perception of Nazi crimes and their agents change over time, what caused the renewed interest in the murderers of European Jewry especially in Germany, and what are the potentials and pitfalls of recent research trends for our understanding of Holocaust history?

Trials and errors

At the end of the war, the depth and extent of human suffering caused by the Third Reich called for a new departure in identifying those responsible. When the Allied powers publicly acknowledged the crimes committed by Germans and called for retribution, they targeted ‘German officers and men and members of the Nazi Party who have been responsible for or have taken a consenting part’ in atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity; to establish their

guilt, military tribunals were established.² While the notion of German collective guilt never guided the Allies' adjudication of Nazi crimes, the International Military Tribunal (IMT) at Nuremberg introduced conspiracy and membership in a criminal organization as charges that transcended individual involvement by what could be seen as 'guilt by association'. In the minds of their American authors, one of the main purposes of these charges was to find a legal basis for coming to grips with what the Nuremberg chief prosecutor Telford Taylor called 'a ghoulish *embarras de richesse*': the large number of perpetrators – estimated at the time at hundreds of thousands – in numerous branches of the German executive, bureaucratic and economic apparatus.³

The Nuremberg proceedings and the definition of charges were based on the assumption that proper judgment could be accomplished only by integrating individual crimes into their political, ideological and institutional context – which explains why a man like Julius Streicher, the editor of *Stürmer*, was sentenced to death based on his pivotal role in preparing the ground for murder through his antisemitic propaganda. The crimes of those directly and personally involved in the mass murder of Jewish men, women and children appeared not just as isolated actions, but as part of state-sponsored policy. Consequently, the assessment of personal guilt required a clear perception of Nazi Germany's internal structure. Despite the broad definition of what was understood as a perpetrator, the Nuremberg court proceedings reinforced the notion that the organized mass murder of innocent civilians, including children and old people, on such an unprecedented scale was the direct result of Hitler's intervention, or more precisely some kind of superior order. Prior to the demise of the Third Reich, propaganda on both sides had presented the *Führer* as being in full control of affairs in Germany as well as in the occupied territories. Germany, it was assumed, had been run like an army, thoroughly organized, hierarchically structured and based on the rigid mechanics of order and compliance. German defendants supported this assumption by insisting that decisions were made by the top leadership and the top leadership only. Accepted by the court as an established fact though not necessarily as a mitigating circumstance, in the minds of the accused the myth of 'superior orders' reduced personal responsibility to the point where individual guilt evaporated altogether.

For the victors it was clear that their judicial efforts could not cover the full range of German crimes and that ultimately the Germans themselves would have to deal with the issue; indeed, courts in the occupied zones started soon after the end of the war to charge those Germans who had committed crimes against their countrymen. Almost unnoticed by a larger audience and soon forgotten, these early trials targeted lower-ranking perpetrators who had been involved, often as early as 1933, in everyday violence against Jews, communists and other 'enemies of the Reich'.⁴ Public attention focused on Allied judicial efforts that were viewed by most Germans not only 'with fear and suspicion',⁵ but

also – quite different from the simultaneous dealings of German courts with rank-and-file perpetrators – as an opportunity to draw a line under their past. The circle of defendants accused by the IMT and the US-led Nuremberg successor trials did not go beyond those few sitting in the dock. Similarly, if some organizations were declared criminal – most notably the SS and the Gestapo – others were by default off the hook. This applied to key functional entities like the German police, the *Wehrmacht*, the judiciary and the state bureaucracy which had all played – at different stages and each in its own way – a major role in the process of persecution. Clearly, Himmler's SS had been in the vanguard in the war against 'enemies of the Reich' and was largely responsible for the mass murder of civilians in occupied eastern Europe. However, in post-war Germany the SS quickly became what Gerald Reitlinger called the 'alibi of a nation':⁶ while not every SS man was regarded as a killer – especially not members of the *Waffen-SS*, the military arm of the SS, despite its dubious war-time record – every killer had to be an SS man.

The longer the Allied trials went on into the late 1940s, the more they became a forum for the defendants' campaign to prove that they too had been victims of their superiors and unfortunate circumstances. This claim dovetailed with the prevailing German (and to some extent Austrian) assertion of having been abused, first by 'the Nazis' – a group no longer seen as part of society – and after the war by the victors. Beyond denial of personal guilt, widespread disregard for historical responsibility on the one hand and the urge to prepare for an uncertain future in the emerging Cold War on the other led post-war German society to dispose of the problem of Nazi crimes together with this entire chapter in the nation's history. Intellectuals provided the arguments. In his assessment of what he and most of his compatriots characteristically called 'the German catastrophe', the historian Friedrich Meinecke stated in 1946 that 'the German people had not succumbed in its roots to a criminal disposition, but had been suffering from a one-time grave infection caused by deliberate poisoning'.⁷ One Holocaust survivor, Eugen Kogon, a keen observer of the German psyche following the collapse of the Third Reich, noted that the majority of his compatriots denied any deeper involvement in historical guilt and dismissed the Nazi era as an anomalous and isolated interlude in German history.⁸

The term 'containment' not only describes the West's political strategy towards the Eastern Bloc from the late 1940s; it also aptly summarizes how Holocaust perpetrators were perceived and treated at that time. In the countries dominated by Germany during the war, public outrage focused on a few key functionaries or otherwise exposed agents of Nazi rule while the complex, highly divisive issue of collaboration which highlighted the intricacies of German occupation policy as well as the complex process of persecuting Jews and other out-groups received little attention. For Germans and Austrians, the

Cold War offered sufficient opportunity to cultivate the myth of two nations hijacked by a small band of demonic leaders and terrorized by an omnipresent Gestapo. Admissions of involvement in genocide, rare as they were, could be seen as both a token of moral cleansing and as an indication of a stubborn clinging to the principles that had caused the crimes. When Otto Ohlendorf, former SS general and commander of a special unit of the Security Police and the SD (*Einsatzgruppe D*), admitted during the Nuremberg proceedings to the murder of 90,000 Jews in the occupied Soviet Union, he left a strong impression on his prosecutors and a wider audience because he did not – like most of the accused – flatly deny the charges. By claiming that his actions had been prompted by an order from the *Führer* transmitted through the SS apparatus, he corroborated the prevailing assumption about the nature and course of decision-making in the Third Reich. In addition, Ohlendorf established a defence strategy that quickly became commonplace and, while it did not work for him and some others, helped many accused to avoid punishment. The distorted public perception of Nazi rule in West German society, its insistence on drawing a clear line between a criminal leadership and their loyal henchmen on the one hand, the majority of uninvolved Germans on the other, was based on scholarly assumptions about the past and manifested itself in intense lobbying for the pardoning of convicted mass murderers. There could hardly have been a clearer indication of a willingness to integrate the former functional elites into post-war society despite their wartime records.⁹

The *Führer* and his followers

For the Nuremberg prosecutors charged with breaking new legal ground after a devastating war in the context of growing tensions between the former allies, it seemed plausible, if not imperative – given the nature of their task – to reduce the complexities of Nazism and thus the scope of perpetration by simplifying political processes to the workings of a top-down system that, while leaving room for personal responsibility, was firmly if not solely based on order and compliance. At the same time, however, the image of the Third Reich as a centralized, executive machine was at odds with both the massive body of evidence presented at court and earlier findings on the complex interaction between *Führer* and *Volk* after 1933. Prior to the IMT, sociologists had set the stage. Writing in the early 1940s, Konrad Heiden explained Hitler's rise to power by his ability to give the Germans 'something that even the traditional religions could no longer provide; the belief in a meaning to existence beyond the narrowest self-interest'. Similarly, other scholars pointed to the strength of German antisemitism as a key factor in the Nazi Party's gaining support in society at large.¹⁰ In his famous study of Nazi supporters conducted in the 1930s, Theodore Abel noted that 'the racial doctrine, especially its anti-Semitic

emphasis, has struck a popular note and in doing so contributed to a considerable extent to the success of the movement'.¹¹

If anti-Jewish stereotypes were important to Hitler's coming to power, what was their role in bringing about the 'Final Solution'? That was one of the crucial questions historians – different from lawyers who focused on individual guilt – were faced with; however, they preferred to avoid it for the time being. Following the Nuremberg assessment on the functioning of the Third Reich, most historians took a narrower view than sociologists by concentrating their explanatory efforts on Hitler and a few of his cronies. The documentation amassed in the course of Allied trials was barely used, and even when it received the attention of historians, the resulting interpretations did not break new ground. In his important monograph on the Holocaust, Gerald Reitlinger perpetuated the assertion that the executioners had been outsiders, evil characters and social misfits.¹² Similarly, Joseph Tenenbaum drew a random line between, on the one hand, 'the scum of the self-appointed master race of fanatical killers' and, on the other, 'simple, everyday human beings' who expressed disapproval of the crimes they participated in.¹³ The willingness of historians to prefer sweeping generalizations to empirical research and to reduce perpetration to a matter of biological disposition shaped future discourse and explains the persistence of simplistic explanations advanced in widely circulated books on the Holocaust.¹⁴

Critical scholars tried to grapple with the problem of explaining the behaviour of the murderers of European Jews and balancing the relevant factors. For Hannah Arendt, the starting point of her analysis on the origins of totalitarianism was the 'outrageous fact that so small (and, in world politics, so unimportant) a phenomenon as the Jewish question and anti-Semitism could become the catalytic agent for first, the Nazi movement, then a world war, and finally the establishment of death factories'. She linked this development to the emergence of 'absolute evil' in totalitarian societies – 'absolute because it can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives'.¹⁵ In the process, anti-semitism as well as any other motivating factor, vanished behind the 'inherent logicality' of mass murder that left all concerned subjectively innocent: 'the murdered because they did nothing against the system, and the murderers because they do not really murder but execute a death sentence pronounced by some higher tribunal', that is, nature or history.¹⁶ The fact that Arendt's brilliant interpretation lacked a solid empirical basis was often held against her, yet this void resulted at least partly from the reluctance of historians to perceive perpetration as a subject worthy of in-depth analysis and to provide other disciplines with reliable data on the issue. Her assumption that the murder of the Jews followed a systemic inner logic broadened the scope of interpretation to encompass, beyond those easily identifiable like the members of Gestapo and SS, all strata of German society. The simplistic as well as, in its diabolic and

deviant traces, comfortably gruesome picture of mass murderers acting outside established norms had been seriously challenged for the first time.

In the early 1960s, the crucial impulse for a revision of what appeared to be conventional wisdom about the Holocaust, its emergence and agents, came from a political scientist who applied the tools of historical analysis more thoroughly than historians had done before. In his monumental, and to this day inspiring, masterpiece *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hilberg presented a massive body of empirical evidence, mostly documents generated by the German bureaucracy at the time and surveyed by Allied prosecutors after the war, to support his thesis that the separation of tasks and the interaction between different groups in German society were key to the process of persecution. The system of mass murder, Hilberg argued, 'was structurally no different from organized German society as a whole'; its operators were 'a remarkable cross-section of the German population'. In order to cope with whatever moral inhibitions they might have, the participants in the process were subjected to different mechanisms of repression and rationalization based on the assumption that Jews were inferior and that the 'Jewish Question' had to be dealt with sooner or later, one way or another. Among officials in Berlin who assembled the machinery and kept it going, the middle-ranking bureaucrat stood out: 'Most often it was he who initiated action'.¹⁷ In further developing his argument, Hilberg later stressed that what the perpetrator did was impersonal, his actions 'diffused in a widespread bureaucracy' that made each man feel 'his contribution was a small part of an immense undertaking'. Thus, Hilberg concluded, 'an administrator, clerk, or uniformed guard never referred to himself as a perpetrator'.¹⁸

Hilberg's assumption that the machinery of state-sponsored genocide reflected the interactions in German society followed Arendt's earlier, though more abstract, analysis, and was taken up by her in her momentous study on the Eichmann trial.¹⁹ Arendt's assessment of Eichmann as 'terrifyingly and terribly normal', a man characterized by lack of imagination and 'remoteness from reality', was not surprising in view of her earlier writings and has to be seen in the context of her criticism of the Jerusalem proceedings (she calls them 'the last of the numerous trials which followed the Nuremberg trials') for their lack of understanding of the true nature and causes of the crime.²⁰ As with her analysis of totalitarianism, in the course of the ensuing debate Arendt's argument was reduced to a simple thesis – in this case to the catchphrase 'banality of evil' – that absorbed scholarly and public energies.²¹ In the rush towards generally applicable explanations, there was no time for empirically saturated nuance and differentiation – key elements for understanding the process of persecution as described by Hilberg. Compared with Telford Taylor's *embarras de richesse*, the scope of perpetrators represented in the discourse of the 1960s had been reduced to a dualistic image personified by 'death factory' mechanics

like Hoess and ‘desk murderers’ like Eichmann at the one end of the spectrum and homicidal maniacs like the members of the *Einsatzgruppen* at the other.

The ‘Arendt debate’ proved how closely reflections on perpetration during the Holocaust remained tied to contemporary interests. Different from earlier decades, however, scholarly discourse of the 1960s and 1970s only partly reflected developments in the legal field. Not more than a few major trials received widespread attention, and even when they did, tended to be perceived within the narrow confines of the ‘banal/demonic’ dichotomy. In West Germany, most of the numerous investigations undertaken since the early 1960s went unnoticed despite the fact that they involved for the most part perpetrators directly responsible for the murder of Jewish men, women and children in the camps, ghettos and killing centres of the East. It is indicative of the climate of the time that the huge trove of material generated by German prosecutors was ignored by the general public as well as by historians.²² Together with the specific criminal events they reflected, legal records were dismissed as having little analytical potential for explaining the overall process; at most, historians were screening statements by witnesses and accused for clues to the existence or non-existence of a ‘smoking gun’ – an order by Hitler, Himmler or Heydrich that was believed to have triggered the Holocaust.

There are good reasons for historians to be hesitant about using judicial sources as they require special methodological care and in-depth analysis. At the time, however, scholarly disregard was more the result of the assertion that legal investigations were dealing with mere forensics, something too close to the murderous acts. The fact that there are limits in conveying the unimaginable brutality of the perpetrators and the immense suffering inflicted on the victims through works of scholarship explains this assessment only in part. Especially in the German setting, facing the brutality of Nazi crimes seemed too alien and dangerous to an historical profession that regarded itself as emotionally detached and ‘neutral’ in its approach after it had been involved in preparing the ideological ground for the ‘Final Solution’.²³ Those who went against the stream by specializing in the Holocaust or by providing expert opinions for court purposes represented a small, marginalized group among German historians. Established scholars not only ignored the potential of new approaches emerging from the study of judicial records, but watched over the upholding of accepted interpretations. If legal experts ventured too far into territory historians claimed as theirs, they faced – irrespective of the soundness of their research – intense criticism.²⁴

For many victims who had survived the Holocaust and who gave evidence at post-war trials, neglect by established historians might have been just as depressing as the legalistic scrutiny they experienced in court. Often against their will, prosecutors and judges had to restrict survivor testimony to what seemed related to the case, thus – as Lawrence Douglas calls it – ‘patrolling the

bounds of the legally relevant against the encroachments of difficult memory'.²⁵ Represented by their defence lawyers and standing in the media limelight, the accused received more attention than their erstwhile victims. The evidence compiled by the courts on the day-to-day workings of genocide across German-dominated Europe could not bridge the gulf between survivor memory and legal procedure. In conjunction with the striking inadequacy of the verdicts (in many cases, acquittals), court proceedings brought back long-repressed recollections even to those survivors who were only observers, not witnesses to the trials. Outside the courtroom, some survivors transformed their encounter with the judiciary into pronouncements that were significantly to shape public perceptions of the Holocaust. Peter Weiss, after attending a session of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial in March 1964, portrayed the proceedings in his famous play 'The Investigation'.²⁶ After almost twenty years of silence, the same trial enticed Jean Améry to write a series of essays that were to appear in book form for the first time in 1966. From today's perspective, it might be surprising to note that Améry envisaged as his audience not his fellow survivors – 'they know it already' – but the majority of Germans who 'felt not or no longer concerned by the most sinister and at the same time most characteristic deeds of the Third Reich'.²⁷ Similarly, Primo Levi stated prior to the publication of his famous *If this is a Man* that 'its true recipients, those against whom the book was aimed like a gun were they, the Germans'.²⁸

The complex interrelation between perpetrator and survivor perspectives of the Holocaust remains yet to be fully examined. It is evident, however, that while the efforts of Weiss, Améry and Levi clearly reached a vast audience, they had little direct impact on the professional keepers of memory. In the scholarly debates of the 1970s and 1980s, the most prominent schools of historians preferred to uphold fixed interpretations over empirical analysis of documents or other sources, including survivor accounts. One group of historians (the so-called 'intentionalists', e.g. Eberhard Jäckel) argued that Hitler's *Weltanschauung* (worldview) provided the blueprint for Nazi policy, thus perpetuating the 'superior order' argument that had emerged at Nuremberg and benefited those accused of mass murder. Their 'functionalist' opponents (e.g. Martin Broszat) claimed that the Nazi system was characterized by a 'weak dictator', who shied away from making decisions on most key issues and instead left it to subordinates from different agencies to fight it out; the winner was then rewarded by Hitler's approval. While the Holocaust was originally not in the forefront of the debate, it became prominent in the late 1970s after German society's willingness to confront the issue had grown following socio-political changes that included the disappearance from public life of the older, directly involved generation. Where the intentionalists saw a straight line leading from the *Führer's* headquarters to the murder sites, the functionalists discovered an unmapped 'twisted road to Auschwitz' (Karl Schleunes) with

many deviations used by various functionaries not directly controlled by Hitler.²⁹

Irrespective of conflicting premises, both the intentionalist and the functionalist interpretations corroborated the already firmly established belief that those who executed the 'Final Solution' had little personal interest in what they were doing: either they were seen as Hitler's henchmen kept on a short leash by their superiors, or they came to be regarded as faceless cogs in a gigantic machine driven by anonymous forces. Individual responsibility, motives and interests as well as the specific crime settings received little attention outside the courtroom. Functional historians especially were and still are criticized for depersonalizing the Holocaust and for overemphasizing Arendt's 'banality of evil'.³⁰ This line of criticism, legitimate as it might be in some cases, ignores the broader context of the functionalist argument: historians like Martin Broszat or Hans Mommsen had to set themselves apart from the widespread demonization of Nazi criminals as well as from the specific traditions of German historiography. In doing so, they greatly contributed to the debunking of myths regarding the Nazi system by moving analytical attention away from its 'Top Three' – Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich – towards different functional elites in the bureaucracy, military and judiciary, their interaction and, ultimately, towards German society at large.

Growing public interest fostered the tendency towards diversification especially in German historiography, manifesting itself in a series of seminal studies on regional, organizational and biographical aspects of the Nazi past. From this perspective, the highly abstract and – as could be seen during the 'historians' debate' of the late 1980s – analytically sterile debate on what Hitler might have thought, planned and done seemed less relevant.³¹ Only in the 1990s, however, did scholarship move out of the by then well-trodden intentionalist/functionalist path into less well-charted territory. Groundbreaking studies on the myths and realities of 'political policing' in the Third Reich or on German occupational policies in eastern Europe shifted the balance of scholarly attention away from the top leadership in Berlin towards functional elites like the *Einsatzgruppen* or key personnel of Heydrich's Reich Security Main Office, towards other strata in German society and the actual killing sites.³² It became clear how diffused the role of top-level officials was for the start of the 'Final Solution' in comparison to personal initiative by local functionaries and to factors arising from the concrete setting, especially in 'the East' where the transformation from persecution to destruction took place. As a result of this changed focus, the interaction and separation of tasks among those responsible for the planning, administration and execution of the Holocaust first described by Raul Hilberg appeared in a new, much clearer light: it was not only the SS and the *Einsatzgruppen* that were of key importance, but a whole range of institutions, from the *Wehrmacht* via other state authorities to private companies, contributed, each in their

own way and not always in concurrence with one another, towards the goal of a German-dominated, 'Jew-free' Europe.

'Ordinary men' and other perpetrators

The more historians were willing to expand their focus beyond Berlin and its key players, the more sharply the involvement of Germans and other perpetrators from all walks of life came into relief. In the early 1990s, based on an evaluation of German prosecution and court files, Christopher Browning presented what for most historians appeared as a stunning revelation. Exemplified by the members of Order Police Reserve Battalion 101 – a unit comprising comparatively old reservists from different backgrounds who actively participated in the 'Final Solution' in Poland – Browning argued that few 'ordinary men', despite their relative distance from the ideological and organizational core of Nazi system, had problems in becoming executioners of the Third Reich's racial policy. Once initiated into mass murder, most succumbed to situational factors which enabled them to act as perpetrators on a routine basis and to legitimize their actions until well after the war.³³ While Browning himself was not regarded as a functionalist, the picture emerging from his 'ordinary men' bore a much closer resemblance to Broszat's thesis of a 'weak dictator' than to Jäckel's stressing of 'Hitler's *Weltanschauung*'. Browning's book was remarkable for highlighting the key role played by German policemen in the murder of the Jews in eastern Europe; yet more importantly, it put the problem of perpetrator motivation where it had never been before: at the top of the historiographic agenda.

Browning found his answer to the vexing question why his 'ordinary men' did what they did in a mix of factors: the specific setting at the time of the crimes, peer pressure and numbing – an interpretation that applied the findings of Stanley Milgram and other social psychologists which until then had been largely ignored by historians. In addition, Browning's interpretation accounted for multi-causal explanations and broadened the issue to encompass more recent examples of murderous if not genocidal acts. His case study quickly led to a debate on whether Police Battalion 101 was 'ordinary' enough to represent other groups of Holocaust perpetrators, let alone those responsible for other instances of mass murder. As Lawrence Langer noted, 'the universalizing tendencies implicit in Browning's final inquiry dilute the charge of German evil by deflecting our attention from the crimes that some men committed to ones that others might have committed but did not'.³⁴ Yet these discussions were stalled after the publication of Daniel J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, a book based on a PhD thesis in political science and laden with preconceived, largely outdated notions. According to Goldhagen, in late nineteenth-century Germany a new 'eliminationist anti-Semitism' emerged which became the key if not the single causal factor for the Holocaust by shaping a consensus on the

urgency of a 'Final Solution' to the 'Jewish Question'. In and of itself, this mixture of a reductionist '*Sonderweg*' thesis with a crude intentionalism contained very little innovative potential; instead, Goldhagen's 'offer of a simple answer' (Raul Hilberg) confirmed stereotypical and uncritical assumptions including the thesis (astounding for scholars, comforting for a German audience) that the alleged German brand of antisemitism responsible for the genocide and graphically described in the book in its deadly manifestations simply vanished after 1945 as a result of Allied re-education programmes.³⁵

'Eliminationist antisemitism', as perceived by Goldhagen, reduced the issue of perpetration to a matter of socio-cultural engineering which left little room for personal initiative; his opponents, on the other hand, stressed the importance of situational factors while leaving the terrain of ideology to Goldhagen. The fact that neither side saw reason to look closer at antisemitism in its Nazi variation and in its application during the Third Reich was the result to a large extent of the absence of in-depth research on the issue – a sad reminder of what historiography had failed to achieve in the course of more than four decades. While reducing antisemitism to a rhetorical football for the purpose of scoring goals for the general public, the Goldhagen debate pushed to one side two of the main insights gained by empirical research since Hilberg's groundbreaking study: the multi-causal nature of the Holocaust and its process character. The debate's focus on long-term ideological dispositions on the one hand, and short-term situational factors on the other, created the impression that the years 1933–45 – the period leading up to the 'realization of the unthinkable' (Hans Mommsen) with its mixture of different, often conflicting developments – were largely irrelevant. Scholars could regard Goldhagen's book and its reception as proof of what remained to be done, especially in explaining the actions of Holocaust perpetrators; the general public, however, was looking for lessons that could be learned from the events – given the growing chronological distance between past and present not an unreasonable expectation, and one that Goldhagen seemed to meet.³⁶

Once the debate over *Hitler's Willing Executioners* had gained momentum, the mechanics of the media market created headlines for it worldwide. Nowhere did the book stand so prominently and so persistently in the public limelight as in Germany where roughly 200,000 copies were sold shortly after its publication in 1996.³⁷ The intensity of German interest in Goldhagen's thesis resulted from a number of factors, some of which had less to do with the book or its author than with the nation's struggle for collective identity after unification. First, it absolved younger Germans from the legacy of a grim past and helped them emancipate themselves from their (by the late 1990s mostly dead) parents or grandparents who had lived through the Nazi era. Second, it dovetailed with an increased public awareness fostered by new research that the element of terror was of less importance to the functioning of the Nazi system than active support from established German functional elites and

compliance from society at large. And third, following the 'Holocaust' TV series of the late 1970s and more so after Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, the murder of the Jews had been transformed from a subject of scholarly cognition to an issue conveyed to a larger audience through visual images and emotive personalization – a development Goldhagen introduced, much more explicitly than Browning, to a historiography that so far had avoided confronting the issue of what perpetration meant to the victims in concrete terms.

Wrapped in the questionable thesis of a bygone form of antisemitism, Goldhagen's descriptions of anti-Jewish violence and brutality confirmed the prevailing German assumption that the Holocaust was, in all its aspects, a thing of the past, with no line of continuity linking it to the present. Historiography could offer little to counter this view. Even insightful, empirically grounded studies produced in the 1990s had for the most part either excluded ideology, racism and antisemitism as explanatory factors or had drawn an abstract picture of the perpetrators' mindset. Götz Aly's stimulating synopsis of the driving forces that led from 'ethnic planning' to the Holocaust presents racial ideas as an important yet vague aspect with little if any direct relevance to the course of events.³⁸ In his influential study on Werner Best, a key official in Heydrich's security police apparatus, Ulrich Herbert stresses the matter-of-fact, emotionally detached attitude of this core group of genocidal planners vis-à-vis the 'Jewish Question' – an interpretation that, while valid for some Third Reich intellectuals and bureaucrats, reaches the limits of its explanatory power when applied to the on-site executioners of the 'Final Solution'.³⁹ Only in the late 1990s has historiography begun to pay more attention to the mental, institutional and social milieu as well as to the interests (many of them material) that facilitated and accompanied the murder of the Jews. However, different from Goldhagen, most historians have found it extremely difficult to link Holocaust perpetration to a specific mindset or disposition; too scarce and unreliable are the sources and too broad is the spectrum of perpetrators that transcends character traits, group affiliations or national allegiances.⁴⁰

Not surprisingly given his simplistic approach, Goldhagen's interpretation replaced old myths – for example, the long-held though already largely discarded notion of a 'clean', machine-like process of mass murder performed by a small group – with new ones: most obviously by alleging that the continuity of German antisemitism had been radically broken after 1945, but also by shifting responsibility to an amorphous entity like 'the Germans', as if Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft* had been unperturbed by internal divisions and imbalances in power between different strata of society and functional groups. The controversy over an exhibition produced by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (*Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung*, HIS) on the *Wehrmacht* and its crimes in the East confirmed how much and in how many ways the German army had contributed to the Holocaust and other policies of state-sponsored mass

murder. Not only the ‘criminal orders’ issued by Hitler and his High Command prior to the beginning of ‘Operation Barbarossa’ on 22 June 1941, but also the habitual violence inflicted by army commanders had driven the German ‘war of destruction’ against the Soviet Union to its disastrous consequences.⁴¹ In an area perceived by the occupiers as ‘the East’, the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ was just one item on the genocidal agenda – albeit a critical one. Red Army soldiers, even if they surrendered, received no mercy: by spring 1942, more than 2 million of the roughly 3.5 million Soviet POWs captured by the *Wehrmacht* had perished, some – Jews, ‘commissars’ and Asians – at the hands of the security police, but most as a result of deliberate neglect by the German military. The basic argument as well as most of the material presented by the exhibition was not new; since the 1960s, historians had pointed to the highly destructive nature of German warfare and occupation policy in eastern Europe without receiving much public attention while the Cold War lasted. Now, however, the exhibition provided graphic evidence that the aim of creating *Lebensraum* in the East and the prevailing stereotype of a ‘Judeo-Bolshevist’ Soviet Union inhabited by ‘sub-humans’ were key factors for the staggering death toll of an estimated 25 million Soviet people.⁴²

Opened in early 1995, the exhibition clashed head-on with one of the founding myths of the German Federal Republic – the legend of a ‘decent’ army that had steered clear of atrocities perpetrated by the SS. Veterans, some decorated with the ‘Knight’s Cross’, and well-known public figures joined younger right-wingers in a campaign to stop the exhibition’s tour of German cities where it drew large crowds. Criticism of the exhibition was enhanced by the journalistic approach of its creators and their unwillingness to correct obvious factual mistakes, which in turn troubled historians interested in presenting an analytically sound product to the public. After the HIS had called outside experts to recommend revisions in substance and form, the controversy over the exhibition subsided and gave way to a broad coalition of supporters, ranging from former critics among the historians to government representatives.⁴³ In the process, despite the massive documentary evidence presented in the modified exhibition and its catalogue, the *Wehrmacht* as an institution with a history that transcended the Nazi era almost vanished from view. It remains to be seen how far the findings of recent research will permeate the borderlines of scholarship and enter into public perception or policy-making. Both the Goldhagen and the *Wehrmacht* exhibition debates prove that heightened public interest in the Holocaust can lead to new departures as well as to regression in our dealing with the past.

Future perspectives

The late 1990s’ debates can be seen as signs of transition from traditional historiographical perceptions towards a new understanding of the Holocaust

perpetrators. As this sketchy outline illustrates, since the end of the war historiography has been through several, chronologically not clearly delineated phases in dealing with the agents of the 'Final Solution'. From early images of habitual murderers and social outcasts, the historian's perspective has broadened over time to encompass a range of people, functions, actions and motives that highlights the complexity of the persecution process at large without neglecting the crucial element of personal responsibility. The blurred, monochrome picture of earlier decades with Himmler's black elite as its most prominent feature has been replaced by a multi-coloured, complex, but no less depressing mosaic in which convinced Nazis and outright criminals seem just as important to the 'Final Solution' as German society and other 'bystanders'. Historians have begun to realize that their profession has dealt with the Holocaust only reluctantly and haphazardly. Other disciplines have provided much of the material and conceptual groundwork from which historiography borrowed while public debates sometimes spurred, sometimes delayed critical reinterpretation. If progress was slow and anything but linear, the same can be said about how historians dealt with the fate of Holocaust victims – a phenomenon that highlights the artificiality of segregating perpetrator- from victim-oriented research.

Despite the potential of recent historiography, it also entails problematic tendencies. As indicated by the emergence of the new term *Täterforschung* (perpetrator research), German historians dealing with Holocaust perpetrators focus heavily on their personality and participation in criminal actions. As much as Holocaust historians have in the past neglected the often graphic evidence produced by prosecutors and courts, they now seem obsessed with it – a rather ironic development if not a sign of overcompensation in the wake of the Goldhagen debate. Two caveats should be added. First, it can be assumed that adults, in becoming perpetrators, do not lose their other defining characteristics or sever their social ties unless one adopts a narrow, biologicistic definition close to the old thesis of the homicidal maniac which, for all we know, applies to very few of the hundreds of thousands of agents of genocide. The more we restrict our analysis to the incriminating act, the greater the risk of severing causal and chronological connections with other, no less relevant aspects of the past. Second, irrespective of the influences working on a person, the socialization towards mass murder involves conscious decisions at every stage. In view of the limits of the historian's methods, identifying the motives behind these decisions is not, strictly speaking, an historiographical issue. To many looking for lessons from the past, this might be a purist and unsatisfactory interpretation of the historian's role; however, it seems appropriate at a time when many facets of the 'Final Solution' still remain to be thoroughly researched.

Historians tend to ignore the fact that their efforts do not always transform into accepted images of the past and, if they do, that these images might reflect already existing assumptions more than lead to critical re-evaluation. Regarding

Holocaust perpetrators, the interaction between scholarship and collective identity is most obvious in Germany. Exemplified as well as fostered by the public debates about Goldhagen and the *Wehrmacht* exhibition, German post-war denial has given way to a new, still evolving collective identity based on rewriting the nation's history.⁴⁴ This can be seen as a positive development. However, it should not be overlooked that what increasingly predominates is, instead of the urge to comprehend better the origins and driving forces of the attempted 'Final Solution', the desire to bring the matter to a close – this time not by repressing it, but, after having dealt (no matter how reluctantly and superficially) with the fate of the Jews, by 'moving on' to German suffering and victimization. In that sense, the spate of TV documentaries and other usages of Nazi history in the German mass media sets the stage for broadening the issue of perpetration to encompass Allied bombing of German cities or the post-war treatment of German refugees, thus deflecting from the Holocaust and its agents.⁴⁵ The continuing rift between scholarly discourse and private memory assists this trend: most Germans believe that, despite all they know about the Third Reich, their grandfather could not have been a Nazi.⁴⁶

Writing after the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial in the mid-1960s, Jean Améry foresaw a future in which the Holocaust would become 'plain history', the deeds of the perpetrators having evaporated in an amorphous 'century of barbarism'.⁴⁷ More so than in the broader, albeit itself comparatively narrow, area of Holocaust studies, research into perpetrator motivation requires interdisciplinary approaches that so far have been lacking. To facilitate discourse among and across disciplines, Holocaust historiography has to address much more thoroughly the multi-causal nature of the events and the whole range of factors that led to the 'Final Solution'. The most pressing desideratum is doubtless in-depth research into the importance of ideology in general and antisemitism in particular for persecution and mass murder. Historians have to resist the tendency to take a part for the whole – a charge they frequently lay against sociologists and political scientists – and concentrate on empirical research into groups, institutions, functional structures and regional settings. Much greater emphasis should be placed on other key elements of the Holocaust, most notably the fate of victims, without venturing too far into an amorphous 'grey zone'. Beyond vague generalizations, 'the perpetrators' seem elusive; whether creating a typology is useful or possible remains open to debate. There can be little doubt, however, that reconstructing the contextual framework of Holocaust perpetration is one of the greatest challenges for future historiography.

Notes

1 For an excellent overview of Holocaust historiography, see D. Pohl, 'Die Holocaust-Forschung und Goldhagens Thesen', *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 45 (1997), 1–48;

for different forms of perpetration in historiographical perspective, see C.R. Browning, 'German Killers: Orders from Above, Initiative from Below, and the Scope of Local Autonomy – The Case of Brest-Litovsk', in *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 116–42; idem, 'German Killers: Behaviour and Motivation in the Light of New Evidence', *ibid.*, pp. 143–69; G. Paul, ed., *Die Täter der Shoah. Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002); W. Kaiser, ed., *Täter im Vernichtungskrieg. Der Überfall auf die Sowjetunion und der Völkermord an den Juden* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002); T. Sandkühler, 'Die Täter des Holocaust. Neuere Überlegungen und Kontroversen', in *Wehrmacht und Vernichtungspolitik. Militär im nationalsozialistischen System*, ed. K.H. Pohl (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), pp. 39–65. The opinions presented here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

- 2 See Declaration of German Atrocities by the United Kingdom, the U.S. and the Soviet Union (Moscow Declaration), 30 October 1943; Agreement by the U.S., France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union (London Agreement), 8 August 1945; Control Council Law No. 10, 20 December 1945, printed in each volume of *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, 1946ff.
- 3 See T. Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992), pp. 35–42 (quotation, p. 36). On the wider context, see D. Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 4 For the history of German trials, see A. Rückerl, *NS-Verbrechen vor Gericht. Versuch einer Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (Heidelberg: C.F. Müller, 1982).
- 5 Taylor, *Anatomy*, p. 638.
- 6 G. Reitlinger, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation* (New York: Viking Press, 1957). Characteristically, Reitlinger's book was published in German in 1957 with the subtitle *Tragödie einer deutschen Epoche*.
- 7 F. Meinecke, *Die Deutsche Katastrophe. Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1946), p. 140 (my translation). On Meinecke and West German historiography in general, see N. Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).
- 8 E. Kogon, 'Das Dritte Reich und die preußisch-deutsche Geschichte', *Frankfurter Hefte. Zeitschrift für Politik und Kultur*, 1, 3 (1946), 44; see also *ibid.*, 'Das deutsche Volk und der Nationalsozialismus', *ibid.*, 1, 2 (1946), 62–70; idem, *Der SS-Staat. Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Frankfurter Hefte, 1946).
- 9 See N. Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996); K.-M. Mallmann and G. Paul, 'Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent? Gestapo, Society and Resistance', in *Nazism and German Society, 1933–1945*, ed. D.F. Crew (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 166–96.
- 10 F. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942); K. Heiden, *Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944), p. 774.
- 11 T. Abel, *Why Hitler Came to Power: An Answer Based on the Original Life Stories of Six Hundred of his Followers* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1938), p. 156. See also *ibid.*, *The Nazi Movement* (New York: Atherton, 1965) and, based on Abel's collection of autobiographical statements, P.H. Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). For an overview of sociological

trends in dealing with the Holocaust, see W. Bergmann, 'Starker Auftritt, schwacher Abgang. Antisemitismusforschung in den Sozialwissenschaften', in *Antisemitismusforschung in den Wissenschaften*, ed. W. Bergmann and M. Körte (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, forthcoming).

- 12 G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., 1953) (published in Germany in 1956 as *Die Endlösung – Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas 1939–1945*). The revised second English edition (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1968) contains few changes over the original text, which was republished, with an introduction by Michael Berenbaum, in 1987 (Northvale, NY: Jason Aronson).
- 13 J. Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich. The Story of an Epoch* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1956), pp. 364f.
- 14 See e.g. N. Levin, *The Holocaust. The Destruction of European Jewry 1933–1945* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968); L.S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975). For a highly critical assessment of these still popular accounts, see R. Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory. The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), pp. 142–7.
- 15 H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd edition (Cleveland, NY: Meridian, 1958), p. ix (preface to the first edition, 1950).
- 16 Ibid., pp. 465, 472.
- 17 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, student edition (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), pp. 263–93.
- 18 R. Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992), p. ix.
- 19 H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963); German edition: *Eichmann in Jerusalem. Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen* (Munich: Piper, 1964).
- 20 Ibid., pp. 263, 276, 287f.
- 21 Arendt wanted the meaning of the phrase to be restricted to the 'strictly factual level, pointing to a phenomenon which stared one in the face at the trial' (*ibid.*, p. 287).
- 22 See H. Jäger, *Verbrechen unter totalitärer Herrschaft. Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Gewaltkriminalität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), with a stimulating typology of perpetrators; also Rückerl, *NS-Verbrechen*.
- 23 Lines of continuity in German pre- and post-war historiography have been investigated only recently; see G. Aly, 'Rückwärtsgewandte Propheten. Willige Historiker – Bemerkungen in eigener Sache', in *Macht – Geist – Wahn. Kontinuitäten deutschen Denkens* (Berlin: Argon, 1997).
- 24 See the debate between historian Helmut Krausnick and public prosecutor Alfred Streim on the origins of the Holocaust in *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, 6 (1989), 311–47. The career aspect in the history of Holocaust historiography has not yet been thoroughly investigated; in general see Pohl, *Thesen*; Berg, *Holocaust*.
- 25 L. Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 142.
- 26 P. Weiss, *The Investigation* (New York: Athenaeum, 1966); see also S. Gilman and J. Zipes, eds., *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096–1996* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 722–35.
- 27 J. Améry, *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne, Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten*, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1977), p. 17, my translation (Foreword to the first edition, Munich: Szczesny, 1966); English version: *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations*

- by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, trans. S. Rosenfeld and S.P. Rosenfeld (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).
- 28 P. Levi, 'The Drowned and the Saved', cited in L.L. Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 40, who also comments on the publication of *If this is a Man* in America under the title *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* (*ibid.*, p. 23).
 - 29 Compare K.D. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (New York: Praeger, 1979); M. Broszat, *National Socialism, 1918–1933* (Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Press, 1967); H. Mommsen, 'The Realization of the Unthinkable: The "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" in the Third Reich', in *The Policies of Genocide: Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*, ed. G. Hirschfeld (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 73–92. For a good summary of the debate see C.R. Browning, 'Beyond "Intentionalism" and "Functionalism": The Decision for the Final Solution Reconsidered', in *The Path to Genocide. Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 88–101. H. Mommsen, *Auschwitz, 17 Juli 1942. Der Weg zur europäischen 'Endlösung der Judenfrage'* (Munich: dtv, 2002), presents a state-of-the-art synthesis of Holocaust research from a functionalist perspective.
 - 30 See most recently Paul, *Täter*, p. 20f, who sees the 'functionalist image of the perpetrator' as 'the scholarly pendant to the judicial exculpation of the perpetrators via the dogma of duress under orders' (my translation).
 - 31 Among the most influential monographs of this time period are H. Krausnick and H.-H. Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938–1942* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1981); O. Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–1945: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); C. Streit, *Keine Kameraden. Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1978).
 - 32 For the police apparatus, see R. Gellately, *The Gestapo and Modern Society. Enforcing Racial Policy 1933–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); U. Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903–1989* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996); R. Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen und die 'Genesis der Endlösung'* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996). Outstanding among the growing number of regional case studies published in Germany are C. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); and D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997); for an overview see U. Herbert, ed., *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939–1945. Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1998); English version: *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000).
 - 33 C.R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).
 - 34 Langer, *Preempting*, p. xiii. Similarly, Arendt pointed to 'the abyss between the actuality of what [Eichmann] did and the potentiality of what others might have done' (Arendt, *Eichmann*, p. 278).
 - 35 D.J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996). For a critical review, see R.B. Birn, 'Revising the Holocaust', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 195–215.
 - 36 See G. Eley, ed., *The 'Goldhagen Effect': History, Memory, Nazism – Facing the German Past* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

- 37 The German translation was published as *Hitlers willige Vollstrecken. Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche und der Holocaust* (Berlin: Siedler, 1996).
- 38 G. Aly, 'Endlösung'. *Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1995), pp. 45, 59, 71, 112, 130, 374f. English version: 'Final Solution': *Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1999).
- 39 Herbert, *Best*, pp. 203–8; similarly, M. Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002). Both Herbert and Wildt focus on the generational experience of a comparatively young, highly educated age cohort (see Wildt, *Generation*, pp. 23–6).
- 40 From among the growing number of studies on individual perpetrators and groups, see Browning, *Nazi Policy*; Paul, *Täter*; Kaiser, *Täter*; E.B. Westermann, "'Ordinary Men' or 'Ideological Soldiers'? Police Battalion 310 in Russia, 1942", *German Studies Review*, 21 (1998), 41–68; G. Paul and K.-M. Mallmann, eds., *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg. 'Heimatfront' und besetztes Europa* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2000).
- 41 See HIS, *The German Army and Genocide: Crimes against War Prisoners, Jews and other Civilians in the East, 1939–1944* (New York: New Press, 1999); and the accompanying anthology by H. Heer and K. Naumann, eds., *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995); English version: *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941–44* (Oxford: Bergahn, 2000); M. Mann, 'Were the Perpetrators of Genocide "Ordinary Men" or "Real Nazis"? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 14 (2000), 331–66.
- 42 See Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, ed., *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. 4: *The Attack on the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), especially the chapters by J. Förster; M. Messerschmidt, 'The Soldier in the War to Conquer Eastern Europe', *Massachusetts Review*, 36 (1995), 414–19. With special focus on German occupation policy in the Soviet Union: G. Reitlinger, *The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939–1945* (London: Viking Press, 1960); T.P. Mulligan, *The Politics of Illusion and Empire: German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1942–43* (New York: Praeger, 1988); T.J. Schulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia* (Oxford: Berg, 1989).
- 43 The new exhibition catalogue – *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–44* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002) – combines in its 750 pages a vast collection of documents (reprinted in facsimile form) with further reading. For a highly critical assessment of the new Wehrmacht exhibition by one of the creators of its precursor see H. Heer, 'Vom Verschwinden der Täter. Die Auseinandersetzung um die Ausstellung "Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944"', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 50 (2002), 869–98.
- 44 See H. Loewy, 'Faustische Täter? Tragische Narrative und Historiographie', in *Täter*, ed. Paul, pp. 255–64.
- 45 In the literary field, G. Grass's novella *Im Krebsgang* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2002) drew considerable public attention to the plight of Germans at the end of the war. J. Friedrich, *Der Brand. Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002), offers a decontextualized and in many respects problematic account of Allied bombing of German cities.
- 46 See H. Welzer, S. Moller and K. Tschugall, 'Opa war kein Nazi'. *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedenknis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002).
- 47 Améry, *Jenseits*, p. 124.

10

The Topography of Genocide

Andrew Charlesworth

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding' (1942)

When people are silent, then the stones speak.

Heinrich Himmler

This could be an essay that encircles the whole globe from the Jewish refugees on the SS *St Louis* off Cuba, the Polish Underground emissary Jan Karski in Washington, the Nazi Party rallies in Nuremberg, the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth to the leafy street in Berlin where the Wannsee Conference was held. I have chosen to deal with the topographies of the epicentre of the genocide: the ghettos and deportation points on the European mainland, the camps that received the prisoners and the killing sites. This essay is not, however, an inventory of the landscape and topography of every site of genocide on soil under German occupation 1933–45.¹

Its starting point is that the genocidal actions at the heart of Nazi racial policy occurred in ordinary landscapes and were fashioned out of the everyday materials found in those locations. It is Claude Lanzmann in his film *Shoah* who taught us to look at the Holocaust in this way.² In that film Lanzmann holds three components of evidence in tension: eye witness testimony, documentary evidence (these two constituting the accepted historical record) and landscape, the places where the events took place. Lanzmann has called *Shoah* 'a topographic film' because he has realized the potential of topography to place these extraordinary events in our ordinary world.³ Lanzmann strips away the sense of the out of the ordinary to touch us with familiarity. This is uncomfortable because

the landscape is also passive, mute and ambiguous. This is what causes the tension with the documentary record.

Lanzmann captures that tension in his conversation with Raul Hilberg, the doyen of Holocaust historians.⁴ The conversation is centred on a German document recording the transport of Jews to Treblinka. Lanzmann questions Hilberg concerning what is special about this document. The question is an attempt by Lanzmann to reconcile that tension of evidence in his own mind. Lanzmann says: 'Because I was in Treblinka, and have the two things together, Treblinka and the document.' In other words: 'I have stood at the place of death Treblinka in the present and now here is the document of the event itself, which I can also touch', and significantly he strikes the document as he refers to it. Lanzmann struggles with us. But what is the connection?

Hilberg the historian sees no connection, no tension of evidence. Hilberg the representative of historical science puts his faith in the document because, as he says, when the survivors are dead that is all that will be left. That is what makes it special. Lanzmann visually challenges the point of view that history is simply the written record. He ends the interview with a view of the bucolic landscape of Treblinka. The place is still there. There will still be a place called Treblinka after all the survivors are dead.

The piece of paper Hilberg holds is not powerful enough for Lanzmann. The immutable stones of the landscape and the names of places appear to hold greater power. How often in *Shoah* does Lanzmann dwell on a place name sign on a railway station board, at the foot of a roadside crucifix, on a street corner? By so doing he transforms what we have come to see as exceptional and unique into the ordinary landscape features they are. It is the interpretation of these ordinary features of the landscape of the Holocaust that we seek to do here.

This is not as easy as it might seem. The topography of the camp and the landscape beyond the wire are often ignored by survivors in their accounts. It is as if the terrifying ordeal they were experiencing meant that they became self-absorbed. This may account for the fact that the old ramp at Auschwitz is so overlooked in such narratives. Even Primo Levi who arrived there is perfunctory in his description, yet it is here that the majority of captives sent to Auschwitz arrived.⁵ Granted it is a rather nondescript site and over time the pictures of the new ramp in the *Auschwitz Album* have gained an iconic status in terms of a landscape of arrival and selection. Even so, one might have expected more.

Equally surprising is that SS and camp personnel diaries and accounts again write about minutiae: often in their case their diet, personal circumstances and then their duties in the camp. But the landscapes of the camps and of the area – in Auschwitz the land we know they rode across and the rivers they bathed in – go for nothing. It is perhaps for these reasons that scholarly accounts of the camps deal rather perfunctorily with descriptions of topography and landscape.

So we are left with a lacuna which we need to fill, as Lanzmann does by walking the terrain trying to recover certain features that give us another insight into the genocidal act. Yet our knowledge of the history of the Germans' policy of racial and social engineering effected through mass murder already colours our expectation of the landscapes and topography we will find. Just as we both expect and want the perpetrators to look evil, similarly we wish to invest the landscapes of the Holocaust with evil and tragedy. People prefer to take photographs of Auschwitz when it is snowy or raining or has leaden skies.⁶ If it does not match our expectations, then we may regard the site as out of place. But the reality both then and now is different.

Topography

We tend to think of the death and concentration camps as built on isotropic surfaces with all traces of topography and geology erased on construction. Perhaps this is best exemplified in those aerial shots of Birkenau taken by the Soviet Air Force at the liberation and still shown to visitors in the cinema at the Auschwitz State Museum. Here we see a grid pattern of rows of black huts, grids of streets and fences, with regularly spaced watchtowers in the snow. The way sites have been presented to us cartographically has confirmed this view. Black dots or lines on white paper characterize such cartographic representations of the Holocaust sites.⁷ Certain topographic features, such as forests, marshes, rivers and seas, are shown, but relief, the contoured landscape, is not. This robs accounts of life and death at these places of an important dimension.

The Płaszow concentration camp – not Steven Spielberg's set which was built on a flat surface – was constructed on undulating topography with steep slopes (figure 1).⁸ It must have cost the Germans a lot of time and resources to build barracks on such terrain. Thomas Keneally describes some of the conditions under which construction took place in one of his first substantive passages on Płaszow: 'Goeth estimated the distance the women had to carry the frames to be some three-quarters of a kilometre. "All uphill," said Kunde, putting his head on one shoulder then on the other, as if to say, so it's a satisfactory form of discipline, but it slows up construction.'⁹ The question is why they chose to do so. In answering that question we are made to think who those men were who made that choice. They were certainly not desiccated, calculating robots or they would have rejected the site as too costly. They were more like Kunde, men with a chosen mission who did not count the cost as long as the end was achieved.¹⁰

On the other hand, in *Schindler's List* Spielberg's intention in inverting the topography of the camp appears to have been to stress the demonic side of Amon Goeth, the camp commandant. By placing his villa on a hillside *above*



Figure 1

the camp, dominating the camp, when the actual house lies below the camp, the power of Goeth's evil is manifested on the set (figure 2). No more questions need to be asked about Goeth's motivations.

Using the topography as Kunde indicated at Płaszow to provide a satisfactory form of discipline can be seen elsewhere. At Majdanek the lack of a rail spur nearby the camp meant that captives had to walk from the ramp to the barracks in Majdanek and this walk was up an incline. The walk would probably be nothing for us, but for those who had been in goods wagons for days, cramped and legs inert, it would have been a trial for the strongest and a death sentence for the weak. The ascent from the ghetto in Kaunas to the Ninth Fort was mockingly called by the Germans and their Lithuanian collaborators 'The road to Heaven' ('Der Weg zum Himmel-Fahrt') (figure 3).¹¹ In other places the name '*Himmelweg*' was given with total irony by the Germans where topography allowed. For example, that is what they called the rise the Jews had to walk up to the gas chambers at Treblinka, either that or the 'Ascension'.¹²

But what are we to make of Jews like those in the Kovno Ghetto who called the torturing hill climb the *Via Dolorosa*, the road ascended by another Jew to his death?¹³ At this darkest, most uncertain hour, why did Jews in Christian countries make references to an eschatological tale from which they had been excluded?¹⁴ That walk in Kovno was literally a killer. The plateau that awaited them at the top unfortunately did not bring relief but even greater terror: the



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

killing field of the Ninth Fort. Very different was the journey a successful basketball team made by vehicle to receive their reward for winning at shooting at Jews held captive in another of Kaunas's hill forts, the Seventh Fort.¹⁵

At Majdanek, where the crematorium was at one of the high points in the camp, the prisoners could not help but be reminded constantly of their ultimate fate. At Bełżec, when they burnt the bodies for four months day and night at the top of the rise, people for tens of kilometres around complained of sickness due to the smoke, ash and stench.¹⁶ It must have been like Dante's Inferno.

There were other ways the Germans and their collaborators adapted the topography to their purposes. Rivers were very convenient dumping places for bodies either alive (the Danube in Budapest) or dead (the Neris in Kaunas) or for ash (the Wistula at Auschwitz). In the former two great national rivers, nationalist collaborators were the ones dumping bodies. It must have constituted a cleansing of these unwanted elements from the national body politic.

It is hardly ever remarked on but the area of the death camps and killing fields for the most part was in that great belt of sand that stretches across the North German Plain of Europe all the way to Russia. Sand is everywhere in the descriptions of body disposal and killing sites (figure 4). At Lvov the killing grounds by the Janowska concentration camp are called the Sands.¹⁷ The *Einsatzgruppen* became adept at selecting killing sites in such geology. The deep sand dunes at Liepaja just behind the beach by the Baltic in Latvia were ideal

for killing trenches and burial sites. Similarly Babi Yar was a wide ravine in sand deposits, so easy to dynamite and collapse the walls in on the 100,000 bodies.¹⁸ If you go to Treblinka and explore the camp complex, you will find your way to Treblinka I, the slave labour and punishment camp for Poles. There you will also find the enormous sand and gravel pit where the Poles were worked to death. If such a pit had been further east, it would almost certainly have been used by the *Einsatzgruppen* as a killing site.

As nature intended

Nature was deployed by the Germans to ensure that mass murder was done as expeditiously as possible. Forests in the region around Konin provided the sites for some of the first experiments in the mass killings of Jews that did not involve shooting them.¹⁹ Like so much else that was experimental in the Holocaust the perpetrators had no idea if they could bring it off or how their captives or the neighbouring Polish population would react. Hence forests were convenient places of secrecy. Before these experiments forests and wooded areas outside cities, towns and villages had been used for mass shootings. This continued after the experimental killings and alongside the gassings of captives. Sometimes in the first sweeps on settlements Jews would be held prisoner without food or water, often in their synagogue, then once debilitated and disoriented, they were led to nearby woods and there killed. The mass grave already dug would then be covered over. The trees acted as camouflage from prying eyes both during the killings and after the graves had been covered. This has of course meant that many of the graves are not marked to the present day.

We have almost come to believe that while the death camps were in operation they were places shunned by nature through some sense of anthropomorphic repulsion. 'No birds sang at Auschwitz' is commonly heard. It is true that in the main prisoner sections no grass grew because it was consumed as soon as the first shoots emerged. One SS officer, however, wrote a book on the birds of Auschwitz, some of which must have been seen perching on the branches of the trees that were dotted through the camp.²⁰

Before the camp was constructed the area had been farmland.²¹ The fruit trees in the camp dated from that time. Kitty Hart recalls being taken for a walk with other prisoners by her *kapo* and passing fruit trees in bloom outside one of the farmhouses that had been converted into a gas and execution chamber and hearing prisoners inside being shot. There were also groves of trees from before the war including birch (literally what the name Brzezinka/Birkenau means) and other species. Captives sheltered in the birch grove by gas chamber V waiting their turn to enter. Or, put correctly, the guards placed them there; if the prisoners got any shelter that probably annoyed the guards.

Wild flowers were growing at Birkenau in 1943–44, not in abundance it is true but they were there. Kitty Hart tells of children waiting under the trees by



Figure 5

gas chambers IV and V before entering to be gassed. They picked the wildflowers growing in the wood. This so annoyed the guards that often they seized the children and smashed their heads against the gas chamber walls.

Fauna and flora were brought to the camps by the Germans. At Treblinka the SS had a zoo for their amusement.²² At Birkenau in the women's section of Kanada there was a lawn where the women workers could sunbathe as the captives filed past on their way to the gas chambers.²³ Gas chamber I at Auschwitz had earth embankments planted with grass, young trees and flowers to conceal its true purpose.²⁴ Around the gas chambers at Birkenau saplings were planted to screen them, though the screening effect never worked given the size of the saplings (figure 5).²⁵ No one has speculated why this was done. Did it mean that the Germans believed that they would need the gas chambers for the Polish population as the trees came to maturity, that is long after all the Jews and Romanies of mainland Europe had been exterminated?

Of course, trees were also planted by the Germans after the death camps were closed. This was part of their programme of concealing their deeds. The pinewoods (quick-growing pine was nearly always chosen for this purpose) for some have come to be almost a symbol of German cowardice. That is, that concealment was about fear of retribution should the Germans lose the war. This notion fails to take into account that concealment began in 1942 when the Germans did not believe that defeat was inevitable. Strzelecki puts forward

a more likely explanation for concealment of the camps' existence. This was to hide the evidence of mass murder so that citizens of a victorious future Reich did not have to bear the trauma and sacrifices that had already been asked of the SS and other Germans waging war against the Jews in order to create the thousand-year Reich.²⁶ In this case even the stones were to be silent.

Camp furniture

The material the camps were made from was already present in a modern society. Zbigniew Libera's controversial work *Lego Concentration Camp*, which is in the form of a Lego pack made up as a concentration camp, underlines this point.²⁷ All the key features of the camps were already in existence and sometimes had been used for not too dissimilar purposes. So the look of these places should have been familiar rather than unfamiliar. Even today, if you walk around the sites and can't make that connection, then one might question why you went there.

The barbed wire of the camp fences is often used symbolically to represent the specific barbarity of the Shoah. Yet the barbed wire for fencing captives is not unique to the Shoah, being used in the first concentration resettlement camps in the Boer War and in POW camps on both sides of the conflict in the First and Second World Wars.²⁸ Goebbels had made sure that in the film *Ohm Kruger* the precedent of the Boer War resettlement camp with barbed wire fences was shown in a number of key scenes.²⁹ Yet the origin of barbed wire and its multitude of uses lies elsewhere.

It had been invented in the 1870s and had been one of the main elements in claiming the Great Plains of the US for agriculturalists. Without it the West could not have been 'won' in the form we know it today. The frontier of settlement could not have been closed. It tamed the ranchers' power and was one of the elements in the destruction of native American culture, by destroying their hunting grounds.

Barbed wire was the ideal territorial marker for keeping out the unwanted. It was used for protecting factories, households and military bases from trespassers (figure 6). It became a frontline defence in warfare as demonstrated on the Western Front. On national boundaries it was used to mark the frontier and to keep citizens from escaping and deter entry by foreigners. The death camp and ghetto barbed wire fences performed the same function. But the multifaceted nature of barbed wire is why on arriving in one part of the Majdanek death camp in 1990 one of my students blurted out 'Steve McQueen', remembering the scene in *The Great Escape* when the character played by Steve McQueen tries to ride his motorbike through fences of barbed wire at the Swiss frontier.

The concentration camps and death camps had other features in common with POW camps. First, they were all designed for the captors to survey their



Figure 6

captives. The lines of barracks were set out in a grid to give good sight-lines. Watchtowers were strategically placed on the boundaries of the camps one or two storeys high to survey the boundary fences and across the camp (figure 7). These became quite monumental structures when they were incorporated into gatehouses at concentration camps on German territory.³⁰ The entrances to the camps were often the only part of the camp to have any symbolic effect on the SS guards and the prisoners. In brick and stone they were displays of SS power and permanence.



Figure 7

For most death camps, like POW camps, this monumentalization never occurred because these were regarded as temporary structures. Once their function was no longer needed when the war was won or all the Jews and Romanies in their deadly catchment were killed, the camps were disposed of. Many had barracks that were made from prefabricated, disposable kits, which again is why POW and Displaced Persons camps, both British and German, internment camps for Japanese in the US, and death camps in Poland look similar. The main camp at Auschwitz being a concentration camp on German soil, and hence having a planned role in the future as a place of punishment and re-education, should have had one of the monumental gatehouses, but a shortage of building materials meant this was never realized.³¹ Birkenau's brick gatehouse with a two-storey watchtower is therefore unique among the six death camps and its appearance has more to do with the size of the camp that had to be surveyed (figure 8). Even today the sight-lines from the tower across the camp are excellent.

Auschwitz-Birkenau's infamous watchtower is very much an extension of Bentham's Panopticon. Like the gatehouses of the concentration camps in Germany, it reminds one of the forbidding entrances to the utilitarian workhouses found in England in the nineteenth century and still operating into the twentieth.³² David Lean's representation of the workhouse and its inmates in the opening scenes of his film *Oliver Twist* owes as much to the description of the camps as to nineteenth-century workhouses. Others have seen modernist continuities in a specific German context through 'Hitler's engineers... taking over the practices of Bauhaus design'.³³

We are all familiar with the searchlight sweeping across a camp landscape in a POW film such as *The Colditz Story*. Searchlights and lighting within those camps and concentration and death camps were also to aid the surveillance of the captives. Yet lighting had another important functional purpose: it meant that the death camps could work through the night. For all commercial and industrial activity the advent of electricity had meant that night was no longer a period of inactivity.³⁴ So it was for the factories of death.

Moreover, they announced the presence of the camp to those beyond its borders. In those suburban/rural locations the power of the occupying forces could be read in the bright glow of electricity. It was a symbol of modernity, demonstrating that the Germans were bringing light to the dark corners of Europe. Such a metaphor in the landscape was there for a regime that had decreed that its greatest deeds could never be written down.

Trains and cars and planes

What modernity taught us – that 'communication, exchange and motion bring to humanity enlightenment and progress' – was mocked in the Shoah by



Figure 8

the bleached bones that littered the rail track from Lvov, the former regional capital of the Galician part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to the obscure place called Bełżec.³⁵ The rail network that carried the death transports is virtually the same today in its topology and topography. Questions about the modernity project are thus etched into the landscapes of Europe.

Before the Shoah trains appear as those agents of civilization, linking modern European states together both intra- and internationally. Railway stations were the points of entry into the wider nation, made the provincial national, and

the national citizen an international traveller. This fact must have struck Eichmann when he travelled to Lvov from Minsk in 1941. In Minsk he had just witnessed a mass shooting: now in Lvov:

I saw for the first time a charming picture – the railway station which was built in honour of the sixtieth year of the reign of Franz Josef.... I always find pleasure in that period.... It was painted yellow.... I remember that the date was inscribed on the wall. This for the first time drove away those terrible thoughts which had never left me since Minsk; this was the first time I could forget.³⁶

The station was part of a civilized world. What had happened in Minsk for Eichmann was another world, a world of barbarism. But within a year he was to have brought those worlds clashing together as he authorized the transports of victims by rail, for the most part to the death camps. Stations often less elegant than Lvov's but still part of the *Reichsbahn* system would be collection points to disgorge the unwanted of the Reich.

As there was no budget for the implementation of the policy of extermination, the Germans adapted what they found on the railway network. At each death camp they had to adapt or create a disembarkation point for their captives. We often write about the ramp at a particular camp, but these varied according to what the existing disposition of railway lines already offered at each site.

At Sobibor there was a siding with a platform adjacent to the camp (figure 9). This was much better for the captives than the old ramp at Auschwitz. That was just a line set off the main line with no platform (figure 10). A brick barrack was built to shelter the SS waiting for the trains and afforded them telephonic communication. Brick sheds were also built adjacent to the barrack to store potatoes grown and harvested by the camp prisoners. The potatoes were shipped out in the goods vans that brought the new captives to Auschwitz. The old ramp was used until a new ramp was built alongside the rail spur extended into Birkenau in 1943–44. Rails for the spur were either made new in the Reich or recycled from the Serbian part of Yugoslavia. But at either site the cost of a platform was considered too great. Certainly, the welfare of the prisoners was not a factor, as the lack of a platform meant that prisoners who had been held in the goods vans for days risked breaking their legs as they clambered out.

At Lublin a rail spur already existed into the aircraft factory complex just down from Majdanek so this was used and prisoners had to march the 1½ kilometres to the camp (figure 11). Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek are the only extant death camps with landscapes that bear a good deal of similarity to those landscapes at the times of the camps' existence. We are familiar with the explanation of why the railway spur was brought to Birkenau: to cope with the



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

vast numbers of Hungarian Jews brought there over a few months in 1944. Yet with a total of some 360,000 deaths at Majdanek the lack of a railway line close to the camp seems to question the concept of production-line death so readily used to explain the layout of the new ramp.³⁷ The absence of the track is a silence on the present-day guided tours to Majdanek.

The places where people arrived at and departed from the ghettos were and are unremarkable and today are often unmarked. In Lublin those sent from the ghetto to Bełżec did not even go to the *Flugplatz* complex, but to a section of track to the east of the town. Even such a place as the *Umschlagplatz* in Warsaw, which has been given almost mythic status, was in reality a goods yard that was conveniently located near the perimeter of the ghetto.³⁸ Sidings and suburban stations were used with little alteration to their form so that on days when captives were not arriving or departing you might have no notion of what was happening there.

Take the Radogoszcz station, the arrival and departure place for the Łódź ghetto, and situated just outside its northern boundary (figure 12). That was at the edge of the built-up area of Łódź, a local station with some buildings for goods in the middle of open land. That is how it is today with no memorial and no visitors.



Figure 12

In fact, it could be argued that the rail network that fed the death camps is the one true memorial to the Shoah in its extent, its topography and geometry. This is true on both a continental and a local scale. For example, in Lvov not far from Eichmann's beloved railway station, there is a section of track that runs from the site of the Janowska concentration camp to the site of the ghetto and then on to Bełżec (figures 13–15). Captives were brought to the Kleparow station near the camp. Selections took place by the trains; sometimes the victims were stripped down to their underwear or even left naked and put back on the train to Bełżec to hasten the process and avoid possessions having to be brought back from Bełżec to Janowska. Some of the prisoners who had come from the ghetto would be put on the trains and taken back through the ghetto, passing friends and relatives on their way to Bełżec.³⁹ By the Janowska camp the track is in a deep cutting – an almost hopeless valley of death for the captives – then the track climbs, circling high above the ghetto like a band of steel. The bridges of the railway themselves became perfect locations for the gates of the ghetto. A number of terrible massacres occurred at those gates where the bridge and the embankment trapped the victims during the deadly onslaught.⁴⁰ That is how it stands today, still etched in the landscape as an eloquent, disturbing, silent memorial to genocide. The sculptured memorial by the bridge and beneath the embankment seems almost superfluous.



Figure 13

Yet we must beware again of taking objects and mythologizing them. At the sight of the Polish goods vans standing on the line by Treblinka station we must not immediately call them 'cattle cars' and associate such rolling stock only with the death trains (figure 16). If we do that, we create discontinuity rather than continuity. Without railways the great emigration of white Europeans of whatever religion to the New World where many of these settlers were to displace and kill the aboriginal peoples could not have taken place. One can find photographs of these emigrants, including Jews, being loaded into goods vans with no more to heat them than a stove because they could not afford to travel in any greater comfort. So the idea of people with few assets travelling long distances in goods vans under such conditions was common in eastern and southern Europe, even in the early twentieth century.

It is not usually mentioned that the original buildings of the main camp at Auschwitz, Auschwitz I, were built by the Austro-Hungarian authorities to regulate the traffic in emigration between eastern Europe and Germany.⁴¹ Certainly goods vans would have left Oświęcim station and the siding by the emigrant camp crammed with the poor of Galicia, including Jews. So the announcements of the first resettlements of Jews and Poles by the Germans would not have been greeted with quite the foreboding we assign to them, and those Jews who did not think the worst were not deluded individuals within the ghettos. Moreover, in eastern Poland and the Baltic states there were other



Figure 14

precedents. In the First World War, German refugees had fled, packed in goods vans, from the Russian Army invading East Prussia in the summer of 1914. The footage of people bewildered and frightened packing themselves into the vans is eerily prescient of Nazi films of the deportation of Jews to the death camps.⁴² A more recent precedent would have been the deportations by train by the Soviets to Siberia between autumn 1939 and early summer 1941. Cruel and harsh as they were they did not mark the majority down for death, as the German deportations were to do.⁴³

Everywhere symbols of the modern age stood in landscapes that were being drenched in blood. Ordinary vans were adapted to become killing vehicles or



Figure 15



Figure 16

gas vans with some minor technical adjustments. In East and West Prussia and the Warthegau it was the Kaiser's coffee vans that were converted to kill asylum inmates. In the area around Belzec the local post van was adapted for killing, bringing the bodies for disposal at the camp. In the 1970s Michel Podchlebnik, one of the two survivors of Chełmno, described the gas vans as like cigarette vans then seen in Israel.⁴⁴ At Sobibor a recycled Russian tank or tractor engine became the source of the carbon monoxide to kill the prisoners.⁴⁵ Even when more obviously barbaric methods were employed, the setting may have been utterly up to date. There is, for example, the petrol filling station at Kaunas where Lithuanian nationalists beat Jews to death shortly after the Germans arrived in the city. At Ponary the Soviets had started to construct a fuel depot with large circular tanks (figure 17). These were seized by the Germans and adapted to be the mass killing sites and graves, principally for the Jews of the Vilna ghetto.⁴⁶

Perhaps most indicative of the two sides of modernity that Nazism exemplified is a landscape Alfred Kantor sketched in Germany towards the end of the war. Having survived a death march from Auschwitz to Germany he was placed in a slave labour complex serving an electronics factory. What he sketched is the camp with barracks and barbed wire fences barely concealed by a perimeter of fir trees from the cars speeding past on the adjacent autobahn.⁴⁷ To a party member passing by there was no contradiction in the juxtaposition of the two



Figure 17

parts of the system; both were necessary for the Reich to survive and prosper: creative destruction, modernity's key impulse.

And planes? At the Erntefest massacres at Majdanek in November 1943 a spotter plane was used with two-way radio communication to adjust the flow of prisoners. Female SS on bicycles ensured that the flow matched the killing rate of the assembly line mass murder. Loud music amplified from a gramophone was played so as not to alert the 18,000 victims, all Jews from the workshops of Lublin, to their fate. On the rooftops of the neighbourhood of Dziesiąta Poles watched this Fordist killing spectacle in awe.⁴⁸

But it is at Uman, the place of origin of the Hasidic movement, that the Germans used the plane to its most chilling effect in the Shoah, matching the lethal potential of planes to bring death to civilian populations down to the present day.⁴⁹ At dawn the Jews were brought out of the town to the airfield where two long pits were dug and filled with quicklime. The transport planes landed, packed with SS units: 24,000 Jews were shot and then, their mission accomplished, the SS units took off again in the Junker 52s.

Planes have brought us some of our most haunting and yet ambiguous images of the topography of the death camps in the form of the aerial reconnaissance shots of the camps taken by the Luftwaffe and Allied airforces. The most reproduced and annotated are those by USAF of Auschwitz and especially Birkenau taken in 1944 during the extermination of Hungarian Jewry. Here is the camp laid out before us in full destruction mode. Arie Galles the artist has used the ambiguity of these shots to depict other images of the camps.⁵⁰ His charcoal sketches reveal an almost surreal topography capturing the sense of other/present world that few others have achieved. Yet one never forgets the source material: aerial photographs, state-of-the art technology for the modern 1940s.

Consider yourself at home

As we go round a death camp today it is easy to let the language of the place slip over our heads. At Auschwitz-Birkenau the first two experimental gas chambers adapted from farmhouses are still called 'The White House' and 'The Red House'. But somehow the fact the first Soviet POWs and Jews were gassed there evades us, because what could a house, a home, have to do with mass murder? In *Shoah*, Lanzmann underscores that point by often allowing the narrative of horror to unfold not inside a gas chamber but in comfortable sitting rooms. We are made to feel uncomfortable precisely because we do feel at home. In the topography of the Shoah the presence of homes should disturb us. Richard Jones used this domestic bourgeois discourse to chilling effect in his production of Wagner's *Ring* at Covent Garden in 1994–96, from the huge domestic chimney in *Rheingold* to the bourgeois homes of the Siegfrieds and the Gibichungs in *Götterdämmerung*.

The connection between the gas chambers and farmhouses is even more complex. With no budget for mass murder the Germans adapted whatever was at hand in the landscape. At Birkenau the brick barracks and the gas chamber complexes were built from the farmhouses that existed in the area prior to the camp. The final twist in this recycling tale is that after liberation the farmers returned to Brzezinka and from the camp reclaimed bricks and material, including from the gas chambers, to rebuild their houses. As Robert Jan van Pelt has pointed out, the best places to do chemical tests for the presence of Zyklon B is in these houses.⁵¹

At Chełmno, the first death camp, where improvisation and experimentation were most marked, a derelict country house was used as the base for the first stage of the killings by gas van. The vans themselves were adapted from existing vehicles. The 'big house' in Chełmno is often referred to as a castle, which immediately makes one think of dungeons and torture chambers. The truth is more prosaic: it had been a country house, possibly on the site of a former castle, as is clear from photographs taken before it was damaged in the First World War.⁵² It would have larger rooms for the well-to-do upstairs and servants' quarters below. The present archaeological excavation at the site reinforces the image of a medieval castle with its barbarity because country houses tend not to be excavated (figure 18). What the Jews from Łódź and the surrounding region encountered on arrival was a large country house set behind a fence. After the conditions in the ghetto, such a house, with its setting overlooking the beautiful valley of the Narew, and such a place must have lulled them into thinking things were not so bad, before the awful truth became apparent to them.

The Auschwitz State Museum would seem to agree that the camp commandant's house is a disturbing place because it is not open to visitors. Like other camp commandants' houses it stands today as a solid bourgeois house, with a house number. The commandant's house at Majdanek has had another house built around it, so its origins and the nature of the former inhabitant are literally hidden (figure 19). Are these attempts to conceal who lived here done so that we will not ponder the connection between the homes and the deeds done there by the heads of the households? Certainly the home life of Rudolf Höss, the camp commandant at Auschwitz, bears some consideration.

As he stepped from his back garden at his home in Auschwitz, Höss crossed the boundary between home and work (figure 20). On one side of the line he was a family man, who played with his children and swam with them in the Soła river just across the road. On the other side he walked the few steps to his office and a further few to the gas chamber. At the end of the day, he would cross the line back to the bosom of his family.

George Steiner, the literary critic, has long wrestled with the fact that the perpetrators of the Holocaust came from one of the most cultured nations the



Figure 18

world has known.⁵³ He has speculated that becoming absorbed in the great cultural works can become so intense that the tragedy being played out in those works shuts out the scream in the street outside. Perhaps the answer may be a little more prosaic and also more pessimistic, even more terrifying: the answer may lie in the solid bourgeois house with its boundary. Tragedy on the doorstep could be ignored for across the threshold a job had to be done to protect the bourgeois family from the world, from the Other, from the Jew.

Hoess had a clear understanding of his world. In his autobiography he wrote:

I have had two lights to guide me: my fatherland and, later, my family. My second worship was my family. To them I was securely anchored. My thoughts were always with their future, and our farm was to become their permanent home.... To bring [our children] up so that they could play their part in the world, and to give them a steady home, was our one task in life.⁵⁴

As Eric Hobsbawm notes, the bourgeois home is often referred to by nineteenth-century observers as an oasis of peace in a world of battle.⁵⁵ A competitive war waged where some died and many more were wounded – the language of warfare and survival permeated descriptions of economic competition.



Figure 19



Figure 20

In E.M. Forster's *Howards End*, Mr Wilcox describes it exactly like that, as 'the battle of life'.⁵⁶ Once inside, the home shut out the din of battle. Once inside, regroup, refresh, back to face the sound and fury, to do the necessary work to save and prosper one's business and in so doing protect one's family – the family firm and the bourgeois home had identical aspirations: to survive at the expense of others.

The Germans were fond of using metaphors of cleansing, of disease, of vermin, of bacilli. These we tend to associate with medical discourses. The motto 'cleanliness is next to godliness' is a bourgeois one. And to many a German *Hausfrau* it would not have been odd to hear that Zyklon B, used as rat poison in the kitchen of the bourgeois home and in factories to keep disease at bay, was being employed in gas chambers to eradicate the Other, the Jew. The world beyond the front door of the bourgeois home had to be cleansed if the family home was to be made safe.

I have often walked down this street before

In accounts of the formation of the ghettos much has been made of the fact that the Germans usually – and always in the cities – chose the areas with poorest housing for the location of the ghetto. This was because the Germans wanted to expropriate as much as possible from the Jews in the first act of resettlement. On the other hand, one must not fall into the trap of SS film and photographic propaganda that wanted the world to see the Jews right from the commencement of ghettoization as degraded sub-humans. The ghettos were not death camps, nor were they on another planet or another part of this planet. It was the SS who proclaimed that 'Asia had come to Europe' as the headline in a propaganda piece on the Warsaw Ghetto had it, just as it was the Germans who gave an Oriental flourish to the walls and gateways of the Cracow Ghetto.⁵⁷

Our problem is that we have not looked closely enough at the photographs, especially those colour photographs from the Łódź Ghetto.⁵⁸ Here, if you view such scenes from the context of the depression of the 1930s and not from the ramp at Birkenau, you begin to see people on streets, hanging around street corners, whose clothes and way of dressing are not dissimilar to Europe's urban unemployed. If you then look into the background, the landscape is not one from a Doré lithograph of Seven Dials in London or Scorsese's Five Points in New York in the nineteenth century. What we have are streets and houses that are recognizable to anyone familiar with east European cities in the 1930s. The landscape of the ghetto looks normal, where daily life appears on the surface ordinary. Pictures of bombed-out families in London or in Berlin can appear more foreign and even distressing to us, a comparison that in the case of the Germans was often made as justification for the conditions in the ghetto and later for the even more brutal treatment meted out.⁵⁹

The ghettos were connected to the existing urban system. The Germans ensured as much as possible that the ghettos did not disrupt that system's economic functioning. Where important circulation routes had to be maintained, these were set apart from the ghetto by properly secured boundaries, usually barbed wire fences. As always with such schemes, they provided the Germans with additional benefits. Where trams followed such secured routes, the non-captive population could see the captives from the trams even when the windows were supposed to be shuttered and through the wire, but it was almost impossible for the former to give any aid. Some, of course, would rejoice at this situation, but others passed by reluctantly on the other side. Robbed of their power to be Good Samaritans they sank deeper into apathy. As time went on you might even forget to look up from your book or newspaper as you passed through.

Nor should we think that a wall dissecting an urban landscape and separating two communities because of the fear that one will contaminate the other is singularly a phenomenon of German occupied territory. In Oxford in the 1930s a wall was built across pre-existing streets to separate a middle-class area from a local authority estate because the people in the latter area were thought to be 'other' and would lower the tone of the affluent district. The Cutteslowe wall outlived all those ghetto walls and fences.⁶⁰

The Germans found new uses for many familiar places in settlements perverting their original purpose. Places of play, relaxation and exercise such as parks, school playgrounds, athletic fields and sports stadiums became collection points and selection sites. Such open spaces, where lovers strolled, babies were pushed in their prams, Easter fairs and Corpus Christi processions were held and games played and races run, became places of terror for a time (figure 21). The same was true of market squares, another convenient assemblage point: the *Aktion* took place, the ghetto was cleared and the square was cleaned, then life went on (figure 22).

A poignant example that illustrates how a place of pleasure can become a place of terror is taken from Lvov. There Rabbi Kahane was being hidden in the Archbishop's Palace (figure 23).⁶¹ He had a window high up in the palace that looked out onto a park, a landscape of pleasure and relaxation, directly below. Like God he watched events below unfold before his eyes. Daily he must have watched Ukrainians come there to enjoy themselves and relax. Then one day a Jewish boy came into the park. He distanced himself from the Ukrainians. Ukrainian children, however, became suspicious of him, they questioned him, they sensed something was not right. Their parents came to see what was going on, the questioning continued. Finally, a policeman was sent for and the boy was led away. A place of pleasure had become, through the agency of 'innocents', a place of terror.

Other everyday spaces were taken over by the Germans. 'Operation Reinhard' was adept at converting property for the administration of its murderous



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23

operation and for storing the plunder of its victims' possessions. Its headquarters in Lublin were sited in what had been a girls' school before the occupation. The building still stands today with nothing to mark its infamous past, even though it is the College of Anatomy of the Catholic University and honours special aspects of the college's past (figure 24). At Bełżec, one of the camps where the plunder began, the engine house at the railway station was commandeered as a store for clothes and even today fragments can be found high up in the building. In Lublin itself a number of large storehouses were created. In the centre of town the Germans found the empty space of the unfinished theatre of the Catholic University and took that for storing belongings (figure 25).

In many settlements industrial property was converted to production for the German war effort. At the *Flugplatz* the former aircraft factory's vast production



Figure 24

sheds and hangars were used. Here 'Operation Reinhard's booty was sorted, graded and cleaned by 3,000 Jewish women before being sent to Germany (figure 26).⁶² In other places factories could become slave labour camps for more profitable or more useful neighbouring enterprises (figure 27).⁶³

Perhaps the greatest perversion of all was the use of hospitals as the site of the T-4 programme, euphemistically called the 'euthanasia programme'.⁶⁴ In Germany the mentally and physically handicapped of an area were brought by buses to be gassed in converted rooms in mental hospitals. These were not sanatoriums deep in the forest but ordinary hospitals in towns. Children often jeered at the buses carrying the patients and the plume of smoke from the Hadamar hospital's crematorium needed no explanation. Moreover, the very act in the landscape of changing a place of care and treatment into one of killing, 'special treatment', demonstrates how important the medical discourse underpinning Nazi racial/social policy was. At the death camps the Lazarett, or hospital, with its Red Cross flag welcomed the infirm and the mentally and physically handicapped where they could be 'cured' by a bullet.

If the end of the journey for the captives held unimaginable terrors, what must they have felt at the start of their journey as they passed through familiar streets? The first transport of 1,000 Jews from Berlin was from Grunewald station in an affluent district of Berlin.⁶⁵ They were brought out by tram on a Sunday morning to a district where so many streets were named after musical associations.



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27

The streets would be quiet so that the presence of hundreds of Jews would attract attention. Did they, as they passed the house where Isadora Duncan and Engelbert Humperdinck had lived at different times, do a dance in their head or sing a melody from 'Hansel and Gretel'? Or did this last glimpse of their Berlin in all its solid bourgeois affluence make the shock of having been alienated from that world by Nazi law all the keener? There is a memorial at Grunewald today, but no indication of how the Jews arrived at the station, so someone could walk up Trabener Strasse without a thought about the Germans who leant out their windows to see that Sunday morning spectacle go by.

Go East

The impression we might have conveyed of the camps could be one that is too orderly and rational. Treblinka suffered chaotic breakdown before Franz Stangl was put in charge, with the landscape of the camp littered with hillocks of dead bodies. But what we need to remember about the camps is that they served a dual purpose – to kill and to expropriate the victims – and hence they were places of vast wealth given the number of captives brought to them in a relatively short space of time. Richard Glazar, one of the most perceptive captives, gets it exactly right when he describes Treblinka as like a settlement in the Wild West,⁶⁶ or a gold-mining town in the Yukon. Everyone employed in the death camp knew that it had a temporary existence, so there was no need to build anything permanent, just temporary structures or conversions of

what already existed in the surrounding area. They did this because they knew that when the Jews ran out, that is, when there were no more to kill, so did the wealth they brought with them. This was as inevitable as a seam of gold becoming exhausted. So much wealth in various forms came into the camps that, like striking gold, you had to be an ascetic not to dip your hand into all that plundered loot. So the captors lined their pockets; but also like miners hitting a strike or a gambler the jackpot, they spent, spent, spent. And this being a male-dominated community they drank and wanted women. Prostitutes flocked to the camps. Farmhouses became brothels and local girls became or were coerced by their families into being prostitutes. Drink flowed freely; local houses became drinking dens. This history of the areas bordering the camps has yet to be written. Michael Treganza's eagerly anticipated work on Bełżec will show how the economy of the village of Bełżec more soberly profited from the presence of such nearby wealth. Land ownership and the style and fabric of houses for many miles around the death camps would certainly be altered by the death camp economy. And local prospectors still keep alive the memories of those brief bonanza days by digging among the remains of the camps in the hope of finding gold.

That sense of events in German-occupied territory mirroring the Wild West of America is not too strained and can be taken a step further. The first proposed permanent spatial solutions to the 'Jewish Question' were termed 'reservations', areas to which the Jews would be pushed and where with few provisions or means of habitation the Germans would let them get on with it. Such spatial strategies echoed the earlier history of the Indian Territories of nineteenth-century America.

To date historians have drawn attention to the SS worldview that saw resetting the East in terms of returning to Teutonic Slav hunting grounds and Aryan ancestral homes, and not to parallels between the Old West and the New East. The railway played its part in the destruction of the old Wild West and the creation of the New West of the United States. The railway cut up the Great Plains of the bison and brought in the hunters, heralding another decisive stage in the genocide of Native America.⁶⁷ In the Reich's Wild East the railway was to prove even more crucial in the destruction of civilizations and cultures that had existed for centuries.

Himmler's line of SS settlements penetrating deep into Russia can be seen as the eastern equivalent of the US Cavalry forts from which SS troops would test their military prowess and chivalrous ideal by sallying forth against hostiles, in their case Slavic partisans. The Russian steppes had already been given mythic status in German propaganda as the great Judaeo-Bolshevik war was being waged.⁶⁸ Once victorious, that same landscape would certainly have become the SS's Great Plains or Monument Valley and celebrated as iconic landscapes in cinemas across the Reich. Certainly in victory all the

landscapes of the Holocaust would have been erased so that they could never be read again.

And know the place for the first time

We began this journey by trying to reconcile the fact of mass murder with places that appeared to deny the horror, ordinary landscapes that sometimes can seem to be too beautiful. Yet as Cresswell explains, 'place has no determinate meaning, no natural and transcendent meaning. The meaning of a place is the subject of particular discourses'.⁶⁹ Our sense of the proper makes horror incompatible with certain landscapes and hence makes it seem out of place. But perhaps we are still not looking from the perspective of the appropriate discourse: from that of the perpetrators who certainly saw these places very differently from the way we see them. There is Kurt Franz's photograph album with its jaunty caption 'Those were the days' for his photographs of Bełżec and Treblinka. One might add to that, 'my friend, we thought they'd never end', to capture the exhilaration of those days and enthusiasm for the job.⁷⁰

Take one aspect of the micro-landscape of the camps that has long been read simply from the viewpoint of the captive and is certainly the only reading that is allowed at concentration camp museums. These are the signs such as 'Disinfection', 'Cleanliness brings freedom', and 'One louse may kill you'. But if we read them from the perspective of the guards, they become powerful legitimating messages and exhortations for their murderous actions: disinfect the Reich, cleanse the Reich of this vermin, if we don't kill these Jewish lice, they will kill us. The medical discourse was powerful and persuasive, one that ascribed 'meanings to place in the language of common sense, of normality', and justified to the Germans 'the heaviest of our tasks'.⁷¹

If it was a pleasant place or a pleasant day for the captives, this made their despair greater, their work almost unbearable. To the killers, however, it was more likely to make their task more acceptable because they could believe that they were ridding the scene of what threatened to make it unpleasant. If you look at the photographs taken by Order Police at Międzyrzec, you can trace the trajectory of the task of killing Jews through to the celebratory relaxing, all undertaken in sunshine and at times in a field outside the town. Lieutenant Gnade's choice of that pleasant spot for the 'undressing barrack' to strip and sexually degrade Jewish women and seize their valuables before their journey to the death camp underlines my point.⁷²

James Young talks of the visitor to a Holocaust site losing sight of the fact that what is presented is framed by the keepers of the site.⁷³ No Holocaust site or museum to my knowledge discusses the killers' perceptions of place. Moreover, Young puts the case that the test of a Holocaust site is to ask on exiting, how do visitors grasp their own lives and surroundings anew in light of a memorialized past?⁷⁴ The museum authorities need to see that the topographies of genocide

have the potential to make us confront what Lifton calls 'the killer self' that is in all of us and not safely distance ourselves from perpetrators as monsters and robots.⁷⁵

Notes

- 1 Such an inventory is provided in M. Gilbert, *Macmillan Atlas of the Holocaust*, 5th edition (London: Macmillan, 2002). The topographies and landscapes of Holocaust sites are ignored.
- 2 C. Lanzmann, *Shoah* (London: Academy Video 1986).
- 3 A talk he gave at Yad Vashem in July 1991. I have to thank Pamela Hope Levin for this reference.
- 4 Lanzmann, interview with Hilberg in *Shoah*.
- 5 P. Levi, *If This Is a Man* (London: Abacus, 1991), p. 16. Characteristically, Hugo Gryn has one of the best descriptions of the first view of Birkenau, but being on one of the Hungarian transports in 1944 his train arrived along the new train spur and on to the new ramp. Those prisoners were able later to orient themselves as the point of arrival was within the camp and observed on later occasions. H. Gryn, *Chasing Shadows* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 174.
- 6 A. Charlesworth and M. Addis, 'Memorialisation and the Ecological Landscapes of Holocaust Sites: the Cases of Auschwitz and Plaszow', *Landscape Research*, 27 (2002), 229–51.
- 7 For understanding the discipline of such cartographic representations, see P. Gould, 'A Note on Research into the Diffusion of Development', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2 (1964), 122–7.
- 8 A. Charlesworth, 'Spielberg's List: Schindler, Authentic History and the Lie of the Landscape', in *Studying the Landscape*, ed. I. Robertson and P. Richards (London: Edward Arnold, 2003), pp. 93–107.
- 9 T. Keneally, *Schindler's Ark* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983), p. 178.
- 10 These different discourses on the Germans' behaviour are discussed with relation to the topography of the camps in A. Charlesworth, 'A Foreign Field that is Forever Spielberg's', *Cultural Geographies* (forthcoming).
- 11 A. Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. 508.
- 12 Lanzmann, *Shoah*, testimonies of Suchomel and Bomba.
- 13 Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust*.
- 14 Lanzmann, *Shoah*, scene outside the church at Chełmno where Polish Catholic witnesses relate how the Jews imprisoned inside the church called on Jesus and Mary.
- 15 M. Greenbaum, *The Jews of Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1995), pp. 308–9.
- 16 R. Reder, *Belzec* (Krakow: Fundacja Judaica/Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1999), p. 142; M. Treganza (personal communication).
- 17 D. Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), p. 78.
- 18 R. Rhodes, *Masters of Death: The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Perseus Press, 2002), chapter 11.
- 19 T. Richmond, *Konin* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 450–5.
- 20 F. Piper, Head of Department of Historical Research, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (personal communication).

- 21 This and the next paragraph are taken from Charlesworth and Addis, 'Memorialization'.
- 22 E. Klee, W. Dressen and V. Riess, *'Those Were The Days': The Holocaust as Seen by the Perpetrators and Bystanders* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), p. 227.
- 23 K. Hart, *Return to Auschwitz* (London: Grafton, 1983), pp. 154–5.
- 24 K. Smolen et al., eds., *KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1991), p. 117.
- 25 B. Zajac, 'Zielony czy stary: jaki był obraz obozu', *Pro Memoria*, 3 (1995), 41–2. Interview with Mrs. Zajac, July 1994.
- 26 A. Strzelecki, *The Evacuation, Dismantling and Liberation of KL Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2001), pp. 52–3.
- 27 S.C. Feinstein, ed., *AbsencePresence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
- 28 A. Krell, *The Devil's Rope: A Cultural History of Barbed Wire* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).
- 29 Ibid., p. 51.
- 30 P.B. Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression: The SS, Forced Labour and the Nazi Monumental Building Economy* (London: Routledge, 2000), chapter 5.
- 31 D. Dwork and R.J. van Pelt, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 225, 361.
- 32 F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 33 D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 33.
- 34 For an interesting discussion on lighting, see N.J. Thrift, 'Inhuman Geographies', in *Writing the Rural*, ed. P. Cloke et al. (London: Paul Chapman, 1994), pp. 191–248.
- 35 Schivelsbusch, quoted in Thrift, 'Inhuman Geographies', p. 200.
- 36 Quoted in M. Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: William Collins, 1986), p. 167.
- 37 Marszalek explains it simply in terms of the short distance between the railway and the camp. I think it is more complex than that and has to do with the type of camp Majdanek was and its relation to the *Flugplatz* complex and the latter's role within 'Operation Reinhard'. It is surprising that for so important a camp as Majdanek we have no definitive history of the camp written in the post-socialist era. J. Marszalek, *Majdanek* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1986), p. 23.
- 38 Wydawnictwa 'ALFA', *Warsaw As It Was* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa 'ALFA', 1985).
- 39 S. Drix, *Witness* (London: Fount, 1995), pp. 136, 167–8.
- 40 Ibid., pp. 37ff.
- 41 Dwork and van Pelt, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present*, pp. 55–9.
- 42 *The Great War* (BBC Production, 1964), episode 4.
- 43 N. Davies, *God's Playground. Volume II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 447–51.
- 44 Dwork and van Pelt, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present*, p. 126; M. Treganza (personal communication); Lanzmann, *Shoah*.
- 45 Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 31.
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- 50 A. Galles, *Fourteen Stations*. One of a number of websites where the exhibition can be viewed is <http://fermi.phys.ualberta.ca/~amk/galles/index.html>

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- 52 See J. Gulczynski, *Obóz Smierci w Chełmnie nad Nerem* (Konin: Muzeum Okręgowe, 1991), photograph in Annex, p. 15.
- 53 Interview with George Steiner, *Kaleidoscope*, BBC Radio 4 (July 1993).
- 54 R. Hoess, *Commandant of Auschwitz* (London: Pan, 1961), pp. 101–2.
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- 57 U. Keller, ed., *The Warsaw Ghetto in Photographs* (New York: Dover, 1984), p. x.
- 58 For example, the collection of photographs in Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main, ‘*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*’ (Vienna: Locker Verlag, 1990).
- 59 Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 73.
- 60 P. Collison, *The Cutteslowe Walls: A Study in Social Class* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).
- 61 Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary*, pp. 133–5.
- 62 A. Nowodworski and M. Treganza (personal communication). After liberation Mr Nowodworski played in the former theatre space and storage depot with his brother on their bikes, their father having been appointed librarian at the university. Remnants of clothes still lay around.
- 63 B. Helfgott (personal communication).
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- 66 R. Glazar, *Trap with a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995).
- 67 D. Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (London: Vintage, 1991), p. 142.
- 68 O. Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), chapter 4.
- 69 T. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 60.
- 70 Klee, Dressen and Riess, ‘*Those Were the Days*’, pp. 225–48. All the words that Paul McCartney wrote for the song ‘*Those Were the Days*’ could happily have been sung by camp guards; only the tune would have to have been altered to match their musical tastes.
- 71 Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*.
- 72 Browning, *Ordinary Men*, chapter 5; the fullest set of those photographs I have found is in Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, *Zagłada Żydowska Polskiego* (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1945), pp. 55–67.
- 73 J.E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 128.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 127–8.
- 75 Quoted in S.R. Horowitz, ‘But is it Good for the Jews?’, in *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*, ed. Y. Loshitzky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 137. For a fuller discussion about moral landscapes and the Holocaust, see Charlesworth, ‘A Corner’.

11

Britain, the United States and the Holocaust: In Search of a Historiography

Tony Kushner

Hugo Gryn was a teenage Auschwitz survivor who came to Britain in a scheme to help young victims of the Nazi camps recuperate after the war. Subsequently, he became a reform rabbi working in the United States and India, before becoming a much loved religious leader inside and outside the Jewish community in Britain.¹ In his last speech, proclaiming that ‘asylum issues are an index of our spiritual and moral civilization’, Hugo Gryn stated:

How you are with the one to whom you owe nothing, that is a grave test and not only as an index of our tragic past. I always think that the real offenders at the half-way mark of the century were the bystanders, all those people who let things happen because it didn’t really affect them directly.²

Hugo Gryn particularly had in mind the historical example of the SS *St Louis*, the German cruise ship, which set off from Hamburg in the summer of 1939 carrying over 1,000 German Jews. The story has subsequently become infamous. Those on board held Cuban visas but when arriving there all but a tiny fraction were refused entry. The captain of the ship deliberately sailed close to the coast of Miami, but the US authorities refused to give the passengers permission to land, as did several South American countries. The ship returned to Europe. Britain, Holland, Belgium and France took the majority of the *St Louis* refugees, but only a handful outside Britain survived the war, caught up in the whirlwind that was the Holocaust. There were other such ships carrying refugees in the late 1930s and many more refugees refused entry to a number of countries using old and new regulations against the entry of aliens. The *St Louis*, however, has become one of the most enduring symbols of what is perceived as the failure of rescue before the Second World War and the unwanted status of the Jewish refugees. There have been many journalistic accounts of its journey, a feature-length film, *The Voyage of the Damned* (1976), as well as award-winning

documentaries.³ The *St Louis* also occupies a major place in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.⁴

The eventual murder of the majority of the *St Louis* refugees provokes much anger: here were people who could have been taken in by many different countries had they been willing to do so, including, of course, the US: 'Urgent appeals were made to the [US] State Department, which decided not to intervene. The passengers sent a telegram to President Roosevelt. It went unanswered; the White House maintained its silence on refugee issues.'⁵ To Hugo Gryn it was an indictment not only of the contemporaries, but also of those who had not learned any lessons from the episode: 'It is a very painful and I have to say this, it is an unacceptable fact, that half a century later, we, and by we I include our political leaders as well, we act as if nothing happened. It's unacceptable.'⁶ Much more, it would seem, has been at stake in the case of the *St Louis*, or even of the Jewish refugee crisis during the 1930s, than is normal in confronting the past.

The first starting point in an historiographical overview of Britain, the US and the Holocaust is that it was far from inevitable that it would develop as extensively as was the case. There have been, for example, genocides and mass murders as well as larger refugee movements that have received little or no attention from historians and others. Moreover, in relation to the Holocaust as a whole, Britain and the US, as prominent liberal democracies during the 1930s and, from the US's entry into the war, the two leading western Allies, are relatively tangential, not, of course, to the diplomatic and military narrative of war, but to the Nazi genocide that took place. Most obviously, they were not the perpetrators: the recent attempt, for example, to connect the massive American computer company, IBM, to the destruction process has been utterly lacking in historical or ethical balance and proportion.⁷ As bystanders, Britain and the US lacked the physical immediacy of the occupied nations, neutrals and non-belligerents to help. In relation to the victims of persecution, again both countries were peripheral. Post-1945 in the war crimes trials and in popular culture, a disproportionate space was found for British and American citizens who suffered under the Nazi regime as non-combatants.⁸ While it is true that both countries before the war and the US after it were major places of emigration for refugees and survivors of the Third Reich, it remains true that in terms of the victims as a whole continental Europe itself was the focal point as a vast killing field. So what is behind the intense and growing interest in British and American responses to the plight of the Jews during the Third Reich?

The escalating fascination with the Holocaust is clearly one necessary but not sufficient reason why the subject matter of Britain, the US and the Holocaust has developed. At an artistic and cultural level, representations of the Holocaust, especially in film, history and literature, have never been so intense and pervasive. More generally, in the western world (and increasingly beyond) the Holocaust is now commonly perceived as one, if not the key, defining moment

of the twentieth century, raising the essential moral questions about human nature and the nature of modernity.

It is important to remember, however, that the concept of the Holocaust as a particular component of the Second World War or more generally of the Nazi era, involving specifically the planned extermination of European Jewry, took many years to evolve, a process that was uneven and is still perhaps incomplete. One example of this gradual evolution has emerged from one of the recent attempts to achieve compensation not from a perpetrator nation, but a so-called bystander, Britain. The deposit accounts of continental Jews who placed their assets in British banks were confiscated by the government during the war as belonging to citizens of enemy nations or enemy occupied countries. After the war, attempts by those who survived or their relatives to reclaim the money or property were for the large part refused by the British government. Being Jewish was not enough to prove that one was a victim of the Nazis rather than an enemy alien. As one British Treasury official put it, 'I do not know how you will distinguish between the Jew who has been persecuted because of his race or religion, and one who has been sent to a concentration camp for committing a criminal offence against the law of his country.'⁹ Moreover, experience of slave labour, hiding and the ghettos was not proof of having suffered persecution. The category of victim was limited to some of those who had died or survived the concentration camps, the definition of which was vague but undoubtedly heavily influenced by perceptions of the images of the liberated camps such as Buchenwald and Belsen.¹⁰

In similar fashion, in 1945 the British Home Office allowed in on a temporary basis and after much campaigning a very small number of child survivors, but stipulated that they must not all be Jewish and that they should come from one or two named camps, particularly, again, Belsen. Not enough children could be found in these specific camps, so the scheme was broadened, enabling those like Hugo Gryn to be granted temporary entry.¹¹ In short, the immediate legacy of the images of 1945 and the subsequent war crimes trials was largely that of essentially undifferentiated Nazi atrocities. There was little interest in the victims and only a short-lived concern to confront and deal with the perpetrators of atrocities. In the new Cold War logic, the latter were soon transformed from the German nation as a whole into very specific parts of it. In essence the higher echelons of the Nazi state structure were blamed, especially the 'criminal' SS who could be labelled as exceptional monsters, mad (wo)men or sadists, unrelated to everyday folk like 'us'.¹² The concept of the bystander was all but lacking at this time, an absence of consideration eased by the American, British, Soviet, French and Polish involvement in the immediate post-1945 war crimes trials. The world was divided between the Nazis and those who had resisted them, even if this meant, particularly in the case of France, creating a national myth that has been so powerful it is still fully to be overcome.¹³

Perceptions more than fifty years later have, however, changed markedly. Rightly, much time and energy have been spent researching the motivations of the murderers, and the estimate of the number of those involved was growing ever larger well before the sensational work of Daniel Goldhagen was published. We may never know why so many ordinary people agreed to take part in the 'Final Solution', but it is clear that choice played a bigger role than was previously acknowledged. The detailed scholarship revealing the sheer scale of those involved and the greater freedom to say no might have further undermined the idea that genocide was carried out by two-dimensional, leather-clad, devils. Nevertheless, the huge popular success of Goldhagen's imagery of bloodthirsty Germans acting as 'willing executioners', in contrast to the relatively unknown work of Christopher Browning and his understated portrayal of mundane 'ordinary men' in a police battalion stumbling into mass murder, suggests that we still prefer our killers to be presented as evil 'sadists'.¹⁴ More strikingly, the victim has gone from total obscurity, or as an object simply there to represent the evils done by the perpetrator, to one of major interest even if still not occupying centre stage. Survivor evidence was largely excluded from the post-war trials¹⁵ and in many countries where they settled, treatment of the surviving Jews was shabby and even violent; they were often seen as an embarrassment and their stories ignored or suppressed.¹⁶ Steven Spielberg's project, the 'Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation', founded in the 1990s, which aimed to interview as many survivors as possible is one illustration of change,¹⁷ although how to incorporate the voices of the victims other than as rather tokenistic illustrations of what the Nazis did, remains an unsolved dilemma in historical writing on the Holocaust and in the growing number of museums devoted to the subject.¹⁸ Considerations of gender, age, religious and political background, to name but a few, have started to be addressed, complicating the 'victim' category even when confined to consideration of the Jews. Nevertheless, 'victim' is now firmly established as the second part of the tripartite division of the principal actors of the Holocaust. The third, of course, is the 'bystander', as unquestioned on a popular level today as it was absent from consideration in 1945.

The recent Goldhagen–Browning debate about the importance or otherwise of antisemitism and/or Germanness in the motivation of the murderers, as much as the fraught controversies of the 1950s and 1960s about alleged Jewish passivity and collaboration, show the power of Holocaust scholarship to stir up deep emotions regarding perpetrators and victims. But it is, perhaps, the role of the bystander which has caused the greatest soul-searching and anger in recent years. Indeed, it must be suggested that it is the popular division of the Holocaust into the neat categories of perpetrator/victim/bystander¹⁹ that is fundamental to why it is seen as raising all the fundamental moral questions of our age.²⁰ There is no serious doubting the horror and scale of the crime and little questioning of the impact on the victims and, finally, few exceptions to a general

awareness that little or nothing was done to stop it happening by those who stood by. The moral concern about bystanders comes out of the rather complacent assumption that few of us will become perpetrators, and an equal optimism that we won't become victims, while at the same time we are aware that in an age of almost instant global communication, we are all witnessing, even if only through the media, the genocides, ethnic cleansing and other manifestations of extreme racism that besmirch the contemporary world, or failing, as Hugo Gryn desperately urged, to help the tens of millions of refugees across the world. However, whereas the ambiguities and contradictions of human nature make the study of bystanders so fascinating, significant and ultimately relevant to today, there seems to be little desire so far for this to be brought out in studies of the Holocaust.

Put bluntly, we like our bystanders to be as bifurcated as the categories of victim and perpetrator. Given the centrality of the Holocaust in contemporary philosophical and theoretical debates about the nature of humankind in the modern age and beyond, this is a dangerous if understandable development. For rather than refining our understanding of the complexity of human responses during the Holocaust, the bystander category is in danger of aiding the tendency to see the subject in Manichean terms, as a symbol of mass evil alongside much less prevalent absolute good (with the emphasis put on the latter to enable hope for the future). As Shoshana Felman has written in relation to the literary critic Paul de Man and the heated reaction to his exposure as a collaborator in Belgium during the war:

[he] was 'Nazi': in denouncing him as one of 'them', we believe we place ourselves in a different zone of ethics and of temporality; 'we', as opposed to 'they', are on the right side of history: a side untouched, untainted by the evil of the Holocaust.²¹

Even Zygmunt Bauman, in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, which throughout strips away the power of individual agency, concludes by praising those people who 'chose moral duty over the rationality of self-preservation.... Evil is not all-powerful. It can be resisted.'²² Returning again to the *St Louis*, the dangers of treating it as a simplistic morality tale are never far from the surface.

The fact that the real villains are essentially off stage – the Nazis are responsible for the urgency to escape but are rarely part of the main storyline once the ship has left Hamburg – enables others to take their place as the villains of the piece, who are contrasted to the hero of the narrative in the self-contained world of the *St Louis*. In the words of Hugo Gryn: 'The only decent person in the whole story is the German captain of the ship. He tries whatever he can. He negotiates with the United States, with Columbia, with Chile, with Paraguay, with Argentina, but nothing comes of it. So the ship recrosses the Atlantic and

comes back to Europe.²³ The power of the emotional and ethical engagement with the Holocaust has led, as will emerge, to ongoing difficulties within historiography, especially in developing one that is neither accusatory nor defensive nor simplistic in outlining motives for action or inaction. The specific historiography itself, however, developed slowly and unevenly in Britain and the US.

During the war a group of dedicated campaigners in Britain, especially the MP Eleanor Rathbone and the publisher Victor Gollancz, attempted to mobilize public opinion in Britain to force the government and international bodies to recognize and publicize the plight of European Jewry and from there to take whatever action was possible to help rescue the 'victims of Nazi terror'. Their campaigns and proposals for action were influential on Jewish and non-Jewish activists in the US.²⁴ Although campaigners on both sides of the Atlantic were prolific, their work and writings were largely forgotten in the immediate post-war period; they themselves rarely referred to their activities. Outside Zionist circles both within and without Palestine, for whom Britain was now 'enemy number 1', there was no mention of the campaigners and the embarrassing issues they had raised in the war. In the newly independent state of Israel the indifference and antipathy of the Anglo-American world to the fate of the Jews became part of national mythology. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's response to the call for restraint from leading left-wingers in Britain at the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956 makes this clear:

We still recall that there were leaders of the Labour Party who did not take seriously Hitler's threat physically to exterminate the Jewish race until it was too late. Six million Jews perished in the gas chambers of the Nazi dictator. I am sorry that you do not see the danger of the Fascist dictator of Egypt.²⁵

In contrast, in Britain and the US, a more comfortable counter-mythology developed that nothing was known and that only with the liberation of the camps did knowledge become available. Ironically, the liberation of the western camps, rather than prompting questions of what could have been done to stop them, was more often than not used to show the moral certainty of the British and American war effort. Images from the camps were 'proof positive' that it had indeed been a 'just war', most famously summarized by the remarks of General Dwight Eisenhower when entering Ohrdruf concentration camp on 12 April 1945: 'We are told that the American soldier does not know what he was fighting for. Now, at least he will know what he is fighting against.' These words are given prominence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum accompanying images of the camp liberations; indeed, Philip Gourevitch has commented that 'Ike's remarks could serve as the museum's motto'.²⁶

In the early historiography of the Holocaust, in works such as Gerald Reitlinger's *The Final Solution* (1953), the only major mention of the western allies was in

the form of camp liberators and even then, showing a rather parochial approach, focusing on the British army's liberation of Belsen. Only two paragraphs were devoted to the responses of the Anglo-American states to the Holocaust. Reitlinger acknowledged the State Department's 'positive obstruction' of rescue measures during the war, but he rejected the possibility that the Foreign Office was equally uncooperative.²⁷ The only major rival to Reitlinger's narrative of the Holocaust was Leon Poliakov's *Harvest of Hate*, originally published in 1951. Poliakov acknowledged that Allied responses to the persecution of the Jews would be revealing, 'though they constitute one of the least known aspects of the history of World War II'.²⁸

The contesting of this mythology – Anglo-America as liberators or indifferent bystanders – has taken a long time to gather momentum and is still far from complete, although half a century on from Poliakov a case could be made for it being one of the best researched areas of the Second World War. Both the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington and the Imperial War Museum Holocaust Gallery in London start or end with the respective American and British soldiers liberating western concentration camps in the spring of 1945. Nevertheless, beyond these initial images they both have critiques of the American/British responses to the Jews' plight during the Nazi era, especially the Washington museum with its focus on the *St Louis*. There is still a problem, however, with the prism through which they confront the role of these particular bystanders, which in turn reflects a continuing problem in the historiography.²⁹

In both Britain and the US the first books on Allied responses to the Holocaust were crude, semi-journalistic and angry in tone.³⁰ By the early 1960s the comforting myth of ignorance had grown to create a reassuringly safe cocoon against self-reflection at the time when the concept of the Holocaust as a separate entity, largely through the Eichmann trial, was starting to emerge. In a polemical way the Eichmann trial had raised the particular issues of the Allied failure to bomb Auschwitz as well as the possibility of negotiating with the Nazis over Hungarian Jewry in 1944. In similar vein, books such as those by Arthur Morse and to a lesser extent David Wyman in the United States and Andrew Sharf in Britain attempted to shatter the illusion that nothing was known or that nothing could have been done.³¹ The mood of complacency marked by Reitlinger gave way to one of accusation. If Reitlinger, an assimilated British Jew, was very much part of the establishment, some of the literature emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s was marked by a growing ethnic pride and self-confidence on behalf of American Jewry in which it was possible to attack the memory of political icons such as Roosevelt and challenge the myth of American exceptionalism with regard to antisemitism. It was aided by the release of government papers, sooner in the United States than in Britain, which outlined reactions and responses to the plight of the Jews during the 1930s and the Second World

War. Morse's book especially, written by an investigative journalist, was marketed in a sensational way. It was the 'untold and shocking account of the apathy shown, and the deliberate obstructions placed by the USA and Britain in the way of attempts to save the Jewish people from Hitler's "final solution"'.³² Yet the tendency towards condemnation, which was understandable as the emotional subject was 'rediscovered' during the 1960s, has still, several decades later, not disappeared. Indeed, the anger has resurfaced more recently with campaigns for legal redress evidenced by the successful lobbying of the Holocaust Education Trust in Britain and in the US by its much more powerful equivalents in the world of organized American Jewry. The moral outrage has been reinforced in the former case by the willingness of the media to give attention to material released from the Public Record Office and National Archives the details of which, particularly relating to state knowledge of the Holocaust during the war, including within the intelligence services, has often already been reported.³³

Nevertheless, in Britain through the 1970s and 1980s more detailed scholarship emerged, even if it was less intensive because of the slow release of government papers and also the limited interest in the Holocaust in society and culture as a whole. In the US the first sophisticated analysis was provided by Henry Feingold in *The Politics of Rescue* (1970). He, in contrast to Morse, wished to 'move beyond the moral aspect to examine the political context in which America's response was conceived'.³⁴ The first serious work on Britain, tellingly by an American (in fact, an American Jew), was A.J. Sherman's *Island Refuge*, covering British refugee policy from 1933 to the outbreak of war. Using what was still a relatively limited range of government papers available in the public domain, Sherman provided a solid narrative of official responses to the Jewish refugee crisis. Yet even in Sherman's self-conscious desire to concentrate on description, it is telling that his conclusion is entitled 'A Balance Sheet'. Indeed, in his much-quoted final paragraph Sherman states that when 'Great Britain's refugee policy [of the 1930s] is] compared with that of other countries it emerges ... as comparatively compassionate, even generous'.³⁵

It is the 'balance sheet' approach that has continued to dominate the historiography since Sherman's book was published in 1973. Sherman in particular compared Britain to the US, for example, setting the failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill to bring 20,000 refugee children in 1939 against the success of the *Kindertransports* which brought 10,000 children to Britain before the outbreak of war. He therefore rejected the charge 'of indifference to the fate of refugees from the Nazi regime'.³⁶ Subsequently, little genuine national comparative work has been carried out on the 1930s or the Second World War with regard to the liberal democracies. Instead, the balance sheet metaphor has been applied within individual nation-states in relation to what was done, and not done, for the Jews persecuted by the Nazis.

Returning to museum representations of the Holocaust in the Anglo-American world, anti-refugee sentiment, including within the state structure, is included in the two national museums, but is done so in a self-conscious desire to show fairness alongside the help offered to the persecuted. Indeed, the Imperial War Museum convened an emergency meeting when finalizing its text and display, to debate whether the exhibition was either too critical or too uncritical of British responses.³⁷

Reviewing the literature in 1987, Michael Marrus stated that 'there is a strong tendency in historical writing on bystanders to the Holocaust to condemn, rather than to explain'. He added that 'Historians have quite properly combed the seamy underside of Allied and Jewish policy, searching through records sometimes deliberately hidden from view. But they should take care in using such material, to give contemporaries a fair hearing.'³⁸ The key is to understand why they reacted and responded in the way they did, not avoiding the moral issues raised, but doing so by exploring the possibilities of choice that were available to contemporaries, inside and outside of government.

The early work on Allied responses to the plight of the Jews was marred not just by its accusatory nature but by its lack of any wider sense of context. There was little awareness of either the dynamics of the bystander nation or the chronological development and confused nature of Nazi antisemitic policy. Morse's book, for example, maintained 'that both the State Department and the Foreign Office were well aware of Hitler's intentions [to exterminate the Jews] long before the war'.³⁹ In contrast, the more detailed research that has taken place in the last 25 years has had greater success in dealing with questions of *realpolitik* – the other concern of government departments and Jewish organizations in the Nazi era. Even more fruitful has been the longer-term approach to the mentality of governments and their state and legal apparatus, especially involving immigrants and refugees, showing how they had evolved *before* the Nazi rise to power and the continuity or otherwise after 1933. In this respect the pioneer work was Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut's (1987) who revealed the continuity of alien policies in the United States after the First World War and throughout the Nazi era.⁴⁰ Even more sophisticated in its understanding of the state apparatus is Louise London's *Whitehall and the Jews* (2000). Feingold's pioneering work had shown the importance of debates within the US state structure. By painstaking analysis of the material available at the Public Record Office, London's research in the British case went much further. A whole range of departments are examined, not just the obvious ones such as the Foreign Office and Home Office. Divisions within as well as between departments and the role of key individual civil servants are highlighted throughout this work. London's book is successful because it understands the complexity of bureaucratic history and the necessity of placing it in political context.⁴¹

It is significant that both Breitman and Kraut and London have extended chronologies, London continuing the story beyond the end of the war. Only through a longer-term perspective can the practices and mentalities of the state apparatus be outlined and changes from normal procedures become apparent. It is still the case, however, that far less progress has been made in understanding the cultural, societal and ideological underpinnings of either state or society's responses to the plight of the persecuted Jews in the liberal democratic and other bystander nations. In this respect, one of the greatest barriers to progress is the use or avoidance of the term 'antisemitism'.

Michael Marrus, in his survey of literature on bystanders, states that 'Generally speaking, few historians believe antisemitism to have been decisive in blocking aid to the Jews', a view from which he does not seem to dissent.⁴² Although early scholarship in the United States by authors such as David Wyman and Saul Friedman had placed emphasis on official antisemitism, even they placed it alongside other factors.⁴³ Bernard Wasserstein in his follow-up to Sherman's account of British government responses, taking the story through the Second World War, provides what is still the dominant analysis, blaming 'bureaucratic indifference' for the fact that there was 'little to celebrate in [his] account of British policy towards the Jews of Europe between 1939 and 1945'. Wasserstein, while not ignoring what he called 'the tinge of anti-Semitism in the words of some British officials and politicians', states bluntly that 'anti-Semitism does not by itself explain British conduct...conscious anti-Semitism should not be regarded as an adequate explanation of official behaviour'.⁴⁴

The problem here is one of context and definition. The list of self-identifying antisemites in twentieth-century Anglo-America would hardly enter the hundreds.⁴⁵ What do we mean by antisemitism in a liberal democratic context? The easiest answer is to concentrate on the extreme – for example, fascists such as Oswald Mosley in Britain or Father Coughlin in the United States, who could be seen to be obsessed by the Jewish peril. Racism in Britain particularly has been and continues to be blamed on such extremists, helping to avoid confrontation with a wider problem. Ultimately, such Nazis and neo-Nazis can be seen to be merely imitating those on the diseased continent; indeed, not really English at all. Similarly, it has been argued that the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC distances rather than bridges the gulf between the United States and Europe, the former being a place of refuge and the latter a place of persecution.⁴⁶

Throughout the discourse of government officials reproduced by Sherman, Wasserstein and others it is apparent that the Jewishness of the victims of Nazism as potential refugees to Britain, elsewhere in the empire and Palestine, or as other recipients of British support, mattered. The same is true of the work of Breitman and Kraut in the case of the United States and their treatment of senior State Department officials such as Breckinridge Long, whose 'stubborn

embrace of law and regulation in the light of the Holocaust's reality was typical of a public servant wearing the blinders of bureaucratic responsibility'.⁴⁷ But neither Sherman, who rejected the term 'indifference', nor Breitman and Kraut and Wasserstein, who embraced it, were comfortable analysing the implications of that contemporary bureaucratic confrontation with Jewishness. In *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (1994), I attempted to explore this question through the prism of the dominant ideology and culture of Britain and the US in the Nazi era and beyond. Antisemitism, or other forms of racism, have often been explained as due to the absence or relative weakness of liberalism. But the situation in Britain, the US and many other liberal democracies in the 1930s and 1940s was more complex. Assimilation was still seen as the solution to the so-called 'Jewish Question' in liberal thinking. If antisemitism persisted in the modern, enlightened world, it was because Jews insisted on retaining their difference, or rather went beyond a religious identity that was perceived as being compatible with national belonging. The more different the Jews, the more dangerous – hence the hostility of British and many other officials to Jews from eastern Europe, one which often went alongside praising the much more integrated Jewish communities of western Europe.⁴⁸

In short, a fundamental ambivalence existed – genuine anguish at the violence of Nazi antisemitism, but a failure to confront why it was happening and a tendency to blame the victims if not support the severity of the punishment; belief in Britain and the United States that they were genuinely tolerant societies that prided themselves on the help they had offered refugees in the past, but a fear of letting in other than carefully selected individual Jews, or individual groups of Jews, lest they bring antisemitism with them.⁴⁹ As Long put it: 'We have been generous – but there are limitations.'⁵⁰ Henry Feingold, in his analysis of the United States and the Holocaust, suggested perceptively that 'The villain of the piece, in the last analysis, may not be the State Department or even certain officials but the nature of the Nation-state itself'.⁵¹ The problem for ethnic minorities throughout the twentieth century and beyond, however, was how the nation-state would deal with difference. Jewish difference, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, was perceived as particularly problematic by both politicians and state bureaucracies.

What is fascinating in both countries is how at particular moments more generous policies could emerge. At the now infamous international conferences on refugees at Evian (July 1938) and Bermuda (1943) neither Britain nor the United States was willing to highlight publicly the specific plight of the Jews or to change fundamentally their entry procedures. At other times, however, politicians and civil servants came up with initiatives that enabled major rescue and relief. In Britain, for example, between 1933 and 1938 highly selective immigration policies dominated. The policy was, in the words of a Ministry of Labour official, 'not to vary the aliens administration in favour of or against the refugees'.⁵²

In the twelve months before war, however, entry was opened up through procedural changes, with some 40,000 Jews allowed entry. Nevertheless, this was followed by a policy of almost total restriction to be adhered to during the conflict and the years that followed.⁵³

How do we explain this relatively large number admitted in the last months of peace? Undoubtedly British guilt after Munich, especially after the moral integrity of appeasement was totally destroyed in the light of *Kristallnacht*,⁵⁴ alongside the closing of the doors to Palestine, explain why procedures were eased. But other factors were at work enabling the movement to be defended along liberal grounds. First, almost all those allowed entry to Britain were on temporary visas – that way they would not create a permanent Jewish ‘problem’. Second, they would be spread out and retrained so as to normalize them – whether as trainee agricultural workers, domestic servants or nurses. It is no accident that Ernest Bevin, who, as Foreign Secretary in the 1940s, was to exclude Jews from Britain, was very positive, as general secretary of the world’s largest trade union during the 1930s, about the entry of several thousand German Jewish youngsters who were to be trained in agricultural techniques in the British countryside with the hope that they would practise their new skills in Palestine or elsewhere.⁵⁵

Bevin is worth a little more attention in order to tease out further the problems of utilizing the term ‘antisemitism’ in a context of a liberal democratic world. After the war Bevin became a hate figure in parts of the Jewish world, especially in the United States. His opposition to Jewish immigration to Palestine and insensitivity to the Holocaust survivors gave rise to the perception that he was motivated ‘by a personal hatred of Jews’. As Alan Bullock, Bevin’s biographer, comments, ‘From this sprang the stereotype of him as the latest in the long series of persecutors of the Jews beginning with Titus and Haman and continuing down to Hitler and Himmler.’ Subsequently, ‘pop’ psychology has been employed to explain Bevin’s alleged hatred of Jews as coming from his troubled childhood. His crudeness and insensitivity are undoubtedly – he simply made no attempt to empathize with the horrors inflicted so recently on the Jewish people.⁵⁶

What is remarkable about Bevin is that he stubbornly stuck to a classic liberal position on the Jews. Such analysis of Bevin, however, has been regarded as ‘untenable’ and ‘far-fetched’. If ‘liberal’ is seen *per se* as an absolute good, then the surprise at the label attached to him can be understood.⁵⁷ But what Bevin wanted was for the Jews to return to their various ‘homelands’ rather than attempt to escape their countries of citizenship, or former citizenship, and, in so doing, jump to ‘the head of the queue’ to leave continental Europe. Jews should return ‘home’ and become once again good Germans or Poles and so on. In 1945 and 1946, as Foreign Secretary, Bevin allowed a small number of young Jews to come to Britain as long as the men would go on the land and the women become nurses. He wanted them to become useful and to stop an

'undesirable concentration of them in towns'. When this failed, unsurprisingly given their physical state, the Jewish survivors were kept out while at the same time the British government enabled hundreds of thousands of continental non-Jews, some of whom had been Nazi collaborators, to enter because they were seen as desirable, assimilable immigrants.⁵⁸

Bevin's policies, however, followed on from those of his rival and fellow Labour cabinet minister Herbert Morrison, who had been Home Secretary from 1940 to the end of the Second World War. Both men were sincere anti-Nazis at home and abroad, and Morrison on a personal level was surrounded by Jewish friends and work colleagues.⁵⁹ On the one hand, the label 'antisemite' does not seem to help other than to provide a neat but ultimately superficial explanation of their policies. On the other, to reject the possibility that Jewishness had anything to do with official thinking avoids confronting the contemporary obsession with the subject.⁶⁰ Indeed, the almost total restrictions on Jewish refugees from September 1939 to 1950 enforced by the British government has to be explained, and this can be done only by analysing how liberal ambivalence, especially the idea that Jews bring antisemitism with them, was taken to its logical extreme, becoming in itself ingrained in 'bureaucratic mentality and practice'.⁶¹

The reality is that most responses from government, state and public in Britain and the United States were marked by a fundamental ambivalence to Jews and Jewish suffering. Not only is ambivalence difficult to pigeonhole, but it is fluid and dynamic, able to respond to different impulses and demands in an unpredictable manner. During the war and in contrast to the pre-war months, British officials learned to deal with calls to aid Jews in the most universal way possible (that is to win the war and reject the idea that Jews particularly were being singled out for persecution). In the United States, however, pressure from Jewish and non-Jewish campaigners outside Congress, and from within the state structure in the Treasury Department, led to the formation of the War Refugee Board in January 1944. Although the word 'Jew' was not incorporated in its title, the major function of the War Refugee Board (WRB) was to save Jewish lives. Indeed, it has been claimed that through its work over 100,000 Jews were helped, especially through relief work in Hungary. A recent account has attempted to debunk the idea that the efforts of the WRB saved Jewish lives: 'It is entirely possible that a searching and critical view of the role of the Board would conclude that the War Refugee Board *actually rescued no Jews at all.*'⁶² Such a critique is simplistic and reflects a general lacuna in the existing historiography that 'In discussions about the Allied response to the Holocaust, scholars have underplayed the relief question in favour of focusing on the question of immigration and rescue'.⁶³ The WRB was relatively marginal within the US state apparatus and most of its resources came from Jewish sources. Nevertheless, its aim was particularistic; it focused on the persecuted and not, as was the official

policy of both the British and US governments, on the overall war effort and 'winning the war first'.⁶⁴

Before the war public pressure in Britain, especially after *Kristallnacht*, had helped open up entry. Tens of thousands of ordinary people were involved in refugee work in Britain during 1939, many in relation to the child refugees. Not surprisingly, however, given the previous hostility, the treatment refugees received on entering Britain was mixed. Not all could confront their own ambiguities about Jews, but it did not stop them demanding that the persecuted be allowed entry.⁶⁵ Liberal ambivalence within the state and the public enabled both restrictionism and generous rescue policies to succeed within bystander nations at different times and different places.

It is also through what Bryan Cheyette has called a 'semitic discourse' operating in liberal culture that news of the persecution of the Jews was responded to.⁶⁶ The first major account of western Allied knowledge of the Holocaust was provided by the right-wing Zionist scholar Andrew Sharf, in his 1964 book on the British press and the Holocaust. Sharf's work was part of the accusatory literature of the 1960s. He argued that the press 'knew well and printed accurately exactly what was happening', but that nothing was done with that knowledge. His explanation was 'an inveterate British inability to grasp imaginatively what could happen on the continent of Europe', which in turn was due to an antipathy towards Jews and the 'psychological commonplace that, with the best will in the world, it is hard to grasp the meaning of suffering wholly outside one's immediate experience'.⁶⁷

A more detailed analysis covering both Britain and the United States was not produced until Walter Laqueur's study, published in 1980. Laqueur, following Sharf, emphasized the psychological factors hindering understanding, posing the question of 'what is the meaning of "to know" and "to believe"'.⁶⁸ Psychological factors cannot be dismissed, but they have been highlighted at the expense of a wider cultural context. If, for example, contemporary discourse regarded the 'Jew' as powerful, untrustworthy and alien, it becomes less surprising that news of their persecution might be rejected as propaganda or seen to be irrelevant to the concerns of those fighting total war. Instead, a somewhat mystical approach has been developed in the historiography of contemporary Anglo-American understanding of the Holocaust with titles such as *The Terrible Secret* or *Beyond Belief*.⁶⁹ Anglo-American knowledge of Auschwitz particularly has been subject to ahistorical and incomplete research, overstating its role in the 'Final Solution' at the expense of camps such as Treblinka, Sobibor, Bełżec and Chełmno in 1942. Such scholarship has ignored what was known about Auschwitz through Polish and other contemporary sources, leading to the misleading claim of Martin Gilbert that the camp was 'one of the best kept secrets of the war'.⁷⁰ Too much research in this area of knowledge and understanding has taken place in a contextual vacuum – in relation to official sources ignoring the

type of records such information came in and in relation to the press utilizing press cuttings that inevitably fail to place such news in the wider setting of the individual newspaper as a whole. On the level of popular understanding, my own work based on extensive scrutiny of contemporary diaries has not been developed.⁷¹ Instead, attention has focused on the information made available to only a handful of people through Anglo-American intelligence intercepts of German signals relating particularly to the killings in the East after the invasion of the Soviet Union. The debate about knowledge has shrunk rather than expanded. It requires a social and cultural history perspective if a less newsworthy but more intellectually productive historiography is to develop.

The failure in much scholarship on Britain and the United States since *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* was published to confront the nature of liberalism and the importance of ambivalence is itself revealing. Some reviewers have engaged in the central argument and quite rightly called for more detailed work to explore much further the nature of liberalism and its relation to nationalism and ethnic difference.⁷² A more common response, however, has been to assume that this is yet another accusatory text that sees 'antisemitism' as the answer to why so little was done, or, paradoxically, to condemn the book for not reaching that conclusion. A similar reception has greeted Louise London's *Whitehall and the Jews*. The desire for black or white explanations is telling. Ambivalent figures are not welcome and there has been an increasing tendency to seek out the moral giants in the bystander worlds whose actions either confirm the weakness of those around them or confirm that ordinary mortals could have done little to help. In 1999 alone, Frank Foley, senior Passport Control Officer in the British embassy in Berlin and Nicholas Winton, a businessman who helped bring refugee children to Britain from Czechoslovakia in 1939, were labelled 'Britain's Schindler'. In both cases market research (accurate as it happens) revealed that this is what the public wanted to hear and read. Crudely constructed renderings of the work of Winton and Foley, as Anne Karpf suggests, 'function as the happy endings of the Holocaust that we impossibly crave'.⁷³

Such tendencies, which seem to be growing in Holocaust commemoration, have many problems associated with them. First, they highlight the role of the major figures in the process, as is the case with Raul Wallenberg, ignoring the very many ordinary people who enabled their actions to have their spectacular success.⁷⁴ Second, they make saints, or angels, both words used to describe Foley, out of these figures, often ignoring their more complex nature and their reasons for engaging in rescue and relief.⁷⁵ We need, in David Cesarani's words, to work towards 'a taxonomy of rescuers' in countries like Britain and the United States.⁷⁶ Third, they allow self-congratulation to become dominant – as illustrated in Britain in 1999 with the plaque unveiled in the House of Commons 'in deep gratitude to the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom for saving

the lives of 10,000 Jewish and other children who fled to this country from Nazi persecution on the Kindertransport 1938–1939.⁷⁷ There is no mention, of course, of the parents who were excluded from this refugee movement. Was this generous in the circumstances or fundamentally inhumane? The question is unanswerable – no balance sheet approach can take away the heartache of separation from the gratitude of life-saving asylum and come up with a meaningful answer.⁷⁸

But the increasing emphasis on gratitude and the help that was provided by the exceptional few has helped enable the success of a revisionism, led in the Anglo-American cases by William Rubinstein in *The Myth of Rescue* (1997). This work argues that during the 1930s, given the circumstances, all that could have been done was done and that in the Second World War itself not one single Jew could have been rescued by the Allies.⁷⁹ Although most academic responses to Rubinstein have so far been critical, popular reviews, especially it has to be said from non-Jews, have been very favourable. Clearly, Rubinstein's work has appealed at an emotional level to many: for those anxious about the moral integrity of the British and American war memory, *The Myth of Rescue* removes any tarnish that in their minds has unfairly developed in recent years. Furthermore, it negates the need for further self-reflection.⁸⁰ Indeed, a detailed survey of attitudes carried out in 2000 revealed that most believed that Britain had been very generous in helping the Jews of Europe during the Nazi era, with a minority of respondents equally simplistically arguing that nothing had been done to help.⁸¹ This brings me to my final point in relation to *The Myth of Rescue*: Rubinstein relieves the reader of any consideration of the dilemmas facing bystanders and its success suggests that he has struck a popular chord. It might be added that Rubinstein's Jewishness has perhaps removed any restraint about saying the 'wrong thing'. As Norman Stone, praising what to him was 'a very good book', stated: 'For the rest of us, common sense and decency make it extremely difficult to offend elderly survivors by suggesting that the picture needs to be amended.'⁸²

But choices *were* there in the British and American worlds. Of course, these need to be placed in their specific contexts, recognizing their particular specific limitations, throughout the Nazi era. Yet there is a danger that rather than confronting the ambivalence, contradictions and ambiguities of contemporaries, we increasingly take refuge in the creation of plaster saints or retreat, as with the obsessive interest in the western intelligence world and its knowledge of the Holocaust, into the comfortable fiction that only the privileged few knew of its existence during the war or that nothing at all could be done to stop mass murder.⁸³ The possibility of bombing Auschwitz in 1944, prominently featured in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, has become a particularly futile area of research with historians analysing whether or not it could have been carried out successfully. The only major context considered in the Auschwitz bombing debate has been the military.⁸⁴ There is a great need to move beyond

the elite world of politicians and the state apparatus and to explore how ordinary people and grassroots organizations responded in the Anglo-American world to the plight of the persecuted (including groups that have so far been ignored such as the Sinti and Roma, and those deemed physically and mentally unfit). There is very little information, for example, on local refugee organizations which were so crucial in rescuing refugees and helping them integrate.

The historiography of the Anglo-American world and the Holocaust, which started tentatively, has taken off in the past thirty years. Reviewing a book on US immigration procedures published in 2001, one of the pioneers of such work, Henry Feingold, commented that he was surprised that there was anything left to say. At the end of his review, however, Feingold acknowledged that the book in question on US consuls and the Jews did indeed show a continuing justification for such research.⁸⁵ Even state responses in Britain and the United States need teasing out further, as exemplified by the superb research of Louise London. By employing a wide-ranging chronology that goes well before and after the Nazi era it is possible to chart continuity and change in alien and refugee policy and avoid the tendency towards ahistorical and emotionally-driven work. Such vertical comparisons need to be placed alongside the horizontal – what was the contemporary response of the Anglo-American world to other crises during the Nazi era? Meridith Hindley, for example, has made important observations comparing responses to the Holocaust and the European hunger crisis during the war.⁸⁶ Through such broadening contexts a genuinely productive historiography could emerge rather than the childish pseudo-debate engineered by William Rubinstein. Away from political and state responses we are still at an early stage in understanding how ordinary people in Britain and the United States, including the Jewish minority, responded to the plight of the persecuted. There is also a need to develop further some of the excellent work that has recently emerged on literary, cultural and artistic responses to the Holocaust in the 'free world' both at the time and subsequently.⁸⁷ Again, by taking a long time span, the complex processes of history and memory can be analysed, revealing much about the making and re-making of British and American identities. Such fresh work, if carried out subtly and away from the accusatory/defensive opposition that has dominated the specific subject matter for too long, may tell us little about the specific history of the Holocaust. It will, however, continue to provide important and unique insights into the workings and dynamics of liberal democratic politics, culture and society.

Notes

- 1 H. Gryn with N. Gryn, *Chasing Shadows* (London: Viking, 2000); obituaries in the national British press, 20 August 1996.
- 2 Rabbi H. Gryn, 'A Moral and Spiritual Index' (London: Refugee Council, 1996).

- 3 The film was directed by Stuart Rosenberg and based on G. Thomas and M. Morgan-Witts, *Voyage of the Damned* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974). In 1996 an award-winning documentary, *The Voyage of the St. Louis*, was directed by Maziar Bahari.
- 4 M. Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), p. 59.
- 5 Ibid., p. 58.
- 6 Gryn, 'A Spiritual and Moral Index'.
- 7 E. Black, *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation* (London: Little, Brown, 2001).
- 8 See D. Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 99. See also T. Kushner, 'The Memory of Belsen', in *Belsen in History and Memory*, ed. J. Reilly et al. (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 190.
- 9 R.R. Whitty of the Custodian of Enemy Property Office, to Gregory of the Trading with the Enemy Department, 9 October 1947, PRO T 236/4312 quoted in *History Notes: British policy towards enemy property during and after the Second World War*, ed. G. Bennett et al. (London: Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1998), p. 37. For a more critical appraisal, see The Holocaust Educational Trust, 'Ex-Enemy Jews': *The Fate of the Assets in Britain of Holocaust Victims and Survivors* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 1997).
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 H. Prestige memorandum, 21 September 1945 in PRO HO 213/618 E409.
- 12 Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*.
- 13 T. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); H. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- 14 E. Klee, W. Dressen and V. Riess, 'Those were the Days': *The Holocaust through the Eyes of the Perpetrators and Bystanders* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991); C.R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); D.J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996).
- 15 Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*.
- 16 Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, introduction and chapter 7; idem, 'Holocaust Survivors in Britain: An Overview and Research Agenda', *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 4, 2 (1995), 147–66.
- 17 See, for example, *The Last Days* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999).
- 18 Among the limited literature examining the nature of Holocaust testimony from ordinary survivors, mainly relating to the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, see G. Hartman, 'Learning from Survivors: the Yale Testimony Project', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 9, 2 (1995), 192–207; L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: the Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991) and S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (London: Routledge, 1992). A less systematic but much more dynamic and sensitive account is provided by H. Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); T. Kushner, 'Oral History at the Extremes of Human Experience: Holocaust Testimony in a Museum Setting', *Oral History*, 29, 2 (2001), 83–94.
- 19 R. Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); it should be added that Hilberg does explore the complexity of and slippage between all these categories.

- 20 An early example was H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963). From the late 1980s there has been a flood of books using the Holocaust to explore the nature of humanity and morality in the modern world written by those with both expertise and little knowledge of the subject matter. See, for example, R.C. Baum, 'Holocaust: Moral Indifference as the Form of Modern Evil', in *Echoes from the Holocaust: Philosophical Reflections on a Dark Time*, ed. A. Rosenberg and G. Meyers (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 53–90; Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989); B. Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); S. Friedländer, *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); O. Bartov, *Murder in our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); M. Burleigh, *Ethics and Extermination: Reflections on Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); N. Geras, *The Contract of Mutual Indifference: Political Philosophy after the Holocaust* (London: Verso, 1998); J. Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999); D. Blumenthal, *The Banality of Good and Evil: Moral Lessons from the Shoah and the Jewish Tradition* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999); and for an overview R. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
- 21 Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, p. 122.
- 22 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 207.
- 23 Gryn, 'A Spiritual and Moral Index'.
- 24 E. Rathbone, *Rescue the Perishing* (London: National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, 1943); V. Gollancz, *Let My People Go* (London: Gollancz, 1943). See Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, Part II, and T. Kushner and K. Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), chapter 6 for an analysis of these activists, their writings and their impact on state and society.
- 25 Ben-Gurion, quoted by J. Adams, *Tony Benn* (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 122.
- 26 Kushner, 'The Memory of Belsen', pp. 181–205; E. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (London and New York: Viking, 1995), pp. 90–1; Berenbaum, *The World Must Know*, pp. 8–9; Philip Gourevitch, 'Nightmare on 15th Street', *The Guardian*, 4 December 1999.
- 27 G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1953), pp. 406–7, 463–9.
- 28 L. Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate* (London: Elek Books, 1956 [orig. in French, 1951]), p. 245.
- 29 Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, p. 193; Berenbaum, *The World Must Know*; Gourevitch, 'Nightmare on 15th Street'; on the Imperial War Museum see D. Bloxham and T. Kushner, 'Exhibiting Racism: Cultural Imperialism, Genocide and Representation', *Rethinking History*, 2, 3 (1998), 353–6; and Kushner, 'Oral History'.
- 30 For example, A. Morse, *While Six Million Died* (New York: Random House, 1968) and A. Sharf, *The British Press and Jews under Nazi Rule* (London: Institute of Race Relations/Oxford University Press, 1964).
- 31 D. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938–1941* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968) represented the first account based on detailed, scholarly research; Sharf, *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule*.
- 32 Morse, *While Six Million Died* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), front cover.
- 33 For recent British press coverage, see D. Staunton, 'Whitehall Sat on 1942 Goebbels Genocide Speech', *Observer*, 21 November 1993; M. Dynes, 'Nazis Wanted British Troops as Guards at Death Camps', *The Times*, 27 November 1993, partly relating to the release of material in PRO HW 1/929; T. Rayment, 'Britain Barred Rescue Plan for

- Doomed Jews', *Sunday Times*, 8 May 1994; on *The Times*, 23 and 30 January 1995 relating to French-Jewish orphans and the British government, relating to Public Record Office papers released many years before; B. Josephs, 'War Papers Show Britain Knew of Mass Slaughter', *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 November 1996; R. Norton-Taylor, 'Code Breakers Reported Slaughter of Jews in 1941', *The Guardian*, 20 May 1997 and similar reports in the national press on the same day; R. Norton-Taylor, 'Britain Stymied Help for Jews in Nazi Camps', *The Guardian*, 21 July 1999; B. Rogers, 'Auschwitz and the British', *History Today*, 49, 10 (1999), 2–3.
- 34 H. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust 1938–1945*, 2nd edition (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980 [first published 1970]), p. ix.
- 35 A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 267.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 264–5. See also Sherman's comments on later historiography in the new edition of his book (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 1–8.
- 37 Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, pp. 216–28; private information concerning the Imperial War Museum. The public controversies that were such a feature of the Washington Museum, which while creating difficulties also made its planning more democratic and openly accountable, have been almost totally absent in the case of the Imperial War Museum.
- 38 M. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), p. 157.
- 39 Morse, *While Six Million Died*, inside cover.
- 40 R. Breitman and A. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
- 41 L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 42 Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, p. 166.
- 43 S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy towards Jewish Refugees, 1938–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), p. 14, which rejects Morse's 'simplistic impression that rampant antisemitism among Washington officials always explained inaction'; Wyman, *Paper Walls*, pp. 14–23 and 210–11 gives more weight to antisemitism.
- 44 B. Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1979), pp. 344, 350–2.
- 45 See C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876–1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979).
- 46 T. Kushner, 'The Fascist as "Other"? Racism and neo-Nazism in Contemporary Britain', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 28, 1 (1994), 27–45; P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
- 47 Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy*, chapter 6, especially p. 145.
- 48 More generally, see B. Williams, 'The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle-Class Manchester and the Jews, 1870–1900', in *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, ed. A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 74–102.
- 49 Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, passim.
- 50 F. Israel, ed., *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long: Selections from the Years 1939–1944* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 128, diary entry for 9 September 1940.
- 51 Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*, 2nd edition, p. xiii.
- 52 Humbert Wolfe minute, 5 March 1935, PRO LAB 8/78.

- 53 Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, Parts 1 and 2.
- 54 N.J. Crowson, *Facing Fascism: The Conservative Party and the European Dictators 1935–1940* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 32–3.
- 55 Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, chapters 2 and 3.
- 56 Ibid., pp. 233–5; A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945–1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 164; see also pp. 165, 182, 277–8. A. Podet, 'The Unwilling Midwife: Ernest Bevin and the Birth of Israel', *European Judaism*, 11, 2 (1977), 35–42 and especially 38 dismisses the charge of antisemitism as 'a spurious issue'. More nuanced is J. Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism, 1917–1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), p. 219 who in analysing Bevin and Attlee concludes that 'If we take antisemitism to imply denial of the rights of Jews to live as equal citizens in non-Jewish society, they were not antisemitic. But if we are speaking of prejudices against Jewish culture, conduct, economic acumen and social "pushiness", they were not innocent.' Nevertheless, Gorny still wants to analyse their 'cool malice' through the prism of the term. Ian Mikardo, a Jewish Labour MP who confronted Bevin in 1947 over Palestine, believed that the Foreign Secretary was a straightforward antisemite and that it related to earlier episodes in his life: I. Mikardo, *Back-Bencher* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), pp. 97–9.
- 57 M. Shefftz in *AJS Review*, 21, 2 (1996), 421–3 and A. Glees in *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 6, 1 (1997), 112–14. For an alternative perspective on the thesis of the book, see S. Beller, "'Your Mark is Our Disgrace": Liberalism and the Holocaust', *Contemporary European History*, 4, 2 (1995), 209–21.
- 58 Bevin's comments are in PRO LAB 8/99; D. Cesarani, *Justice Delayed: How Britain Became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals* (London: Heinemann, 1992).
- 59 B. Donoughie and G.W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison: Portrait of a Politician* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973).
- 60 B. Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and more generally G. Dench, *Minorities in the Open Society: Prisoners of Ambivalence* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). For an insistence on an 'either for or against us' approach to British attitudes towards Jews, limiting antisemitism to extremists, see W. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).
- 61 Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, chapters 5–7; Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, chapter 6.
- 62 W. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (London: Routledge, 1997), chapter 5, especially pp. 196–7.
- 63 M. Hindley, 'Constructing Allied Humanitarian Policy', in 'Bystanders' to the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation, ed. D. Cesarani and P. Levine (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 86.
- 64 Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy*, chapters 9 and 10 provide a positive assessment of the Board. See also D. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), part IV and Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*, chapter 9.
- 65 Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, chapter 5.
- 66 Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew'*.
- 67 Sharf, *The British Press & Jews Under Nazi Rule*, pp. 113, 194, 209.
- 68 W. Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution'* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980), pp. 3, 197 and 'Hitler's Holocaust: Who Knew What, When and How?', *Encounter*, 55 (July 1980), 24.

- 69 Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*; D. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press & the Coming of the Holocaust 1933–1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986). For an alternative approach, see Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, chapter 4.
- 70 M. Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), p. 92 and elsewhere repeats the phrase. The television documentary version directed by Rex Bloomstein in 1982 stresses the elusive nature of Auschwitz even further, and B. Rogers, 'Auschwitz and the British' continues this tradition. For a critique see D. Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).
- 71 Sharf and Lipstadt, for example, relied on press cuttings. For a social history approach, see T. Kushner, 'Different Worlds: British Perceptions of the Final Solution during the Second World War', in *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, ed. D. Cesarani (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 246–67.
- 72 Beller, "Your Mark is Our Disgrace", 218–21; M. Burleigh, 'Synonymous with Murder', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 March 1995.
- 73 M. Smith, *Foley: The Spy Who Saved 10,000 Jews* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), the paperback edition of which announced that it was 'the book that uncovered Britain's Schindler'. The phrase was used earlier on 'Today', BBC Radio 4, 26 February 1999. On the book's immense success, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 July and 19 November 1999. Foley was later granted status by Yad Vashem as a 'Righteous Among Nations'. See *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 October 1999. On Nicholas Winton, see 'Britain's Schindler', BBC Radio 4, 7 June 1999, written and presented by myself. Both the producer and I objected to the title, which was overruled by the BBC. The account of Winton and of British refugee policy was more complex than the title suggested; A. Karpf, 'The Future Prospects for Remembering the Past', *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 July 1999. Winton was subsequently knighted. See *The Guardian*, 1 January 2003.
- 74 Levine, 'From Indifference to Activism', *passim*.
- 75 Smith, *Foley*, pp. vi, 169; *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 July 1999: 'The saintly spy of Berlin'.
- 76 D. Cesarani, 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen: Towards a Taxonomy of Rescuers in a "Bystander" Country: Britain 1933–45', in *'Bystanders' to the Holocaust*, ed. Cesarani and Levine, pp. 28–56.
- 77 *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 June 1999.
- 78 Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, pp. 154–7.
- 79 Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue*.
- 80 In the new introduction to the paperback edition (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 1. Rubinstein comments himself how 'It sharply divided critics, and I became used to reading reviews consisting of either fulsome praise or venomous hostility'. David Cesarani has commented on the division representing also those who have and have not carried out archive work on the subject. On 'Lateline', Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 20 July 1997.
- 81 Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex: Summer Directive 2000, 'Coming to Britain'.
- 82 N. Stone, 'Could the Allies Have Saved Them?', *The Guardian*, 3 July 1997.
- 83 For the increasing fascination in relation to the historiography of the Allies and the Holocaust, see R. Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), a book that has received widespread attention and popular success. See also the second edition of Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999) which includes newly available intelligence material.

- 84 M. Neufeld and M. Berenbaum, eds., *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
- 85 B.-A. Zucker, *In Search of Refuge: Jews and US Consuls in Nazi Germany 1933–1941* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001) reviewed by Feingold in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 16, 2 (2002), 296–8.
- 86 Hindley, 'Constructing Allied Humanitarian Policy', pp. 77–102.
- 87 See, for example, J. Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); J. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987); A. Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); M. Rawlinson, 'This Other War: British Culture and the Holocaust', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 25, 1 (1996), 1–25; T. Kushner, 'The Impact of the Holocaust on British Society and Culture', *Contemporary Record*, 5, 2 (1991), 349–75; A. Parry, "Lost in the Multiplicity of Impersonations?" The Jew and the Holocaust in Post-War British Fiction', *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 8, 3 (1999), 1–22.

12

The Holocaust and the Soviet Union

John Klier

The USSR was second only to Poland as the country where the Holocaust found its greatest number of victims. This tally is still higher if the territories acquired by Soviet aggression before June 1941 – Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Moldova – are included. On the other hand, it was largely due to the exertions of the Soviet Red Army that significant numbers of European Jews were spared German mass murder. The Red Army also had the largest number of Jewish combatants in the Second World War and, consequently, the largest number of Jewish combat losses. During the war the Soviet government was the most active of all the Allied states in publicizing the Holocaust to the wider world. As a final irony, after the war internal politics led the Soviet leadership to erase the Holocaust from historical memory.

Soviet Jews responded to the Holocaust in diverse ways. They were active participants in the armed struggle and played a major role in the dissemination of Soviet anti-Nazi propaganda. Wartime atrocities produced a renewed sense of national identity among Soviet Jews and generated Jewish activism during and immediately after the war. The change in attitude that accompanied the end of the wartime alliance and the rise of the Cold War had a very negative effect on Soviet Jewry. The cultural leadership was subjected to a murderous purge between 1948 and 1952. The increasingly open antisemitism of late Stalinism culminated in the so-called Doctors' Plot of 1953, which had ominous implications for all Soviet Jewry. In the post-Stalin USSR, the memory of the Holocaust was a major component in the reassertion of a Soviet Jewish national identity that had been undermined by Stalinism. The Holocaust also appeared in the cultural sphere: although the theme grew rarer in Soviet literature after the war, it became the focus of a number of important public controversies.

Jews in the USSR on the eve of the Great Patriotic War

In 1939, Soviet Jewry numbered just over three million people, approximately 1.78 per cent of the population.¹ While a process of rapid urbanization was apparent among the Jewish population, many Jews still lived in small towns, the *shtetl* of Jewish lore. The rapid industrialization of the USSR and the need for literate cadres provided numerous economic opportunities for Jews in the Soviet Union, and helped to end the pre-revolutionary concentration of Jews in trade and commerce. Jews were well represented in industry, white-collar (managerial) positions, and in the professions and among state and party cadres. Jews were also increasingly acculturated: the number of Jews declaring a Jewish language to be their mother tongue dropped from 70.4 per cent in the census of 1926 to 39.7 in the census of 1939. Soviet nationality policies, seeking to undercut the appeal of Zionism and the Bund, assigned the Jews the status of a national minority, with all the advantages attached to it in the Soviet system of ethnic politics.² Antisemitism, seen as a weapon of the class enemy, was outlawed. Jews collectively suffered the vicissitudes of Soviet nationality policies. However, most Soviet policies tended to impact on the Jews as Soviet citizens, rather than as Jews.

The acquisition of Eastern Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova as a result of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact brought an additional 1.9 million Jews under Soviet rule. From this period of coerced annexation produced the charge that Jews in the newly occupied territories welcomed the Soviet forces and administration, or that they were prominently represented among the commissars who imposed communist tyranny on unwilling subjects. Whatever the truth of this claim in individual cases, it was hugely exaggerated by Nazi propaganda. Indeed, Jewish political activists of all stripes were among the first victims of the imposition of communist political uniformity. The Jewish bourgeoisie were not spared the consequences of centralized economic controls. Many Jews refused to 'take the Soviet passport' when the annexed areas were formally made part of the Soviet Union.³

The Holocaust in the Soviet Union

Scholars debate the exact time and circumstances surrounding the decision of the Nazi leadership to implement the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe'. There is no question, however, that the German attack on the Soviet Union – triggering what the Soviets called 'The Great Patriotic War' – which commenced on 21 June 1941, was accompanied by numerous instances of the mass murder of Jews. The *Wehrmacht* quickly overran the territories that had been seized by the Soviet Union in 1939. In a number of cities, such as Vilnius, there were murderous pogroms directed against the Jewish population. The

Germans desired such events, anticipated their occurrence and encouraged them when they did not take place spontaneously. The direct involvement of the Germans and imported collaborators remains unclear, but there is no question that some of the local population enthusiastically participated.⁴ Attached to the regular forces of the *Wehrmacht* were special commandos known as the *Einsatzgruppen* whose function was to spread panic and confusion in front-line areas, and to liquidate the most dangerous enemies of the Germans, agents of the Soviet regime ('commissars') and Jews. The *Einsatzgruppen* carried out a number of mass murders in the first days of the war.⁵

Soviet wartime propaganda made the claim that the Soviets had a special policy for the evacuation of Jews from the advancing German forces, because they were seen as an element of the population that was particularly vulnerable. There is no hard evidence for this claim. Many Jews were evacuated because of their technical expertise or their prominence in the party state system, not because of their ethnicity.⁶

The Germans had already developed a system of separating the Jews from the rest of the native population by concentrating them in ghettos. Jews who were not killed in the opening stages of the war were gradually collected and concentrated in ghettos, usually ruled through a German-imposed *Judenrat*. A familiar pattern evolved in Nazi-occupied eastern Europe. Ghettoization was followed by 'selections' to cull the Jewish population through the liquidation of elements who were not judged capable of work.⁷ Most of the murders of ghetto inhabitants took place nearby, in forests or isolated areas. Eventually, the Germans developed the concept of centralized killing centres, camps like Bełżec, Sobibor, Chełmno, Treblinka, or combination work camp and extermination camps, such as Auschwitz, to which victims were transported. At these camps the Germans experimented with a variety of techniques to kill and dispose of their victims. While the extermination camps, especially Auschwitz, have become the symbols of the Final Solution, it should be stressed that many Jews in eastern Europe were killed near their places of settlement, usually by face-to-face killing. Most ghettos in eastern Europe, therefore, had nearby killing grounds.

A number of sites acquired special notoriety because of the scale of the mass murders. The ghetto in Berdichev, with approximately 30,000 inmates, was liquidated between 5 and 16 September 1941. On 29–30 September 1939, virtually the entire Jewish population of Kiev – 33,771 in all – were murdered by small arms and automatic weapons fire at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of the city. The killing site for the Jews of Vilnius and Lithuania was Paneriai (Ponary), a wooded area outside the city. Kaunas (Kovno) and Latvian Jews were murdered at the Ninth Fort, one of a ring of tsarist era fortresses surrounding the city. While Jews comprised the largest single element of victims, the Germans also used these locations to execute communists, prisoners of war, partisans

and anyone who fell foul of the authorities. Before these areas surrendered to the advancing Red Army in 1943–44, the Germans made efforts to burn the corpses and destroy traces of the camps. None the less, ample forensic evidence survived of the mass murder sites. Many contemporaries described the anguish of walking on pathways of ashes and bones.⁸

A comparatively small number of Germans carried out an extraordinary number of murders. In part, they were served by procedures of industrialized killing pioneered by German industrial consultants. They received invaluable assistance from local collaborators. This remains one of the most contentious and under-researched aspects of the Holocaust on Soviet soil. In particular, the motivation of participants is unclear. Very few were motivated by ideology. The much invoked formula of ‘traditional antisemitism’ is altogether too simplistic. Many participants were prisoners of war, who volunteered for such work to escape the feared conditions of German POW camps (only 1,368,849 Soviet POWs out of over 4,000,000 survived German captivity). A major motivation for collaboration and denunciation was probably greed: monetary rewards for turning in Jews and the opportunity to loot Jewish property.⁹

In all, approximately one million Soviet Jewish citizens were killed by the Germans and local collaborators in the period 1941–44. The total number of Soviet citizens – soldiers and civilians – who perished in the Great Patriotic War has been much debated. Stalin, anxious that the USSR not be seen as weakened by the war, put the number at seven million in 1946. In the post-Stalinist era, the common figure was ‘the twenty million victims of Fascism’. Contemporary researchers put the total number of wartime losses at about 25 million.¹⁰

Soviet Jews and the war

As Soviet citizens, Jews participated fully in all branches of the armed forces, including the Red Army. At least 500,000 Jewish men and women saw active service, of whom as many as 200,000 died on the battlefield, of wounds sustained in combat or in German captivity. Jews compiled a service record far out of proportion to their percentage in the population. Comprising less than 2 per cent of the population, 161,000 Jews received war decorations, placing them fourth among all Soviet nationalities.¹¹ This point should be stressed, because there were persistent rumours throughout the war that the Jews were shirking military service, that they ‘fought the war in Tashkent’, far behind the lines. A common grievance of Jews was that their collective heroism was publicized abroad, but not in the Soviet Union itself, where it might give the lie to such claims. Jews were also active in the partisan movement, often the only alternative to life in the ghetto and the recurrent ‘selections’.¹²

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

The Soviet Union's vigorous wartime propaganda campaign was coordinated by the Soviet Information Bureau (*Sovinformburo*), whose vice-chairman was the veteran Jewish Bolshevik, Solomon Lozovskii. In particular Soviet propaganda sought to appeal to 'progressive circles' in the West, in the hope that they would promote vigorous Allied support of the Soviet war effort, in particular the opening of a Second Front in Europe, as well as military and humanitarian aid. Five Anti-Fascist Committees were created under *Sovinformburo* control, including a 'Women's Committee' and a 'Slavic Committee', but the most successful was the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC). The idea was proposed to the Soviet authorities by two leaders of the Polish Bund, Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter, who had fled the Nazi occupation of Poland. They were purged as 'Nazi agents' when it became evident that they could not easily be controlled. The chairmanship of the JAC was assigned to the celebrated Jewish actor and theatre director, Shlomo Mikhoels. The membership included prominent Jewish cultural figures, such as the Yiddish poets and writers Itsik Fefer, Perets Markish, Der Nister, David Bergelson, the Russian-language writer Ilya Ehrenberg, and Jews prominent in other fields of Soviet life, such as Dr Lina Shtern and General Yakov Kreyzer. The JAC worked to publicize German atrocities against the Jews, while emphasizing the alleged absence of antisemitism in the USSR and the special aid it rendered to the Jews.

The JAC, by its very nature, departed from Soviet ideology that saw the Jews in the USSR as a specific, territorial ethnic group, with their own distinct language (Yiddish), culture and national history. They had nothing in common with Jews anywhere else, still less with any entity conceptualized as 'world Jewry'. JAC propaganda, in contrast, stressed a concept of brotherhood that linked all Jews together.

The concept of Jewish brotherhood underlay the JAC's extensive publishing campaign, led by a national weekly in Yiddish, *Einikayt*. Designed for distribution abroad, it had many avid readers among Soviet Jews. The paper emphasized the dual themes of Jewish suffering and Jewish heroism in the war. In the summer of 1943, Mikhoels and Fefer were sent on a highly publicized trip abroad, which featured a lengthy tour of North America. They established links with Jewish organizations in the West, made speeches and attended rallies, and received funds that had been raised to assist the Soviet war effort. The JAC published other Yiddish-language materials in the USSR, and dispatched information abroad to western media outlets. From these contacts arose a project to publish a series of books, in the USSR, America and in Palestine, devoted to Jewish suffering and heroism. This was the genesis of *The Black Book*, which was to be a compendium of Nazi atrocities during the German occupation of the USSR.¹³

There was an unintended development tied to the existence of the JAC: it evolved into a national body for Soviet Jewry – the so-called 'Jewish address' – such

as had not existed in the USSR since the disbanding in the early 1930s of special departments of the party and the state, the *Evsektsiia* and the *Evkom*, which had been created in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution to carry on propaganda and agitation 'on the Jewish street'. The JAC became a focus for Jewish national aspirations. Correspondents turned to the JAC for information and advice, and to complain of mistreatment. Mikhoels, for example, transmitted to state and party organizations complaints of antisemitic actions, or of discrimination in the distribution of foreign aid, with some expectation that action would be taken. The JAC also served as a clearing house for information, for example, accounts of German atrocities or information about the location of refugees. Within the JAC there were disagreements as to the specific policies to be pursued. Should the organization restrict itself to fighting fascism or should it take up the task of aid and rehabilitation to Jews and the revitalization of Jewish cultural and communal life during and after the war? Increasingly, the JAC pursued the latter objectives. The most dramatic initiative came in 1943, shortly after the Soviet authorities accused the native population of the Crimean Peninsula, the so-called Crimean Tatars, of collaboration with the German occupation and began their wholesale resettlement to Soviet Central Asia. Recalling that the Jews had ancient links to the Crimea, where Jews had settled in classical times, Mikhoels submitted a proposal that the Crimea be designated as a post-war home for the resettlement of shattered Jewish communities. The proposal was rejected, but it was to have lethal consequences for its authors.¹⁴

Anti-Nazi propaganda

The Soviet Union was active in publicizing German atrocities in the Soviet Union as a means of mobilizing international support for the Soviet war effort and of building support at home. These efforts included the highlighting of German mass murder of the Jews. These were linked to a declared intention to bring German war criminals to justice at the end of hostilities. Thus, in November 1942, the Soviets created the Extraordinary State Commission on the Atrocities of the German Fascists and their Accomplices, which was charged with collecting evidence and even of trying the occasional war criminal who fell into Soviet hands. On 15–18 December 1943, three officials of the Kharkov Gestapo were tried by a military court in that city. The trial was highly publicized, even serving as the subject of a documentary film. The Extraordinary Commission carried out an enormous investigation, and published 27 volumes of materials and analysis. The Extraordinary Commission's evidence was the main Soviet submission to the trials of the major Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. As John Garrard has shown, even at an early date the Commission began to submerge the fate of Soviet Jews into that of the Soviet population in general.

Investigations of mass murders that were carried out specifically and only against Jews identified the victims, not by ethnic identity, but as 'peaceful Soviet citizens'. This became part of a general strategy with the slogan 'Do Not Divide the Dead'.¹⁵

Soviet military forces were the first to encounter the German death camps of 'Operation Reinhard', and Soviet reports clearly identified Jews – from both the Soviet Union and from Europe in general – as the major victims of the Nazi genocide campaign. In August 1944, the army newspaper *Red Star* (*Krasnaia zvezda*) published a long, illustrated article about the camp at Majdanek, near Lublin, although it emphasized the 'international' aspect of the hundreds of thousands of victims. Far more specific was a detailed account of 'The Treblinka Hell', written by Vasily Grossman and published in the November 1944 issue of the Soviet literary magazine, *The Banner* (*Znamia*). The account was presented as factual reporting, based on interviews with members of the local population and captured Germans. It emphasized throughout that the victims of Treblinka were Jews. Grossman presented a detailed account of the 'processing' undergone by each trainload of victims, including their arrival, gassing and burial or cremation. Grossman described the destroyed camp as a landscape covered with human ash and ground bones. He estimated that three million perished at Treblinka (although the number was probably closer to 800,000). 'The Treblinka Hell' was published in a book-length collection of Grossman's wartime literature and reporting in Moscow in 1945, and in an English translation in 1946.¹⁶ By the end of the war, no well-read Soviet citizen would have been unaware of the mass murder of Soviet and European Jewry.

The Sovinformburo widely publicized the Nazi murder of Jews abroad, largely through the efforts of the JAC. In 1943, in conjunction with the visit to London by Mikhoels and Fefer, the British Jewish Fund for Soviet Russia published a 110-page booklet, with accounts of Jewish heroism and martyrdom, entitled *The Russian Jews in the War*. The latter included accounts of 'Jewish Massacres in Poland', 'The Jewish Massacres in Minsk' and 'Entire Jewish Population of Kursk Exterminated'.¹⁷

The impact of the war on Soviet Jewry

Recovery from the human and economic consequences of the war with Germany was a daunting task for the Soviet Union as a whole. It was an even greater task for the Jewish population, which had lost a third of its total population. Those who survived were scattered across the Soviet Union, far from their Ukrainian or Belorussian homes. Refugees returned to find their families exterminated and their property dispersed or destroyed. An alarming phenomenon was the appearance of antisemitism among the population. There were many causes of this phenomenon: mundane prejudices from past ethnic

conflict, the impact of German antisemitic propaganda, the fear of those who had collaborated, actively or passively, in mistreating and murdering Jews, or who had benefited from the theft of Jewish property. The JAC received many complaints from Jewish refugees on this score.

The war was also a source of pride for Jews, who could point to their significant contribution to the Soviet war effort, although this was qualified by the absence of national recognition, which often dismissed 'Jewish boasting'. In particular, there was the determination of Jews that Hitler should not be given a posthumous victory through the disappearance of the Jewish people. Jewish activists were determined to re-establish their communities, to assure that Jewish victims received a fair share of post-war aid and to recreate a Jewish cultural life. For example, early in 1946 a group of Jews in Lviv (Lvov), including a Communist Party member and decorated war veteran, applied to the authorities to re-establish the religious community in the Lviv district. They were not believers themselves, the founders announced, but sought to promote the national-cultural and religious unification of local Jews, to raise the political, national and cultural consciousness of the Jewish population, to implement measures to improve the material and social conditions of the Jewish population of the area.¹⁸ In response to numerous requests from the grass roots, the JAC began to pursue these objectives. Existing projects, such as the assembly and publication of *The Black Book*, were also pursued. Under the leadership, first of Ilya Ehrenburg and then Vasily Grossman, the project participants assembled interviews, testimony and official documentation to present a detailed view of the implementation of the Final Solution in the occupied Soviet Union and in the 'Operation Reinhard' extermination camps of eastern Poland.¹⁹

The Holocaust became a recognized motif in Soviet Jewish literature, especially in Yiddish, both during and after the war. There were poems and stories devoted to the fate of Jews in the ghettos published by Der Nister, Itsik Fefer and Bunim Heller, as well as Hirsh Smolar's documentary description of resistance in the Minsk ghetto, all published in 1946. Biblical motifs appeared with increased frequency. Savva Golovanivsky used the image of the *akedah*, the sacrifice of Isaac, in his poem 'Abraham', which described Russians and Ukrainians turning their backs on Jewish victims. Hirsh Osherovich imagined the spirit of the Prophet Ezekiel hovering over the 'dry bones' of the Jewish victims of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek and Babi Yar. Ayzik Platner's poem 'Two Sisters' compared two Jewish refugee girls to the biblical Naomi and Ruth.²⁰

Writers frequently expressed their delight that some Jews had survived the Holocaust. In the words of Peretz Markish, 'If one Jew remains alive on this earth – this people will remain forever.' Grubian was grateful that Jews were returning to their ancestral villages:

The ear that hears, how in Jewish homes
It seethes with life, and music plays.²¹

Writers stressed not only the physical survival of the Jews, but also the survival of a Jewish identity. A story by I. Kipnis described how a Ukrainian woman saved two Jewish children and made them part of her family. While grateful for her brave deed, Kipnis lamented the children's loss of their Jewishness: 'I have become most jealous in recent years. I am greatly concerned for what has remained whole. Whenever I see a Jewish student, a beautiful young girl, a bold and sturdy-looking soldier, a learned old man, an academician and a plain, simple Jew, I long for them to address me in Yiddish.' Kipnis also expressed the wish that the Star of David might hang next to the Soviet Red Star on the decorations of Jewish veterans.²²

The very antithesis of the Soviet conception of the Jews as a distinct ethnic group separate from the other Jews of the world was contained in a poem by Itzik Fefer, 'I Am a Jew'. He traced the Jew's 'wanderer's way' from the Exodus to the present, invoking the names of biblical and post-biblical heroes: the prophet Isaiah, Samson and Solomon, Bar Kochba, Rabbi Akivah, Yahudah Halevi, Heine, Spinoza and Karl Marx. Although a Jew 'who has drunk up/ Happiness from Stalin's cup', he emphasizes the universal brotherhood of the Jewish people:

From Haifa Harbour answeringly,
From London comes the response to me,
From Buenos Aires and New York
Come songs from Jews who fight and work.²³

These were materials written in the 'national language' (Yiddish) for a specific ethnic audience, and very little of this material was translated into the other languages of the Soviet Union, especially Russian. There was some literature with Holocaust-related themes. Vasily Grossman's non-fiction essay 'The Treblinka Hell' was published alongside fictional material, such as 'The Old School-Teacher', which describes the liquidation of the Jewish residents of a small Ukrainian village. Ilya Ehrenburg's wartime novel *The Storm (Buria)* also includes Holocaust episodes.²⁴ The central characters of Vasily Grossman's novel about the battle of Stalingrad, *For a Just Cause (Za Pravoe Delo)*, published in 1952, are Jewish, and the novel also includes Holocaust events.

Efforts were also made to memorialize the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. In 1946, a monument in Russian and Yiddish was erected close to the remains of the former Minsk ghetto, on a plot that had served as an execution site. It survives to the present day.²⁵ Other monuments, such as the one at Paneriai (Ponary), were removed by the authorities after they became the focus for assemblies and memorial activities.²⁶ The post-Stalin era would demonstrate

the contentious nature of commemoration and its importance for Soviet-Jewish self-identity.

Late Stalinism and the Jews

The tasks of post-war reconstruction in the Soviet Union were daunting: over 20 million people had been lost from the population, and many more maimed and crippled; huge tracts of land laid waste; immense property damage, especially to housing stock; and industrial production devoted almost entirely to the military. The breakdown of relations with Russia's wartime allies, especially the United States, and the beginnings of the Cold War had serious implications. Instead of a programme of post-war reconstruction, aided by the West, Soviet citizens were advised that 'the war with Fascism ends, the war with Imperialism begins'. Rather than a general demobilization, the Red Army remained under arms in order to occupy former enemies as they were transformed into new 'fraternal socialist allies'. There was a similar change in thinking about the West: wartime allies were transformed from courageous friends into dangerous adversaries, intent on re-establishing or creating empires, and committed to the destruction of the USSR. Those who had been 'in the West', either as Soviet prisoners of war, wartime refugees or forced labourers in Germany, as well as those who had had extended contact with western military forces, were now considered ideologically suspect. This was even more the case for areas that had been under German occupation (much of the Ukrainian SSR), or were newly annexed to the USSR (areas of eastern Poland incorporated into the Ukrainian and Belorussian republics, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and Moldova, taken from Romania). A massive campaign of national indoctrination was launched, seeking to restore ideological rigour, to warn against the wiles and machinations of the West and to undermine renewed national feeling, which was condemned as 'bourgeois nationalism'.

This ideological campaign is usually referred to as the *Zhdanovshchina* (Zhdanovism) after the party's chief ideological spokesman, Zhdanov, who led the cultural campaign until his death in 1948. The campaign denigrated everything western, denied any cultural influence of the West on the East, and attacked artists and critics accused of 'kowtowing to the West' as 'rootless cosmopolitans'. The security forces launched vigilance campaigns against those who had links with foreign spies and against internal traitors, especially 'bourgeois nationalists'.²⁷

These campaigns left the leadership of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee – who were also, it should be remembered, the leaders of Yiddish-based Soviet Jewish culture – terribly exposed. All the assignments they had been ordered to perform were now transformed into criminal acts. For example, the JAC had been specifically ordered to establish and maintain links with the West. Its

assignment included the dispatch of information about the war effort in general, and Jewish combatants and victims in particular, as well as the cultivation of information links with sympathetic westerners. These objectives required that Soviet Jews be depicted as linked to their 'Jewish brethren' all over the world. The JAC, on its own accord, had also assumed the role of a national centre for Soviet Jews and a sponsor of their national needs.

In the changed conditions of the post-war Soviet Union, the JAC was easily depicted as an anti-Soviet criminal organization. The JAC had sent military intelligence – it mattered not whether it was classified or unclassified – to imperialist circles abroad. The JAC maintained links with western espionage agents. For this purpose, the NKVD assigned the role of 'American spy' to the left-wing, pro-Soviet journalist, B.-Z. Goldberg, who had maintained close contacts with the JAC leadership during and after the war. Foreign relief bodies with whom the JAC had contacts, such as the Jewish-American Joint Distribution Committee ('The Joint'), were designated as foreign espionage agencies. The role of the JAC in intervening on behalf of Soviet Jews was easily depicted as 'Jewish bourgeois nationalism'. The abortive proposal to resettle refugee Jews in the post-war Crimean peninsula was indicted as an elaborate plot to detach it from the USSR, to transform the Crimea into a bourgeois democratic republic that would serve as an outpost of western imperialism on the USSR's doorstep.

At a time when Soviet state and party structures were undergoing purges as part of the vigilance campaign, there was little chance that the cadres of the JAC would escape. In January 1948, Mikhoels died in an apparent traffic accident in Minsk – in fact, murdered by the secret police. In November 1948 the JAC was formally wound up by the authorities. By the end of the year, its most prominent members were arrested, including the Yiddish writers P. Markish, I. Fefer, L. Kvitko and D. Bergelson. A total of 14 defendants were secretly tried and all but one, Dr Lina Shtern, executed between 11 and 18 July 1952. With the publication of the transcripts of the trial of the defendants, a number of questions have arisen. There is evidence that the initial charges against the defendants, while serious, were not going to be capital charges. Some of them, especially I. Fefer, had apparently been groomed to act as the repentant accuser so familiar from many Soviet show-trials. At some point, the affair became much more elaborate and expanded to include charges of foreign espionage. In the time-honoured Soviet judicial tradition, ideological opponents – most notably Zionists and Bundists – were added to the conspirators, linked in the prosecutorial mind by the fact that they were 'Jewish'. Most of the accused put up a vigorous defence at their secret trial before a military tribunal. At least one official urged, unsuccessfully, that the case be looked at more fully.²⁸ There are thus grounds for linking the fate of the JAC to rivalries within the security agencies. The transcripts make one thing clear, however: the war and the Holocaust had engendered a strong sense of Jewish identity among the Soviet

Jewish intellectual leadership, as the defendants repeatedly demonstrated in their testimony. Whatever the motivations underlying the purge of the JAC, it culminated in an immense act of cultural vandalism. The affair claimed the lives of all the giants of Soviet Yiddish literature who had survived the Holocaust. The Soviet secret police completed the task that the Nazis had begun – the destruction of Yiddish culture in eastern Europe.

Memorialization was also a casualty. The Soviet publication of *The Black Book* was announced and drafts had been sent abroad. The Russian version had been typeset and a few galley proofs run off. In 1948, the type was broken up and the book was suppressed, a graphic symbol of the Soviet Union's determination to reject a special Jewish claim for suffering in the course of the Great Patriotic War.

One motive often attributed to the Soviet state – anti-Zionism – does not seem to have played a decisive role in the affair of the JAC. Even as it arrested the Yiddish cultural leadership at home, the Soviet Union was proving a friend to the fledgling Zionist state. The Soviets supported the partition plan for the Middle East, voted to admit Israel to the United Nations, and funnelled valuable military aid through her client state of Czechoslovakia during the time of the Israeli War for Independence. External factors underlay Soviet considerations: the desire to discomfit the British in the Middle East and the hope that the young Israeli state might lean towards the Soviet bloc. By the time the trial of the JAC took place, these hopes had been disappointed, and a 'Zionist' charge was added to the sins of the accused, just as it was to the party leaders, like Rudolph Slánský, who were purged in Czechoslovakia in 1952. Zionism had been an old foe 'on the Jewish street' at the time of the Revolution, and the regime needed no encouragement to stifle the movement at home, even as it was supporting it abroad. The regime also was apparently taken aback by the enthusiasm of Soviet Jews for the new state, exemplified by the boisterous public welcome given to the first Israeli ambassador to the USSR, Golda Meier. The archives also reveal that many Jewish combat veterans wrote to the Soviet authorities to volunteer to defend the Jewish state. Thus, in October–November 1948, simultaneously with the arrest of the JAC leadership, Zionist leaders were also arrested. The latter were given long prison sentences, however, while the former were shot.²⁹

Stalin's calculations in the last years of his life remain obscure, but there is no question that they presaged major political changes. The party leadership of Leningrad was purged in 1948 ('The Leningrad Affair'). Party operatives were removed in Soviet Georgia ('The Mingrilian Affair'), weakening Lavrenty Beria's territorial power base. The central ruling organ, the Praesidium of the Communist Party, was enlarged in 1952, thus diluting the power of its veteran membership. The apparatus was in place for the launch of a vigilance campaign that would target individual party leaders, such as Beria. To this was added

a much larger category: Soviet Jews. On 13 January 1953, an article in *Pravda* announced the arrest of many of the leading medical personnel attached to the Kremlin polyclinic, whose responsibilities included the treatment of the top party leadership. The doctors, *Pravda* announced, 'monsters in human form', had used medical malpractice to murder a number of Soviet leaders, including A. Zhdanov. Of the nine doctors arrested, six were Jews who, it was claimed, were connected with the international Jewish bourgeois nationalist organization, 'The Joint', an organization which, 'under the direction of American intelligence, conducts extensive espionage, terrorist and other subversive work in many countries, including the Soviet Union'. 'The Joint', which issued some of its instruction through 'the well-known Jewish bourgeois nationalist, Mikhoels', had ordered the doctors 'to wipe out the leading cadres of the USSR'.³⁰

The announcement of what came to be known as the Doctors' Plot generated panic among Jews and non-Jews alike. The latter became suspicious of Jewish medical personnel, and many refused treatment from Jewish doctors and nurses or medication from Jewish pharmacists (all professions where Jews were very well represented). Many Jews, on the other hand, gave credence to rumours that swept through the Soviet Jewish community that the announcement of the Doctors' Plot would inaugurate a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms in major Soviet cities. This would be followed by the forced resettlement of Jews to camps in Central Asia or Siberia. Within a month of the death of Stalin, the Doctors' Plot was repudiated, and all the accused who had survived were released. In the Secret Speech, Nikita Khrushchev attributed the Plot to Lavrenty Beria, but the head of the NKVD was almost certainly a target himself: what was the level of vigilance that could overlook 'doctor-poisoners' at work in the Kremlin itself?

The extent to which the Doctors' Plot was aimed at all Soviet Jewry remains a matter of dispute among specialists. While there is no doubt that Jews at the time were convinced that some form of mass resettlement was planned, researchers have been unable to locate any archival evidence to this effect. If a mass expulsion were actually being planned, it has been claimed, there would be evidence of preparations: orders for the construction of camps or the assignment of rail transport to the task. There exists such evidence for other occasions of Soviet ethnic cleansing (e.g. for the wartime expulsions of the Chechens or the Crimean Tatars).³¹ On the other hand, other expulsions, such as that of the *kulaks* during the collectivization of agriculture in the early 1930s, took place without any pre-planning. A judgment on Stalin's ultimate intentions in this regard therefore remains open.

Soviet Jews and the Holocaust after Stalin

While the repudiation of the Doctors' Plot removed the immediate threat to Soviet Jews, they remained in an ambiguous situation. The authorities dropped

the claim of Mikhoels' alleged connections with US intelligence, but the circumstances of his murder were never publicly resolved. The executed members of the JAC were not immediately rehabilitated. When Khrushchev denounced the Doctors' Plot in the Secret Speech of 1956, its Jewish elements were entirely ignored. Nothing was done to reassure the Soviet population that the Jews were loyal citizens and not 'doctor-poisoners' or 'rootless cosmopolitans'. Jewish cultural institutions, such as the Yiddish theatre and the Yiddish publishing programme, were not restored. Under such circumstances, there was no question of asserting a claim to special Jewish sufferings because of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust continued to bind Jews together, however, comprising an important component of a distinct Soviet Jewish identity. Informal and unofficial efforts were made to commemorate the dates of mass murder actions, or to mark the sites of mass killing. In the main, however, specifically Jewish commemoration was discouraged and unsanctioned memorial markers were removed. Informal gatherings for commemorative purposes were broken up by the police. When the failure to commemorate was accompanied by an effort to obliterate, controversies arose, most particularly at the mass murder site of Babi Yar in Kiev in the Ukraine.

Babi Yar had special resonance for Soviet Jews. It was the most centrally located and public of the mass murder sites: the Germans had marched the Jews to Babi Yar from the centre of Kiev, in the presence of the entire population. Moreover, it was a shared site, for many non-Jews had also been executed there after the initial mass slaughter of Jews. Jews could hardly forget Babi Yar. It was the very first atrocity described in Ehrenburg and Grossman's *The Black Book*. Ehrenburg also included reference to it in his novel *The Storm*. The author of the Babi Yar account in *The Black Book*, Lev Ozerov, observed that 'not all the bodies were burned; not all the bones were ground to dust – there were too many of them. Even now anyone who comes to Babi Yar will see bits of skulls and bones mixed with charcoal. He will find a boot with a decayed human foot in it, as well as slippers, galoshes, scarves, and children's toys'.³² The theme of Babi Yar appeared frequently in post-war Yiddish poetry. The Ukrainian-Jewish composer D.L. Klebanov wrote a symphony devoted to Babi Yar, based in part on Jewish liturgical music.³³

There were hundreds of monuments erected in the Soviet Union to mark almost every aspect of the Great Patriotic War, from the great memorial complex at Stalingrad to a monument commemorating the wartime fight of the NKVD against subversion. As noted, the small monument in Minsk was virtually the only marker devoted to the Holocaust, especially as other markers were removed by the authorities. Babi Yar thus appeared to be a logical site for some form of memorialization. Indeed, the Soviet Ukrainian authorities even commissioned sketches for a memorial in the late 1940s, and the question was raised again at

the end of the 1950s. Instead, the authorities decided on a radically different plan. Despite protests led by the writer V. Nekrasov, they resolved to build a dam and pump mud into a holding lake, which would settle out and fill in the ravine. The result was an ecological disaster. On 13 March 1961 the dam burst and obliterated the surrounding area of Kurenevka. Over 100 people were buried alive.

Among those who came from Moscow in the aftermath of this tragedy was the popular young poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Yevtushenko immediately composed a poem, 'Babi Yar', with the opening line, 'No monument stands over Babi Yar'. It was published in the prestigious organ of the Writers' Union, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, on 19 September 1961. The poem created a sensation and sparked controversy, since it violated many of the ideological guidelines that were supposed to govern Soviet literature. Yevtushenko used the absence of an appropriate memorial to the dead of Babi Yar as a starting point for a condemnation of antisemitism throughout history, not least in the pogrom era of late imperial Russia. Ideological purists could accept Yevtushenko's invocation of Anne Frank³⁴ and Captain Alfred Dreyfus as stereotypical images of Jewish suffering and persecution. But the poet also used the religious imagery – always suspect in the Soviet context – of Christ on the cross and the Hebrews in exile in Egypt. Worse still, he referred to 'the Jewish people' as linked by persecution across time and place. No great imagination was required to see an indictment of antisemitism in the contemporary USSR – if not a recollection of wartime collaboration in the Ukraine – in the lines:

O my Russian People!
 I know that you are really international.
 But those with unclean hands
 Have often loudly taken in vain
 Your most pure name.³⁵

With its thematic daring, 'Babi Yar' was a product of the second wave of destalinization under Khrushchev. The first was inaugurated by Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' at the XXth Party Congress in 1956, which had condemned Stalin and detailed some of the crimes arising from his 'Cult of Personality'. The second period began with the XXIIInd Party Congress in 1961, which voted to remove Stalin's embalmed body from the Lenin mausoleum on Red Square, and to rename towns and cities associated with the dictator, such as Stalingrad. It witnessed a temporary relaxation of artistic controls, which culminated in the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's anti-Stalinist novella, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, in 1962. But destalinization always remained contested territory. 'Liberals' welcomed the publication of 'Babi Yar', and the great Soviet composer Dmitry Shostakovich incorporated it as a chorale in his

13th Symphony. ‘Conservatives’ were sharply critical. The poet A. Markov published ‘My Reply’ in *Literatura i zhizn'* with the provocative lines:

But enough of turning graves,
It hurts them, it's more than they can bear.
As long as graveyards are trampled,
Be it by one cosmopolitan –
I'll say: I am a Russian, O my people!³⁶

Writing in the same paper, the critic A. Starikov was equally brutal: ‘To see in the tragedy of Babi Yar but one of history’s manifestations of antisemitism?! The fate of those who perished there howls out against this’. Moreover, ‘what is the real value of these exclamations, as ignorant as they are thoughtless, on the “Jewish people” as such “in general” ... Yevtushenko feels himself happily free to kindle, whether deliberately or not, the dying embers of nationalist prejudices’. Just as Markov had invoked the worst of Stalinism by calling Yevtushenko a ‘cosmopolitan’, Starikov offered his own denunciation: ‘what is important is that the intolerable falsity, with which his “Babi Yar” is permeated, represents an obvious departure from Communist ideology to ideological positions of bourgeois stamp’.³⁷

The struggle between ‘Liberals’ and ‘Conservatives’ continued until the fall of Khrushchev from power in 1964. Yevtushenko was forced to revise the poem slightly – emphasizing the hostility of the working class to antisemitism – and Shostakovich’s 13th Symphony had difficulty securing a performance, and still less did it find a place in the Soviet performing repertoire. Yet Holocaust-related materials did continue to appear. In 1965 the memoir of a young inhabitant of the Vilnius ghetto, Masha Rolnikaite, *I Must Tell*, was published in Moscow. In 1966 the Soviet literary magazine *Lunost'* serialized a documentary novel written by A. Kuznetsov entitled *Babi Yar*. The narrator recalled his youth as a young boy growing up in German-occupied Kiev. The centre-piece of his account is a harrowing description of the murder of Kiev’s Jews at Babi Yar, based on the testimony of Dina Pronicheva, one of a handful of survivors of the slaughter. The ‘Jewish’ aspect of Babi Yar was absolutely clear. Kuznetsov defected from the Soviet Union in 1969, and published a revised version of his work, restoring the cuts made by the Soviet censor. It offers a more rounded picture of events and also demonstrates the concerns of the Soviet censorship regarding the history of the occupation of Kiev and the murder of the Jewish population.³⁸

The publicity given to Babi Yar by Yevtushenko’s poem and the ensuing controversy kept the issue of memorialization alive. Visiting foreign dignitaries to Kiev routinely asked to see the site, and the absence of a memorial constituted an embarrassment. The site became the focus for pilgrimage and commemoration for both Jews and Ukrainians. The authorities finally gave in, and sought to

co-opt the site by issuing promises that an official monument would be constructed. The promise was fulfilled only in 1976. The 16-metre bronze memorial was typical of the hackneyed socialist realist design that characterized most Soviet war memorials. It featured the figures of a resistance fighter, a POW and a sailor striking defiant poses against an unseen enemy. With their bodies they shield an old woman and a woman with an infant in her arms. Nothing about the ensemble makes any reference to the first victims of Babi Yar, the Jews. Their absence is reinforced by the inscription, contained on plaques in front of the monument: 'Here, in the years 1941–1943, were shot more than 100,000 citizens of the city and POWs.' There was only one concession to the Jewish identity of the victims that has been overlooked by most descriptions of the site: the inscription on the plaques is in Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish. None the less the monument, which transformed the 34,000 Jewish victims into 'citizens of the city', has always been judged unsatisfactory by Jews. After the demise of the Soviet Union, a new memorial, in the form of a Jewish *menorah*, or candlestick, was placed near the site.

The spirit that grudgingly conceded a monument at Babi Yar also permitted the publication of a Soviet novel with a Holocaust theme, *Heavy Sand* (*Tiazhelyi pesok*) in 1978. The author was Anatoly Rybakov, a recognized establishment figure in the realm of Soviet literature, who is best known for his anti-Stalinist novel, *Children of the Arbat* (1987), one of the literary symbols of *glasnost*. In construction and content, *Heavy Sand* is very much a Soviet novel that follows many of the conventions of socialist realism. The author offers a portrait of hard-working, loyal Soviet Jews in a medium-sized town, quite different from the *shtetl* types of Sholem Aleichem. There is an almost total absence of religion or religious culture in Rybakov's depiction of his Jewish characters. He places great emphasis on the 'friendship of peoples', presenting an idealized portrait of absolute amity among the various ethnic groups that inhabit the town. This became especially apparent during the German occupation and the ghettoization of the town's Jews, when they received generous assistance from non-Jews, even at the considerable risk to their own lives. The most negative character, Uncle Yosif, is a Jew, and also a scoundrel, seducer and willing collaborator with the Nazi occupiers. He is perhaps meant to demonstrate the Russian proverb, 'there is no family without freaks', but he also provides 'balance' to the other Jewish characters. While the novel notes the suffering of all the victims of the Germans, it provides a detailed description of the horrors of the Holocaust, in which almost all the central characters die horrible deaths. Rybakov does provide some emotional compensation in the form of the extremely successful activities of Jewish partisans. The narrative of the ghetto ends with the escape of a few survivors to the partisans in the woods. This episode has an almost mystical conclusion in which the central character, the matriarch Rachel, 'simply dissolved into the forest amid the motionless pines'.

The novel ends with a description of the efforts of the surviving population to memorialize the local victims of the Holocaust. Rybakov describes a memorial plaque, with an inscription in both Russian and Hebrew, said to have been erected by the local inhabitants in 1972. The description of such a monument was, to put it politely, poetic licence.³⁹

In one regard, however, the account was accurate. Unnoticed in the West, a number of Jewish communities in the post-Stalin era sought to provide a more appropriate resting place for victims of the Holocaust by transferring their remains to the local Jewish cemetery. A re-interment occurred in the *shtetl* of Chausy, Mogilev region, in 1955. Such operations apparently took place with the approval or cooperation of the local authorities. The murdered Jews of Surazhe, Briansk region, were reburied in 1961, reportedly after local leaders submitted a petition to Leonid Brezhnev (then a Politburo member, but not yet the Soviet leader).⁴⁰

Rybakov's major work, *Children of the Arbat*, was written in the 1960s, but not published until the dramatically changed environment of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. This was also the fate of a novel by Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sudba*) which was first published abroad in 1980, and did not appear in Russia until 1988. The novel has a legitimate claim to be one of the outstanding Russian literary creations of the twentieth century. Its treatment of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union occupied the same literary status as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's literary indictments of the Stalinist camp system, the Gulag. *Life and Fate* is a sequel to Grossman's 1952 novel, *For a Just Cause*, but it reaches a much higher creative level. The novel compresses the history of the Holocaust and the later Stalinist repression of the Jews by including an episode with anachronistic references to the Anti-Cosmopolitan campaign. One of the central characters, like Grossman in real life, fails a moral test when he signs a collective letter of denunciation. Grossman describes, with an empathy made possible by his wartime experiences, the fate of Jews in the ghettos on Soviet soil. He creates the picture of a ghetto much like the one created in his home town of Berdichev, where his mother perished. In another scene, he follows one of his characters into the gas chambers. Episodes in the novel are prefigured in Grossman's earlier literary and publicist works mentioned above, but they undergo a remarkable literary transformation in the hands of a writer at the height of his powers. The most controversial aspect of the novel is a chapter in which a German SS officer argues, in a convincing fashion, that there is little that separates the two totalitarian systems of Nazism and Stalinism.

The novel was the product of the flicker of hope that emerged from Khrushchev's Secret Speech and the first destalinization campaign. By the time it was complete, in 1960, the ideological atmosphere had darkened, not least because of the scandal that attended the publication of Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago*, and his reception of the Nobel Prize for Literature (which the authorities

forced him to refuse). When Grossman submitted his novel for publication, the authorities found its content totally unacceptable. The secret police raided his flat and confiscated all copies of the manuscript. Unbeknown to Grossman, several versions were hidden away. After his death, they were smuggled abroad and published. It is a telling commentary on the Soviet treatment of the Holocaust that of Grossman's two major works dealing with the theme, *The Black Book* was never published in the USSR and *Life and Fate* appeared only on the eve of the fall of communism.

Notes

- 1 These figures, and other demographic information, are drawn from M. Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social and Demographic Profile* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998).
- 2 See Z. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
- 3 See B.-C. Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule: Eastern Poland on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
- 4 See A. Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944: The Missing Center* (Riga: The Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996); and several chapters in Z. Gitelman, ed., *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), especially M.I. Koval, 'The Nazi Genocide of the Jews and the Ukrainian Population (1941–1944)', pp. 51–60; H.-H. Wilhelm, "Inventing" the Holocaust for Latvia: New Research', pp. 104–22; and S. Shner-Neshamit, 'Jewish-Lithuanian Relations during World War II: History and Rhetoric', pp. 167–84.
- 5 For the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen*, see R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, revised edition (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), vol. I, pp. 273–390.
- 6 See M. Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews at the Time of the Nazi Invasion', in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941–1945*, ed. L. Dobroszycki and J. S. Gurock (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 77–104.
- 7 See I. Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
- 8 For specific details of the Holocaust on Soviet soil, see any of the principal surveys: Hilberg, *Destruction*; L.S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Bantam, 1986); M. Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Collins, 1986).
- 9 See, most recently, M. Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000) and Dean's paper in this volume.
- 10 For total Soviet population losses, see M. Ellman and S. Maksudov, 'Soviet Deaths in the Great Patriotic War: A Note', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46 (1994), 671–80.
- 11 L. Krichevsky, 'Dispelling Myths, Book Shows Jewish Role in Soviet War Effort' (<http://www.ncjs.org/AuxPages/121602JTA.shtml>), 27 April 2003.
- 12 See D. Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941–1945* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985).
- 13 For the history of the activities of JAC, see S. Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia: the Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, 1941–1948* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1982).

- 14 For the documents relating to these events, see S. Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism: A Documented Study of Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR* (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic, 1995).
- 15 See J. Garrard, 'The Nazi Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Interpreting Newly Opened Russian Archives', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 25, 2 (1995), 3–40.
- 16 V. Grossman, *The Years of War* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1946).
- 17 *The Russian Jews in the War* (London: Jewish Fund for Soviet Russia, 1943). It is quite clear that all the material in the brochure was provided by the Soviets.
- 18 M. Mitsel', *Obshchiny iudeiskogo veroispovedaniia v Ukraine: Kiev, L'vov: 1945–1981 gg.* (Kiev: Biblioteka Instituta Iudaiki, 1998), pp. 159–60.
- 19 As noted below, the book never appeared in the Soviet Union. The most complete version available in English is I. Ehrenburg and V. Grossman, *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001).
- 20 B. Pinkus, *The Soviet Government and the Jews: A Documented Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 167–8.
- 21 Ibid., p. 170.
- 22 Ibid., p. 495. This story earned Kipnis a reprimand for 'bourgeois nationalism'; ibid., pp. 149–50.
- 23 *The Russian Jews in the War*, p. 9.
- 24 I. Ehrenburg, *The Storm*, trans. J. Fineberg (New York: Gaer Associates, 1949).
- 25 For a picture of this monument, see Z. Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*, 2nd expanded edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 134.
- 26 Pinkus, *Soviet Government*, p. 559, n. 14.
- 27 For the classic study, see R. Conquest, *Power and Policy in the USSR* (New York: Macmillan, 1962). For more recent treatments see A. Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and D. Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 28 For an abridged English translation of the trial transcript, see J. Rubenstein and V.P. Naumov, eds., *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: the Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*, trans. L.E. Wolfson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- 29 See the discussion in Pinkus, *Soviet Government*, pp. 229–37.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 219–20.
- 31 See O.J. Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).
- 32 *The Complete Black Book*, p. 12.
- 33 Pinkus, *Soviet Government*, p. 175.
- 34 *The Diary of Anne Frank* was published in Russian translation, with an introduction by Ilya Ehrenburg, in 1960.
- 35 For the text of the poem, see Pinkus, *Soviet Government*, pp. 114–16.
- 36 Ibid., p. 119.
- 37 Ibid., pp. 119–23.
- 38 For the English translation of the full novel, see A. Anatoli (Kuznetsov), *Babi Yar* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972).
- 39 A. Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, trans. H. Shukman (London: Allen Lane, 1981).
- 40 Both reported in the Leningrad Jewish newspaper *Ami/Narod moi* (30 October 1990 and 17 February 1991).

13

The German Churches and the Holocaust

Robert P. Erickson and Susannah Heschel

The study of the German Churches during the Nazi era is undergoing a radical shift. During the first decades following the Second World War, historians were primarily concerned with the extent to which the Churches were sources of resistance to the Nazi state, with little attention paid to any contribution church officials or teachings might have made to Nazi antisemitism and the Holocaust. Most of those writing about the Churches were themselves German pastors and theologians who sought to portray the Church as a centre of resistance to National Socialism. More recently, historians, particularly those in the United States, have focused attention on the Churches' cooperation with Hitler, particularly on ways in which church teachings of anti-Judaism may have contributed to the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

Much of the shift in approach results from the changing definition of what constitutes Nazi evil. An earlier generation of church historians tended to view Nazism as primarily an evil of world war, racism and suppression of religion which resulted from placing Hitler above God. Rarely did antisemitism or the Holocaust enter the discussion of the Churches. Starting in the late 1980s and 1990s, however, a new generation of historians was established, for whom the great crime of the Nazis was genocide. Individual German theologians were exposed as rabid antisemites, and important factions within the Protestant Church were revealed to have lent theological support to Nazi measures against the Jews. Rather than describing the Churches as bastions of resistance to National Socialism, these historians described the Churches as forces of collaboration.

Unlike other professional groups, such as doctors, nurses, engineers, police officers and the military, pastors and theologians did not play a direct role in killing Jews. Theirs was a role of influence, persuasion and the assuaging of troubled consciences. The killers of the Jews were all Christian – Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox – and clearly aware that murder of innocent civilians was wrong. While some killers had no interest in religious teachings, others were able to draw on a long history of Christian defamations of Jews and Judaism to

justify the genocide. In some cases, German theologians provided explicit religious authorizations for Nazism and the Holocaust; for the most part, they provided no religious basis for refusing to participate in the Holocaust.

The Churches' self-defence

The Churches have often been placed outside the framework of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. Towards the end of the war, some constituencies within the German Churches quickly developed a myth of Christian resistance to Hitler and Nazi persecution of the Churches.¹ Even the Allies proved susceptible to this myth, granting the Churches the opportunity for an independent self-examination, rather than a rigorous, external denazification procedure. As a result, few pastors or church leaders lost their positions because of their Nazi past. Even those whose involvement with the Nazis had been blatant found they could leave their past behind. For example, Siegfried Leffler, a leader of the pro-Nazi German Christian movement who joined the Nazi Party in 1929, had been rehabilitated by 1949 and subsequently served as a leading light and spokesperson for the Protestant Church in Bavaria.² The fact that the Churches had not taken an active role in opposing the persecution, deportation and murder of Jews was explained away as a result of their ignorance of the fate of the Jews or their fear of retaliation. Such were the explanations given by church leaders and lay people in the immediate postwar years.

A second approach has been to deny the significance of the Churches in modern life, either directly or by ignoring them. Secular historians tend to dismiss the Churches as well as Christian teaching in their attempts to explain the German people in relation to the Nazi regime. This chapter assumes, by contrast, that the Christian component in Nazi Germany merits careful consideration. A few figures help clarify the picture. The German census of May 1939 indicates that 54 per cent of the population considered themselves Protestant and 40 per cent Catholic, with only 3.5 per cent claiming to be neo-pagan 'believers in God', and 1.5 per cent unbelievers.³ This census came more than six years after Hitler took power. Both the Catholic and Protestant Churches remained official state Churches throughout the Nazi regime, which meant that the state collected a church tax and funded church expenses. Religious education remained a part of the school curriculum, chaplains served the military and theological faculties were funded and active within the state universities. Article 24 in the Nazi Party Programme always professed 'positive Christianity' as the foundation of the German state.

It is clear that the Nazi regime had no *real* sympathy for Christianity and little use for theologians, but we may still ask how the Churches themselves experienced the regime. Certainly, Hitler's effort to separate the Church from the state was perceived correctly by many church leaders as an attempt to reduce

their power and influence, yet the separation was hardly an act of persecution. In 1936, when the Nazi Party demanded that the swastika be removed from Protestant church newspapers and from church altars, there were loud protests from church leaders.⁴ Pastors who had placed the swastika on the altar, next to the cross, claimed that the swastika was a key element in the religious life of their congregants. Church officials who placed the swastika on the masthead of their church newspapers meant thereby to proclaim their support for the regime. At the time, the NSDAP policy prohibiting the Churches' use of the swastika may have been experienced as an act of persecution, denying the Churches full participation in the life of the Third Reich. Yet this is hardly the persecution that church leaders complained of in the postwar years. For historians seeking to evaluate the Churches' intentions, the important point is that the Protestant Church did not ban the use of the swastika, just as the Catholic Church did not threaten to excommunicate Nazi murderers.

A turning-point in the discussion of the Churches came with Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz's 1980 book on Gerhard Kittel, one of the most distinguished theologians and Protestant scholars of Judaism of the twentieth century, and one of Germany's leading academic collaborators with the Nazi regime.⁵ Siegele-Wenschkewitz's book examines Kittel's writings from the year 1933 on the so-called 'Jewish Question' and argues that they must be seen within the historical context of the era: 1933 was a year of hope for the spiritual and economic revival of Germany. Kittel's proposals for 'solving' the alleged 'Jewish problem' are tempered by Siegele-Wenschkewitz by being seen in the larger context of his intellectual cooperation with Jewish scholars prior to 1933, on the one hand, and his excessive nationalist enthusiasm awakened by Hitler, on the other. By focusing on one of Germany's most distinguished and influential professors of theology, one with expertise in Hellenistic and rabbinic Judaism as well as the New Testament, Siegele-Wenschkewitz placed the scandal of Christian Nazi sympathizers squarely at the centre of the Church's most respected segment, the university theological faculty.

Despite its moderate tone, Siegele-Wenschkewitz's book aroused a great deal of controversy in Germany. Most assessments attacked it for being far too critical of Kittel and for exaggerating the anti-Judaism of his writings, while others criticized it for being too sympathetic to Kittel by failing to take into consideration his subsequent, equally antisemitic writings.⁶ Nevertheless, the book, and the several subsequent volumes Siegele-Wenschkewitz edited, helped open a discussion within the German theological community on Christian theological anti-Judaism and its contribution to Nazi antisemitism.

A far broader and more critical study of Kittel, as well as two other major German theologians of the Nazi era, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch, was published in 1985 by Robert Erickson, and demonstrated the broad, mainstream nature of Deutsche Christen (DC) theology.⁷ All three theologians supported

Hitler and, to varying degrees, his antisemitic policies. Ericksen compared their biographies and showed the parallels in their intellectual backgrounds and their antisemitic writings. Most importantly, he presented them as products of Christian theology, not as monstrosities created by the exigencies of the Nazi regime. Unresolved issues regarding Church-state relations and theology's relation to society produced formulations that opened the door to a Christian embrace of central Nazi doctrines. For Ericksen, the fact that these theologians embraced Hitler signifies the success of Nazi propaganda, but also the problematic state of Protestant theology.

Ericksen's book is not only an indictment of the three men, but also an important demonstration that the 'radical' ideas of the DC were not products of isolated fanatics, but could be found within the mainstream of German Protestantism, at the universities and among highly respected and influential theologians. More recently, Manfred Gailus has investigated the infiltration of the DC in local church congregations. Focusing on Berlin churches, long thought to have been allied with the *Bekennende Kirche* (BK – Confessing Church), particularly with Martin Niemöller and the radical 'Dahlemite' faction of the BK that he represented, Gailus gives us a radically revised picture of German Protestants. Gailus' results present a story of Nazi ideology infiltrating the Protestant Churches and the Protestant social milieu. Countering a church history tempted to stress only a few heroes, he shows that the Churches were 'overwhelmed by their own fascination with the ideas of 1933', and concludes that the terms 'Christian' and 'Nazi' were most certainly not mutually exclusive, as some post-war defenders of the Church would have it.⁸

The confessing Church

The *Kirchenkampf* (church struggle) within the German Protestant Church is sometimes mistakenly understood as the Protestant Church's resistance to National Socialism. In fact, the term refers to an internal dispute between members of the *Bekennende Kirche* and members of the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians) for control of the Protestant Church. The conflict had little to do with campaigning against Nazi antisemitism or the Holocaust, but focused instead on whether the Church should participate in the overall Nazi *Gleichschaltung* of German society.

While scholars of the Holocaust may interrogate the Church's teachings on anti-Judaism and responses to Nazi antisemitism, scholars tend to focus on the Nazi treatment of the Churches and their role in society. John Conway's *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* (1968) was one of the first and remains the standard text on the topic in English.⁹ Conway broke with the post-war tradition of adulating the BK and instead pointed to examples of collaboration, as well as opposition, on the part of church figures. He rejected the image of the

Churches as monolithic institutions and showed instead the internal tensions in their attitudes to National Socialism.

Conway's overriding thesis, however, is that the Churches were in real danger of ultimate dissolution. Based on wartime documents from Hitler advisers such as Martin Bormann, as well as the Nazi policy adopted in the Warthegau to arrest and kill hundreds of Polish clergy, Conway asserts that those actions presaged what a Nazi state would have undertaken everywhere – the ultimate destruction of Christianity. Yet those actions can be interpreted in other ways. Were Christian clergy simply one faction of the elites in occupied territories, who were arrested and executed in large numbers to prevent active resistance? And should we assume that the German clergy in the future would have been treated as badly as the Poles?

Klaus Scholder is the counterpart to Conway among German church historians. Nearly a decade of thorough archival research resulted in a first volume of over 700 pages describing events that occurred in just one year, 1933.¹⁰ Scholder's theological sympathies lie with Karl Barth, and he follows Barth in condemning political theology for the Church's efforts to reach accommodation with the Nazi regime. Regarding Nazi antisemitism, Scholder says little.

Much like Conway, Scholder stresses throughout his work that the truth of the *Kirchenkampf* is that Christians would have been the next victims. He presents his case by pointing to the goals of Alfred Rosenberg and Martin Bormann and by noting the harsh treatment of the Churches during the war in Poland and Czechoslovakia. One problem here is that this argument assumes and stresses the convenient image of Christians as victims, even when they were declaring their loyalty to the regime.

Scholder adds to this problem by his extraordinary use of the term 'Final Solution' to describe the Nazi campaign against Christianity: in 'the way toward the "final solution"' and 'the postponement of the "final solution"'.¹¹ The Nazi policy against the Jewish population – which culminated in the real 'Final Solution', or extermination – emanated from a thorough and relentless rhetorical, ideological, political and physical attack. To attempt to draw a comparison between this and the variegated courtship and antagonism which marks the Christian–Nazi relationship is insensitive, tasteless and unacceptable.

Despite their willingness to emphasize the victimhood of the Christian Churches, both Conway and Scholder worked as church historians seeking objectivity and balance. By contrast, former members of the BK wrote much of the historiography concerning the *Kirchenkampf*, presenting their movement in heroic terms while casting blame on the *Deutsche Christen* (DC) for 'selling out' to Hitler. The main challenge of Nazism was not the Holocaust, but its secular assault on the Christian faith. Further, many of these church leaders had actually supported Hitler. They therefore needed to be engaged in a post-war cover-up, as illustrated by the case of the post-war historian, Wilhelm Niemöller.

Together with his more famous brother, the Berlin pastor Martin Niemöller, a leader of the BK, Wilhelm had fought in the right-wing *Freikorps* during the early Weimar years, having joined the Nazi Party in 1923. Both he and Martin supported Hitler in elections from 1924 until he came to power. They both greeted Hitler's taking power with enthusiasm and lost confidence only when the regime's political interference in the Churches emerged as a problem. After the war, Niemöller quickly set up an archive at Bielefeld and produced major studies of the *Kirchenkampf*. The Protestant Church (EKD) then established an *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, a counterpart to the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* on the other side of town. Soon, a large body of church history emerged, providing a wealth of material on the BK. In effect, if not by design, the complexity of Christian responses to National Socialism tended to disappear.

None of his Nazi sympathies are found in Wilhelm Niemöller's post-war histories of the Churches, and there is almost no mention of the Holocaust. The wide-ranging and important enthusiasm on the part of Protestants for Hitler disappears. Indeed, when Conway's book appeared in German translation in 1969, including a brief mention of the Niemöller brothers' enthusiasm for Hitler, Wilhelm denied it, insisting that the book include a 'correction'.¹²

Alongside this 'history of heroes' tendency, several German scholars have produced a corrective. In 1959 Friedrich Baumgärtel published *Wider die Kirchenkampf-Legenden* (1959), the first book to expose Wilhelm Niemöller as a Nazi Party member. Clemens Vollnhals, in a study of the Protestant Church and denazification, also highlights the baggage carried into the post-war period. When Martin Niemöller and Bishop Wurm, perhaps the two most important Protestants in post-war Germany, attacked the Allied denazification policy, they also had family members in mind. Wurm's son had been imprisoned for falsifying his *Fragebogen* (questionnaire), by trying to conceal that he had joined the Nazi Party in 1922, and Martin must have been keenly aware of his brother's vulnerability as an *alte Kämpfer*.¹³ The work of Gailus, among others, represents an important continuation of this unmasking process.

While the Third Reich was still in power, the BK became well known abroad. Hoardings in the US called for the release of Martin Niemöller from prison, for example, and Karl Barth's fame as a theologian included widespread awareness of his authorship of the 1934 Barmen Declaration and his flight to Switzerland the following year. Thus the BK, based on the Barmen Declaration, at the end of the war was able to parlay 'opposition' and victimhood into a legendary status. When the Allied armies swept into a defeated and demoralized Germany, membership in the BK became one of the surest signs of a 'good German' and one of the safest paths to smooth denazification.

Victoria Barnett captures this atmosphere in the prologue to her popular history, *For the Soul of the People*. She introduces the reader to Stefanie von Mackensen, fleeing Breslau for Hannover in May 1945. When stopped by US troops,

someone in her group panicked and denounced her as a Nazi and wife of a high-ranking Pomeranian official. Not only was von Mackensen a party member, but so was her husband and father-in-law, the First World War hero and early supporter of Hitler, General August von Mackensen. However, the US troops let her go and provided her with a full tank of petrol as soon as she mentioned 'her friend', Martin Niemöller. She had been an important supporter and on the governing council of the BK.¹⁴

Germans faced moral as well as physical defeat in 1945, with their cities in rubble and the evidence of Nazi horrors coming fully to light. There was a desperate need for distance from these horrors. There was also a desperate need for millions of party members and other implicated individuals to slip through the denazification process demanded by the Allies. And so no German protested when routine reference to the BK, the Catholic Church or even just to Christian faith took on the mantle of resistance and served as exoneration. Church historians were not inclined to question this.

In the search for heroes, Dietrich Bonhoeffer gradually assumed mythic status. A brilliant and idealistic young pastor and theologian, he had opposed National Socialism from the beginning, which could not be said of Niemöller or many other Christians in Germany. Training pastors for the BK, he soon came under Gestapo surveillance and was banned from speaking in public. Finally, he followed family connections into a full-fledged resistance against the regime. As an early accomplice of the 20 July conspiracy to assassinate Hitler, he was arrested, imprisoned and interrogated for several years before his execution in April 1945, three weeks before the end of the war. Although his writings reflect traditional elements of Christian anti-Judaism, there are indications of a growing understanding that the Nazi murder of the Jews was a central Christian theological concern.¹⁵

In recent years, as the hagiographic tendency of scholarship on the BK has diminished, critical studies have focused more on the question of Christians and Jews, demonstrating, among other things, that although members of the BK were willing to support so-called Jewish Christians, they did not extend their support to Jews, and that the DC altered Christian Scripture and liturgy in line with Nazi principles. Wolfgang Gerlach's book *And the Witnesses Were Silent* details the isolation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as he failed in his attempt to persuade fellow BK members to speak out on behalf of the Jews.¹⁶ Even though both Bonhoeffer and Niemöller had made the Aryan Paragraph (paragraph 3 of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, 7 April 1933, which removed 'non-Aryan' civil servants from their posts) an issue, and Bonhoeffer had noted the persecution of Jews as a Christian moral issue, the Barmen Declaration has nothing to say on the subject. Gerlach also argues that silence continued into the post-war period, with a refusal to consider Christian guilt vis-à-vis the Jews, and he clearly establishes

widespread antisemitism and an anti-Jewish theology even among members of the BK.

The German Christian Movement

In the mid-1960s Kurt Meier made the first attempt to write an historical survey of the DC.¹⁷ Meier, a church historian in the former East Germany, was hampered in his efforts by the church archives, which had not organized all the relevant documents at the time he was conducting his research. What emerges in his book is a picture focusing primarily on the organizational structure of the movement, confined to the years 1933–39, with little attention given to the philosophy of the movement and its position within National Socialist ideology.

Strikingly, antisemitism is virtually ignored, although it was a consistently central issue on the various platforms issued by the DC leadership. Just as troubling is Meier's apologetic tendency.¹⁸ He warns against moral censure, citing the difficult circumstances of a totalitarian state.¹⁹ Instead of criticizing the Churches for failing to speak out on behalf of the Jews, he suggests that the Jews and the Churches were joint victims of the Nazis. Although active resistance on the part of the Churches was minimal, Meier argues that the very existence of the Churches in the Third Reich was a form of resistance.

More recent studies have tried to compensate for the deficiencies in Meier's work. One of the first regional studies to appear examined the DC in Bremen, which developed an independent movement under the direction of Bishop Weidemann. In his study *Anpassung und Identität*, Reijo Heinonen is thorough and critical in his reconstruction of the theology and church politics in Bremen during the Third Reich.²⁰ He describes in detail, for example, church leaders' development of a new version of the New Testament, one that was more acceptable to the Nazis, which incorporated work by Emanuel Hirsch, professor of theology at the University of Göttingen and one of the most highly respected German Protestant theologians of his day.

The Bremen New Testament and other liturgical materials were intended to provide a 'Germanized' version of Christianity and carried a strongly anti-Jewish bias, influenced, according to Heinonen, by the writings of the Protestant theologian Adolf Schlatter. One of the most distinguished New Testament scholars of the early twentieth century, Schlatter was known in particular for his studies on early Judaism and he wrote the most widely used German commentary on the New Testament. Heinonen discusses the anti-Judaism in Schlatter's work and his belief in the religious foundations of the Volk, expressed most blatantly in his 1935 essay, 'Will the Jew Triumph over Us?' Here Schlatter argues that Jesus was the strongest opponent Judaism ever encountered. In the twentieth century, Schlatter claims, Judaism is the 'corporality' that must be overcome through Christian 'spirit', a struggle all the more necessary under National

Socialism, which despises all ‘corporality’ and must therefore combat everything associated with Judaism.

The linkage Heinonen exposes between the writings of a respected New Testament scholar and the political activities of pro-Nazi clergy is a significant first effort in an important line of research. Schlatter was clearly not the only Protestant theologian in Germany to espouse Christian justifications for anti-Judaism; investigations have yielded few Christian theologians whose work does not express anti-Jewish tendencies. By limiting his consideration to Schlatter's writings, Heinonen's analysis may exaggerate his influence and fail to appreciate how widespread anti-Judaism was. On the other hand, Heinonen's work is path-breaking in developing a crucial link between the theologies developed within the universities and their political consequences within the Churches.

By contrast, James Zabel and Hans-Joachim Sonne strike a far less critical and, at times, even apologetic tone presenting the DC as a purely Nazi era phenomenon, unrelated to larger trends within Christian theology.²¹

In Zabel's portrayal, the DC are Protestants who viewed National Socialism as a movement of nationalist renewal that would re-establish Christian values. In his effort to sympathize with DC members and understand their motivations, Zabel loses critical judgement with regard to the deadly side of the DC's efforts. In their church newspapers, theological tracts and revised liturgical material the DC provided enthusiastic Christian justifications for National Socialism, a far more powerful form of propaganda than anything the regime could offer. The very act of placing a swastika on the altar shows the synthesis with Nazism that DC pastors voluntarily undertook. Zabel fails to question the ominous consequences for churchgoers of their pastors' support for the regime. To what extent was resistance forestalled by the DC and perhaps even transformed into voluntary collaboration in atrocities?

Hans-Joachim Sonne's more recent study of the DC, which includes previously unpublished archival documents, also emphasizes the nationalist elements within the DC movement. He identifies the sacramentalization of the *Volk* and the polemical, resentful evaluation of the Weimar Republic as its two most salient features, and analyses the political theology of the three main factions within the DC, to present a differentiated picture of DC ideology.

While Zabel and Sonne offer correctives to the false picture presented in earlier scholarship of unity within the DC, they err in not recognizing the central role played by antisemitism in determining the DC's theological platform and attracting members to its organization. Nor do they question the impact of a DC pastor, supporting National Socialism from the pulpit. Moreover, both Zabel and Sonne limit themselves to discussing developments during the Third Reich, as though the DC's ideas emerged solely, or primarily, in response to National Socialism. In contrast to Heinonen, neither Zabel nor Sonne recognizes the connection between the DC and traditional Christian theology. In fact, the

DC were simply proclaiming, perhaps in exaggerated form, theological tendencies already present in German Protestantism. For example, the issue of eliminating the Old Testament had been debated by German theologians prior to the rise of Nazism, as was the issue of Jesus' identity as a Jew or Aryan. Both Zabel and Sonne suggest that the greatest problem posed by the DC was their willingness to use Christian theology in the service of political opportunism, but this charge is weaker than it should be.

Several biographical studies of individual DC pastors have been published. Heiner Faulenbach has written on Bishop Heinrich Oberheid of Bad Godesberg, outside Bonn, a Protestant bishop who became active in the DC movement and was the representative in western Germany of the radical Thuringian wing of the DC.²² Having turned to the study of theology, after a brief but successful career in business, Oberheid was too inexperienced to be appointed bishop without important political connections. Once appointed he used his office to promote adoption of Thuringian DC policies at the highest levels of the national church hierarchy. Indeed, he was a driving force behind the notorious 1939 Godesberg Declaration, which declared Christianity to be the unbridgeable opposition to Judaism and led to the establishment of a theological institute whose goal was the dejudaization of Christianity.

Oberheid joined the Nazi Party in 1928 and the SA in 1929, but Faulenbach offers no interpretation of his motivations. In exploring Oberheid's involvement in a movement that Faulenbach clearly condemns, Faulenbach none the less urges objectivity. Unfortunately, his desire to eschew a judgemental tone leads him to avoid posing some key questions, such as the possible roots of Oberheid's virulent antisemitism, which Faulenbach cites but does not analyse. Ultimately, Oberheid's turn to National Socialism is explained by citing his own explanation, written in 1932: after the First World War, ideal, absolute norms and values had been shattered. This made Oberheid easy prey, Faulenbach suggests, to the theological liberalism which he blames for giving rise to the DC, whose fatal error was a willingness to compromise religious doctrines for political gain. While the post-First World War belief that traditional theological values had been shattered was widespread among German theologians, not all reacted by supporting Nazism, nor can theological liberalism alone be held responsible for the antisemitism of the DC. Faulenbach has presented a remarkably detailed, extremely useful account of Oberheid's activities, but the ultimate explanation of this man's life still awaits better models for critical analysis.

Similar problems haunt the biographical study by Anja Rinnen of Siegfried Leffler, another DC pastor.²³ An early and major leader of the more radical branch of the DC, Leffler also served in the Thuringian Ministry of Education, playing a significant role in Nazifying the University of Jena's theological faculty. The author of numerous pamphlets, including *Christus im Dritten Reich der Deutschen*, published in 1935, he proclaimed that the Jews were a 'satanic curse'

on the world, and urged that Christianity be purged of all Jewish influences. Yet Leffler's antisemitism is not described or analysed in Rinnen's study, which focuses instead on his rabid nationalism.

The most comprehensive study since the work of Meier is Doris Bergen's major survey of the ideology of the DC. Bergen pays particular attention to its anti-dogmatic understanding of religion, its antisemitism and its glorification of masculinity, themes already present, she notes, in German theological discussions of the 1920s. Bergen argues that the DC movement, like National Socialism, should be seen as an outgrowth of German culture of the post-First World War period. She explains the success of the movement as evidence of its reflection of deeply embedded ideas regarding religion, race and gender in German society. In calling for a 'manly Christianity' to root out all traces of Judaism from its theological and liturgical materials, the DC were seeking a Christian counterpart to National Socialism. Rather than a marginal aberration created by the Third Reich, the DC emerges as symptomatic of a corruption at the heart of the universal claims of the Christian Church and an intrinsic ideological faction within the National Socialist state.

Other Christian Churches

While most historians focus on either the Catholic or Protestant Church in Germany, Ernst Helmreich has provided a helpful overview of all the German Churches from the Weimar period to the initial post-Second World War years.²⁴ Helmreich presents the internal political conflicts of the Church that developed during the Weimar Republic and affected the Churches' initial responses to Nazism, and details with great care the various religious factions during the Third Reich, including the neo-pagan movements, divisions within the DC, small church sects, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, developments within the BK and the role of the Catholic Church, including the Vatican. The sheer magnitude of the book's information makes it indispensable, although some of Helmreich's arguments need to be tempered with scepticism. He presents the *Kirchenkampf* as the struggle of the Churches to maintain their independence from state control, minimizing the significance of church leaders who wanted to create a synthesis of Christianity and National Socialism. While he recognizes that the Churches 'did not challenge Nazism directly as a political system', they functioned, he writes, as 'a broad channel through which criticism of Nazi policy could and did flow'.²⁵ Helmreich underestimates the power of the DC and the control it achieved within the Protestant Church, leading him to exaggerate the opposition of the Churches to Hitler, even as he describes the failures of resistance.

The situation of Christians in Germany other than Lutherans, Reformed and Catholic has been explored only to a limited extent. Christine King's study

describes the fate under National Socialism of five groups: Christian Scientists, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, the New Apostolic Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses.²⁶ Each group engaged in a different degree of opposition and accommodation to the regime and each suffered persecution at the hands of the Nazis, ultimately ceasing to function during the war years.

While the Jehovah's Witnesses were not the largest group, with only 20,000 members, they were viewed as the most dangerous because of their refusal to bear arms, vote or offer allegiance to the state. Despite their persecution by the Nazi regime as potential or real enemies, King shows that they managed to develop highly effective underground networks in Germany and the concentration camps where they were imprisoned.

Christian Scientists came under political suspicion because of their connections to the American Church. They were allowed to continue practising in Germany until 1941, when Christian Science was officially banned and the Church went underground. The Seventh Day Adventists, who had attracted wealthier Germans as members, welcomed Hitler warmly in 1933. Like the Christian Scientists, the Adventists offered no opposition to the regime, but none the less fell under government suspicion for their foreign contacts. Unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Adventists accepted conscription willingly and even found biblical justifications for antisemitism, arguing that the Bible itself warned against the Jews and questioning whether Jesus had really been a Jew. Still, the Adventists, according to King, were notable for the private assistance they offered individual Jews.

King's work, based on archival materials, church publications and oral histories, presents a varied spectrum of responses to Nazism on the part of these small church groups, none of which received support from the large, established Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany. Instead, each attempted to survive within Nazism, and none challenged the regime for its antisemitism. Still, the Jehovah's Witnesses, in particular, opposed National Socialism and suffered severely for it. In considering the possibilities for Christian response to National Socialism, the Jehovah's Witnesses emerge as an important model of resistance against which other groups, especially the mainstream Lutheran and Reformed Churches, might be measured.

The Roman Catholic Church

Since the early 1960s, Pope Pius XII has taken centre-stage on the question of Roman Catholicism and the Holocaust. He has had critics who place a large share of responsibility for the Holocaust on his shoulders and defenders who call him a saint. Neither the brightness of the spotlight on him nor the passion of this debate seems to diminish, though decades have passed. One explanation is that Pius XII represents something entirely unknown in the Protestant world, an international figure who claims absolute authority in questions of morality

and doctrine and who stands at the apex of a global institution of prestige, wealth and power. These circumstances made him a significant figure for the approximately 40 per cent of Germans who were members of the Catholic Church as well as for the German church hierarchy. In addition, while Pius was neither German nor, for the most part, under any direct German control, he was in contact with the German authorities, directly aware of the round-up of Jews 'under his very windows' and well informed about the murders taking place.²⁷ Therefore, in comparison to Germans who might have been subject to the inner constraints of patriotism and political enthusiasm and the outer restraints of the Nazi state, Pius had greater freedom to respond to the Nazi persecution and murder of Jews. In comparison to political leaders outside continental Europe, he had greater proximity to the events, a greater presumed claim on the Catholics among the perpetrators and bystanders, and a greater onus as a religious leader to stand up for right against wrong. His limited willingness to do so, despite various claims pressed on him, have made him the subject of a highly contentious analysis.

It is important to remember that Pius XII is only part of the Catholic story, though he has the highest historical profile. There is the broader question of the Vatican and its many officials and diplomats during the war years, and also the stance of prior popes and the nature of Catholic teaching about Jews over the centuries. There is also the question of the Catholics in Germany, both clerical and lay, and how they responded to or even contributed to the Holocaust. Finally, there is the question of Catholics in other countries, especially Poland, where the vast majority of the killing took place, as well as France, Italy, Austria and other places where Catholic influence was strong.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, loyal Catholics in Germany were portrayed as heroes. Bishop Johannes Neuhäusler of Munich published an account in 1946 which describes without nuance a German Catholic Church resistant to Hitler from beginning to end, and victim of his persecution.²⁸ Though any Catholic able to remember the twelve years of Hitler's rule must have recognized that this was not the entire story, it met their need to forget the past and blend in with a democratic future under Allied, and especially American, influence. The Vatican under Pius XII also claimed to have opposed Hitler and helped Jews, and words of appreciation from a number of Jewish survivors gave credibility to the claim.

The positive image of the Catholic response first came under serious attack in 1961, when Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde contributed an article to the respected Catholic journal, *Hochland*.²⁹ His description of Catholic cooperation and complicity in response to Hitler in 1933 aroused immediate and angry protest, and some scholars castigated his work as 'patently unserious' or based on 'extraordinarily primitive methods'. Two years later Hans Müller published a book of documents lending greater credibility to Böckenförde's account than

Neuhäusler's, but the pattern of charges against the Church followed by angry defence would repeat itself for decades.³⁰

Compared to reaction to Böckenförde, which was strong but confined primarily to German Catholic circles, Rolf Hochhuth triggered an international tidal wave with *The Deputy*.³¹ This play first appeared on stage in Berlin in February 1963 and then in various European capitals until it arrived in New York one year later. Critics often noted that the complexity of Hochhuth's play, which would have taken six to eight hours to perform as written, lost its impact when cut to three hours for the stage. Often it was seen simply as an attack on Pius XII, who was depicted as an icy diplomat more worried about communists than Nazis, and who failed to condemn the crimes against Jews when called on to do so. When the play opened, some members of the public screamed and picketed the theatre, and large segments of the Catholic world considered it a rank example of anti-Catholic prejudice, but many others in Europe and the United States applauded Hochhuth's work.³²

Strikingly, Hochhuth, a playwright, had posed in 1963 many of the questions which still reverberate among historians debating the role of Pius XII. Before he became pope, as Eugenio Pacelli, he had lived and worked in Germany and appreciated German culture. Like virtually all Catholics of his time, he detested communism as a godless ideology, so that when war was declared, he could not support Stalin. As a trained politician and diplomat, during the pontificate of his predecessor Pius XI, he had helped draw up the 1933 Concordat by which Hitler's new regime and the Vatican came to an agreement with each other. He had also worked on a similar agreement with Mussolini in 1929. As Pius XII he was concerned to protect the 109 acres of Vatican City and the institutional structure of the Catholic Church in dangerous times. Was he less concerned to protect the Jews of Europe?

Critics assume that he could have done something effective in opposition to Hitler and in support of European Jews if only he had chosen to do so.³³ Jewish, British and American representatives kept him informed of the Holocaust (as did Catholic sources), and they pleaded with him throughout 1942 publicly to condemn the Nazi murder of the Jews.³⁴ He did not. He never focused on the Holocaust or publicly spoke the word 'Jews', though he did read a Christmas radio message in 1942, condemning in general terms violence and injustice on all sides. Would it have made a difference if he had been more explicit? Should he have excommunicated Hitler, who was, after all, still officially a Catholic? Would a public statement and warning by a respected world figure have persuaded German Catholics to turn against Hitler? Would bystanders in Germany and elsewhere, especially in Poland, have been motivated to help Jews or otherwise try to prevent the killing process? Would Jews have known more fully their fate and found ways to avoid it? It is impossible to know.

Defenders of Pius claim that his 1942 Christmas message represents a courageous and appropriate warning, understood at the time as a real condemnation of the ill treatment of Jews.³⁵ They also criticize – even ridicule – the idea that stronger or more explicit words would have made a difference. The Vatican, without military means, was vulnerable to Mussolini and, after his fall in 1943, to Hitler (though the Vatican was never breached by either, and both wanted to avoid unnecessary alienation among Catholics). Hitler would not have listened or been deterred, they say, and both Jews and Catholics might have been made more vulnerable to harm (though it is difficult to imagine greater vulnerability on the part of Europe's Jews). These explanations emanated from Pius XII himself, as well as from his supporters. The issues remain hypothetical, of course.

Pius' side of the argument also included the claim that his quiet diplomacy and *sub rosa* efforts saved many Jews, perhaps hundreds of thousands.³⁶ We know that many Jews were able to hide in Italy, including in Catholic establishments, so that the percentage of Italian Jews murdered was relatively low. These are among the acts credited to Pius XII. Susan Zuccotti undertook to investigate such claims and found no evidence that Pius ever directed his representatives or Catholics in general to save Jews.³⁷ This lack of documentation convinces her that the motivation for the many acts of Catholic assistance came from the individuals directly involved. Focusing on the phrase 'under his very windows', her work clearly implies a moral charge against Pius XII: How could he watch as Jews were rounded up in the shadow of his quarters to be sent to their death without speaking out?

Part of the problem facing Zuccotti – and all scholars dealing with this topic – involves severe limitations placed on access to Vatican sources. She had to work on the margins of the question, looking for memos and messages in peripheral archives, rather than being able to go without restriction to the Vatican itself. On the one hand, the papacy has a very long-term view of its place in history and keeps its documents secret for generations. On the other hand, charges levelled by Rolf Hochhuth threatened the Vatican with a public relations disaster. Responding to this concern, Vatican officials broke precedent and published eleven volumes of Pius XII's documents between 1965 and 1981.³⁸ These provide a wealth of material, though the self-selection process exercised by four Jesuit editors cannot dispel the suspicion that questionable materials might have been withheld.

Pope John Paul II, who has travelled to Israel and otherwise tried to create better relations between Catholics and Jews, called in 1987 for an analysis into any possible Catholic responsibility for antisemitism and the Holocaust. The resulting product, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, appeared in 1998 to a much less enthusiastic response than John Paul had hoped. The document regrets that Catholics practised religious anti-Judaism over the centuries. But it argues that racial antisemitism, the real cause of the Holocaust, developed in

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries outside the Church and despite Catholic condemnation. Criticisms of *We Remember* led to another effort, a commission of three Jewish and three Catholic scholars, who tried to develop an overview of Pius XII's relationship to the Holocaust. Starting with already published materials, the committee began but could not complete its task, finally breaking down in angry recriminations in July 2001. Committee members questioned the Vatican's commitment to the opening of its archives. Some outsiders then questioned – in a rather ugly manner – whether Jewish scholars could really pursue the topic without prejudice. It seems likely that only unrestricted access to the Vatican archives will allay suspicions.

In 1998 the Vatican opened its files on the Inquisition. David Kertzer took advantage of this opportunity and has written a powerful critique of *We Remember*. He rejects as untenable the claim that Catholic anti-Judaism differed fundamentally from Nazi antisemitism. Examining nineteenth- and early twentieth-century records of the Inquisition and the two major Vatican news outlets, *Civiltà cattolica* and *L'Osservatore romano*, he discovered Vatican support for just the sort of racial antisemitism which undergirded Nazi politics. Kertzer acknowledges that Catholics never called for the murder of Jews, but shows that the Vatican tried to overturn the Jewish emancipation order issued by Napoleon when he seized Rome. When the Papal States returned to papal control, Jews were forced back into the ghetto, lost their civil rights and were forced once again to wear the yellow Star of David. Opposing not only the French Revolution but all political modernization, the Vatican associated Jews with democracy, individualism and other alleged evils of the modern world, and advocated the repression of Jews as a race for the good of the Christian world. The Vatican even encouraged the resurgence of the madness of ritual murder charges, which swept Catholic Europe towards the turn of the twentieth century. This reawakened the medieval fantasy that Jews kill Christian children in order to use their blood for religious purposes. Trials for ritual murder were held in Catholic countries with papal approval, and the Catholic press fanned the flames of such hysteria.³⁹

Michael Phayer's *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* adds two important dimensions to this story.⁴⁰ Phayer criticizes Pius XII and other members of the hierarchy and notes the hostility of Catholics to Jews. However, he illustrates the actions of individual Catholics, often in the lower echelons of the Church, who risked their lives and well-being to help Jews. That aspect of the history should not be exaggerated or used to mask institutional failures, but should not be overlooked. Some Catholic (and Protestant) Christians behaved morally, even heroically, and Phayer argues that they are more likely to be found at the grassroots. By taking the story up to 1965, Phayer also describes the very real changes that had taken place in the Catholic Church by the 1960s. Under the leadership of Pope John XXIII, Catholics met at the Second Vatican Council

and dropped their longstanding teaching of contempt for Jews. No longer would orthodox Catholic doctrine call Jews Christ-killers; no longer would Good Friday be a day for instilling hatred against all Jews everywhere.

Less material is available on Catholics in Germany, but the questionable structure built up in Bishop Neuhausler's imagination in 1946 has been thoroughly demolished. In 1966 Saul Friedländer, using German Foreign Office documents, published a study of German-Catholic relations during the Second World War. He established that Pius XII did not shrink from cooperating with Germany, despite the nature of the regime. Rather, he feared the 'bolshevization' of Europe and hoped that Germany, together with the Western Allies, would protect Europe from Russia.⁴¹

Guenter Lewy wrote the first account in English of Catholics in Nazi Germany. He tries to acknowledge the complexity, noting opposition to the Nazi ideology, especially before 1933, as well as enthusiasm, especially after what he calls the 'Great Reconciliation' which occurred between March and July 1933. But in conclusion, Lewy's judgement is highly critical:

When thousands of German anti-Nazis were tortured to death in Hitler's concentrations camps, when the Polish intelligentsia was slaughtered, when hundreds of thousands of Russians died as a result of being treated as Slavic *Untermenschen*, and when 6,000,000 human beings were murdered for being 'non-Aryan', Catholic Church officials in Germany bolstered the regime perpetrating these crimes. The Pope in Rome, the spiritual head and supreme moral teacher of the Roman Catholic Church, remained silent.⁴²

Donald Dietrich published a book in 1988 which attempts to probe the failure of individual Catholics in Germany to recognize the Nazi regime for the evil that it was. He highlights the patriotism of Catholics, especially in response to Bismarck's anti-Catholic campaign – the *Kulturkampf* – of the 1870s, when the basic rights of Catholics were taken away for alleged disloyalty. He attempts a psychosocial analysis, noting the impact of the First World War and the uncertainties of Weimar, and stressing the cognitive dissonance between their value system and the brutalities of the regime. One finds in this book plenty of evidence of collaboration by Catholics with the Nazi state, but also a less harsh judgement than that found in Lewy's book.⁴³

One can add to the evidence of Catholic collaboration found in Lewy and Dietrich, especially on the part of Catholic bishops, in a book of essays by Klaus Scholder. Among other examples, he has Cardinal Bertram ordering a special mass for Adolf Hitler in May 1945 after learning of Hitler's death. Although Bertram was 86 years old at the time, his action indicates a deep-seated complicity with the regime.⁴⁴ Such complicity was far more commonplace than many acknowledge.

The post-war era

Equally troubling is the long delay after 1945 before the Churches, both Protestant and Catholic, began to consider their culpability in the Holocaust. The initial response of German church leaders was to claim that Christians had resisted Hitler. The 1945 Stuttgart Declaration, the earliest Protestant post-war response, says nothing about the murder of the Jews, just as the 1934 Barmen Declaration, the strongest anti-Nazi statement issued by the Confessing Church during the Third Reich, had said nothing about Nazi antisemitism. It was not until the 1960s and again in the late 1970s that a few Protestant theological voices begin to suggest that Christianity had to revise its attitude toward Judaism and the Jewish people. Among Roman Catholics, the Second Vatican Council, convened in the early 1960s, caused some change in Catholic attitudes, spurred by the enormous controversy Hochhuth's play had generated.

In the first years after the war, the German Churches were unable to muster even a strong *condemnation* of the murder of the Jews, much less an expression of responsibility for its horrors. This should not surprise us, perhaps, for church leadership remained, with a few exceptions, in the same hands that had guided the Churches under Hitler. Furthermore, theologians after 1945, even those who had opposed some aspects of National Socialism, had all been trained in an environment hostile to Judaism. Few were untainted by the antisemitic mentality of Nazi propaganda or the formidably anti-Jewish slant within the universities' theological teachings. Even a generally admired figure such as Theophil Wurm, Bishop of Würtemberg, illustrates the problem. In a letter written in January 1949 to lay church members meeting at Darmstadt to formulate a declaration about the Holocaust, he wrote:

Can anyone in Germany speak about the Jewish question without mentioning how Jewish literature sinned against the German people through its mockery of all that is holy, since the days of Heinrich Heine? Or of the suffering endured in numerous regions by German farmers at the hands of Jewish money-lenders? And if one wants today to speak out against antisemitism, can one remain silent on the misfortune caused by the Occupying Forces, who have given power to émigré Jews, so that they might give expression to their understandable feelings of rage?⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, given the tone of Wurm's advice, the Darmstadt Declaration ultimately blamed the Holocaust on the Jews' refusal to become Christians.

During the 1970s the Churches of the Rhineland, Baden and Brandenburg tried to rid themselves of centuries of anti-Jewish theology and forge a new affirmation of Judaism's continued vitality and legitimacy. It is worth noting that those efforts began among German Churches influenced more by Calvinist

than by Lutheran traditions. Individual pastors, such as Benjamin Locher of the Rhineland, played a crucial role in formulating the 1960 declaration by the German Protestant Church (*Evangelische Kirche Deutschland* – EKD) and the even more influential 1980 declaration by the Church of the Rhineland. Locher insisted that the Holocaust was not one of many Christian concerns, but the central problem of Christian theology. ‘Something is false in our faith. There must be something false at its heart that we as Christian teachers or practitioners are teaching or representing.’⁴⁶ One of today’s groundbreaking Protestant theologians in Germany, Friedrich Wilhelm Marquardt, has attempted to formulate a christology that would affirm Jesus as the embodiment of the Jewish faith, not as a teacher who sought Judaism’s destruction. Marquardt’s efforts begin with the question: ‘What meaning does it have for us to speak of God after Auschwitz?’⁴⁷

Despite these tendencies, the situation in Germany’s theological community today is mixed. Numerous theologians, pastors and lay people continue to promulgate the outdated and denigrating portrayals of Judaism they have inherited. A recent bestseller by the journalist Jörg Zink suggests that if Jesus instead of Moses had taught the Ten Commandments, they would have been formulated as loving suggestions, rather than apodictic laws.⁴⁸ His argument recapitulates the stereotype of Jewish legalism in contrast to Christian love, as well as the idea that the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament. A German feminist theologian, Christa Mulack, maintains that Jewish adherence to divine commandments is equivalent to Nazi obedience to the criminal orders of their superiors. She describes the Holocaust as the triumph of Jewish patriarchal ethics over the feminist morality taught by Jesus; thus Jews are made the victims of their own religion.⁴⁹

Other theologians are more subtle. Jürgen Moltmann, Germany’s most famous contemporary Protestant theologian, does not emphasize Christian responsibility for antisemitism, but instead places Christians alongside Jews as victims of persecution:

There is only one people of hope in the world, the one people of God. It is the one people of God, the people of the old and new covenant. Because Jews and Christians have a common hope for ‘the one who is to come’, the messiah, they are on the way together to God’s kingdom and future. That is why they are persecuted together and suffer together. When Israel is led to the slaughter, the church goes with her – if things are as they should be.⁵⁰

In reality, Jews and Christians are not ‘one people of hope in the world’. Since the days of Jesus, they have not had a shared history, but rather two different histories, which often were rent apart by Christian persecution of Jews. The notion that ‘when Israel is led to the slaughter’ the Church ought to accompany her is troubling. Most of us would contend that neither Jews nor Christians should

ever be slaughtered. Most disturbing, however, is Moltmann's inability to concede that the principal cause of the murder of Jews throughout the course of western history has been Christian anti-Judaism. His sentimental vision of what should be diverts attention from the horror of what has been. Instead of declaring Christian readiness to be killed with Jews, Moltmann should honestly acknowledge Christian responsibility for past slaughter.

At the same time, important efforts are being made by leading theologians in contemporary Germany to repudiate the kind of anti-Jewish tradition exemplified by respected figures such as Harnack and Bultmann. Institutes for Jewish studies are found at most of the leading German universities, and increasing numbers of students of Christian theology are writing dissertations to expose and repudiate aspects of Christian anti-Judaism. Few theologians outside Germany have devoted as much energy and passion to creating a Christianity that affirms Judaism, and few Christian theology students are as engaged in studying Hebrew and Judaism as are German students. Many German theologians today view the Holocaust and the centuries of Christian anti-Judaism that flourished in Germany as the central problems to be addressed if Christianity is to have a future in Germany and if Germany is to have any moral standing in the community of nations.

Conclusion

Increasingly, scholars are beginning to recognize that the German Churches played a far more important role in the Holocaust than has hitherto been admitted. Most importantly, their role involved moral suasion: through the support for Nazi policies articulated by many religious leaders, ordinary Germans were reassured that those policies did not violate the tenets of Christian faith and morality. To the extent that the Third Reich viewed propaganda as central to meeting its goals, the Churches can be seen as a powerful ally. A minister in long black robes, preaching from the pulpit on Sundays, could be considered far more effective than a politician, especially for believers. A minister claims to be God's voice on earth, while politicians are notorious as symbols of duplicity.

In addition, historians are presenting evidence that large and powerful segments of the Catholic and Protestant Churches supported Nazism with enthusiasm, under circumstances in which silence would have been morally preferable and politically more judicious. Such evidence forces a re-evaluation of the role of the Churches and an assessment of their actions during the Third Reich. Indeed, the passion for National Socialism expressed by some theologians and pastors indicates their fervent belief that Nazism was good for the Church as well as the state. That Nazism carried out the genocide of Jews and the destruction of European Judaism was not recognized as a devastation of the Church and Christian faith.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, R.P. Erickson and S. Heschel, 'The German Churches Face Hitler: An Assessment of the Historiography', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte*, 23 (1994), 433–59.
- 2 See C. Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung 1945–1949. Die Last der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1989).
- 3 P. Matheser, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1981), p. 100.
- 4 S. Heschel, 'Church Protests during the Third Reich: A Report on Two Cases', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 10 (1997), 377–88. See, for example, an undated letter written by Walther Schultz, protesting at the Nazi Party order that the swastika be used only in official party contexts and be removed from church institutions, in Berlin Document Center: Schumacher Collection on Church Affairs, T580, R. 42; also in Bundesarchiv Koblenz, BA R43II/150 Fiche #3.
- 5 L. Siegele-Wenschkewitz, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft vor der Judenfrage: Gerhard Kittels theologische Arbeit im Wandel deutscher Geschichte* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1980).
- 6 See, for example, M. Rese, 'Antisemitismus und neutestamentliche Forschung: Anmerkung zum Thema "Gerhard Kittel und die Judenfrage"', *Evangelische Theologie*, 39 (1979); and R.P. Erickson, 'Zur Auseinandersetzung mit und um Gerhard Kittels Antisemitismus', *Evangelische Theologie*, 43 (1983).
- 7 R.P. Erickson, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).
- 8 M. Gailus, *Protestantismus und Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Durchdringung des protestantischen Sozialmilieus in Berlin* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001); idem, 'Overwhelmed by their own Fascination with the "Ideas of 1933": Berlin's Protestant Social Milieu in the Third Reich', *German History*, 20 (2002), 462–93.
- 9 J.S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933–1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).
- 10 K. Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich. Vol. I: Preliminary History and the Time of Illusions, 1918–1934* (London: SCM Press, 1987); originally published as *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich, Band I: Vorgeschichte und Zeit der Illusionen 1918–1934* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1977); idem, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Vol. II: The Year of Disillusionment, 1934. Barmen and Rome*, ed. G. Besier, D. Kleinmann and J. Thierfelder (London: SCM Press, 1988); originally published as *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich, Band II: Das Jahr der Ernüchterung 1934. Barmen und Rom* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1986). G. Besier, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich: Spaltungen und Abwehrkämpfe 1934–1937* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2001).
- 11 Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, Vol. Two, pp. 112, 116.
- 12 Interview with John Conway, 26 February 2003.
- 13 Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung*, p. 75.
- 14 V. Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 3–4.
- 15 E. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologe – Christ – Zeitgenosse* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1967); English translation: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage*, trans. E. Mosbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); idem., 'Nichts scheint mehr in Ordnung', in *Ethik im Ernstfall: Dietrich Bonhoeffers Stellung zu den Juden und ihre Aktualität*, ed. W. Huber and I. Tödt (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1982).
- 16 W. Gerlach, *Als die Zeugen schwiegen: Bekennende Kirche und die Juden* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1987); English translation: *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The*

Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews, trans. and ed. V.J. Barnett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). Note that Gerlach completed his work as a dissertation in 1970, but then struggled for 17 years to find a German publisher. His willingness to criticize important theologians and church leaders certainly contributed to the delay.

- 17 K. Meier, *Die Deutsche Christen: Das Bild einer Bewegung im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reiches* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964).
- 18 It is worth noting that Meier worked within the context of another state in need of apologetics, the German Democratic Republic. Gerhard Besier has been at the forefront of this controversy about the Churches in the GDR, as editor (with Stephan Wolf) of '*Pfarrer, Christen und Katholiken: Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der ehemaligen DDR und die Kirchen*' (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991, 1992), and as author of *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche: Der Weg in die Anpassung* (Munich: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1993).
- 19 K. Meier, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Die evangelische Kirche im Dritten Reich* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), pp. 225–36.
- 20 R.E. Heinonen, *Anpassung und Identität: Theologie und Kirchenpolitik der Bremer Deutschen Christen 1933–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).
- 21 J. Zabel, *Nazism and the Pastors: A Study of the Ideas of Three Deutsche Christen Groups* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1976); H.-J. Sonne, *Die politische Theologie der Deutschen Christen: Einheit und Vielfalt deutsch-christlichen Denkens, dargestellt anhand des Bundes für Deutsche Kirche, der Thüringer Kirchenbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' und der Christlich-Deutschen Bewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).
- 22 H. Faulenbach, *Ein Weg durch die Kirche: Heinrich Josef Oberheid* (Cologne: Rheinland Verlag, 1992).
- 23 A. Rinnen, *Kirchenmann und Nationalsozialist: Siegfried Lefflers ideelle Verschmelzung von Kirche und Drittem Reich* (Weinheim: Deutsche Studien Verlag, 1995).
- 24 E.C. Helmreich, *The German Churches under Hitler* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979).
- 25 Ibid., p. 132.
- 26 C.E. King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982). For studies of the German Mormons under National Socialism, see O. Eggenberger, *Die Kirchen: Sondergruppen und religiösen Vereinigungen* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978); and G. Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Germany between 1840 and 1970* (Salt Lake City, 1970). On Baptists, see A. Ströbind, *Die unfreie Freikirche: Der Bund der Baptistengemeinden im Dritten Reich* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991).
- 27 The phrase used by Susan Zuccotti in her book about Pius XII.
- 28 J. Neuhäusler, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Der Kampf des Nationalsozialismus gegen die katholische Kirche und der kirchliche Widerstand* (Munich: Verlag Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946).
- 29 E.-W. Böckenförde, 'Der deutsche Katholizismus im Jahre 1933: Eine kritische Betrachtung', *Hochland*, 53 (1961), 283–304. See also his 'German Catholicism in 1933', *Cross Currents*, 11 (1961), 283–304.
- 30 H. Müller, *Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente 1930–1935* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1963). For a commentary on Böckenförde and Neuhäusler, see K. Sontheimer's 'Einleitung', especially pp. viii–ix for his quotations from the former's angry critics.

- 31 R. Hochhuth, *The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964). This play had an extraordinary response. See, for example, D. Fisher, *Pope Pius XII and the Jews: An Answer to Hochhuth's Play, Der Stellvertreter (The Deputy)* (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1963).
- 32 See E. Bentley, *The Storm over the Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).
- 33 A recent example of this critique can be found in J. Cornwell's aggressively titled book, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking, 1999).
- 34 O. Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 35 For example, see R.J. Rychlak, *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* (Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000).
- 36 See, for example, P. Blet, *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999).
- 37 S. Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).
- 38 P. Blet, A. Martini, R. Graham and B. Schneider, eds., *Records and Documents of the Holy See Related to the Second World War*, trans. Gerard Noel (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968).
- 39 D.I. Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2001). See, for example, Part I on Jewish oppression in the Papal States and chapters 4 and 11 on ritual murder.
- 40 M. Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
- 41 S. Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation* (New York: Knopf, 1966).
- 42 G. Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 341.
- 43 D. Dietrich, *Catholic Citizens in the Third Reich: Psycho-Social Principles and Moral Reasoning* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988).
- 44 K. Scholderer, *A Requiem for Hitler and Other New Perspectives on the German Church Struggle* (London: SCM Press, 1989).
- 45 17 January 1949, Letter to Bruderrat, Landeskirchlichesarchiv Darmstadt, Bestand 36/73, cited in C. Raisig, *Wege der Erneuerung: Christen und Juden. Der Rheinische Synodalbeschluss* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2002), p. 57.
- 46 Berlin 1960: Bericht über die vierte Tagung der zweiten Synode der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland vom 21. bis 26. Februar 1960, hg. im Auftrag des Rates von der Kirchenkanzlei der EKD, p. 257; cited by Raisig, *Wege der Erneuerung*, p. 81.
- 47 F.W. Marquardt, *Von Elend und Heimsuchung der Theologie: Prolegomena zur Dogmatik* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1988), p. 138.
- 48 J. Zink, *Neue Zehn Gebote* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1995).
- 49 C. Mulack, *Jesus: der Gesalbte der Frauen* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1987), pp. 155–6.
- 50 J. Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 22.

14

Jewish Leadership *in Extremis*

Dan Michman

Images

'The point of departure in any discussion of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust must be the basic fact that the Jewish People did not succeed in defending these lives [of the six million who died]' – thus historian Leni Yahil presented her view of the Jewish scene at the opening of her lecture at Yad Vashem's first international scholars' conference, held in 1968.¹ Yahil was one of the first academic Holocaust researchers in Israel, and was already well known at the time because of her path-breaking study on the rescue of Danish Jewry.² She would establish her reputation later in a comprehensive history of the Holocaust.³ Her view expressed the feeling of many Jews and non-Jews alike, at that time as well as later. Even if this approach can be justified to a certain extent, it is nevertheless based on a somewhat problematic assumption concerning the cohesion and mode of organization of 'The Jewish People', an assumption that will be discussed later. But, if 'the Jewish *People* did not succeed in defending the lives of its members', a necessary question regarding the Jewish *leadership* had to follow: how did this leadership behave vis-à-vis and react to the Nazi threat, and – most emphatically – in what did it fail?

It is therefore not surprising that public discussion among Jews – survivors and others – during the first decades after 1945, and especially in Israel, as well as historical research regarding Jewish leadership, were *ab initio* dominated by enormous criticism of the Jewish leaders. At the public level the chairmen (and in many cases also the members) of the Jewish Councils (*Judenräte*) were usually identified as *the* Jewish leaders responsible for the débâcle, and they were condemned as 'collaborators'. This started as early as the 1940s, during the Holocaust. In the immediate post-Holocaust period there were even occasions – for instance, in the Netherlands, Belgium and Hungary – when

survivors or whole communities in Europe initiated legal proceedings against these people, either before a state court or a Jewish 'court of honour'.⁴ Later, leaders of the Jewish communities in the free world, including first and foremost the leaders of the American Jewish community and the leadership of the Zionist Yishuv in Palestine, were accused of having contributed to the failure by not having done their utmost to save their persecuted brethren. The public debate generated journalistic as well as scholarly research (and even committees of inquiry, such as the Goldberg Committee in the early 1980s among the American Jewish community), which, in turn – because of the spate of publications – fuelled public discussion once again. Such developments characterized almost every Jewish community outside Europe at that time.

In addition to this popular approach, generated by survivors (in the Netherlands, for instance, the Amsterdam Jewish Council, the *Joodsche Raad*, was ironically called *joods verraad*, meaning 'Jewish treason'), three scholars publishing their studies in the 1950s and early 1960s had a major impact on all later discussions dealing with Jewish leadership under the Nazi regime: Raul Hilberg, Hannah Arendt and Philip Friedman. The works of the first two, written in English, are usually quoted in any publication on Jewish Councils. Hilberg, in his authoritative study *The Destruction of the European Jews* (first published in 1961), viewed the Jewish Councils as the one and only 'leadership' of the Jews. On the one hand, this leadership was appointed by the Germans, on the other hand it was – as he presented it – a continuation of the Jewish leadership that had existed before the Nazi period. This leadership, which personified – in a concentrated way – characteristics of the Jewish community, had two 'salient features': 'an attempt to avert action and, failing that, automatic compliance'. These were an outcome of 'a two-thousand-year-old experience' of persecution, which the Jewish people, as a group, had survived, even if individuals had perished. 'This experience,' Hilberg claimed, 'was so ingrained in the Jewish consciousness as to achieve the force of law.... A two-thousand-year-old lesson could not be unlearned; the Jews could not make the switch [to resistance].' In summary: 'Only in 1941, 1942, and 1943 did the Jewish leadership realise that, unlike the pogroms of past centuries, the modern machine-line destruction process would engulf European Jewry.'⁵ Arendt was even more extreme:

Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way and another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people.⁶

Hilberg, who in some ways distanced himself from Arendt's harsh conclusions (on the moral level), nevertheless continued to perceive the Jewish Councils as 'tools' of the Germans.⁷ Philip Friedman, one of the finest Holocaust scholars of the first period, remained less well known to the widening community of Holocaust researchers, because he focused on 'the Jewish dimension' of the Holocaust, and – though living in the United States – published many of his most important studies in Hebrew, aiming at the Israeli scholarly community and the Hebrew-reading audience abroad. Accordingly, his views had a greater impact on Israeli and Jewish research (more so because Hilberg and Arendt were not translated into Hebrew until 2000). In a series of articles dedicated to the major 'Ghetto chiefs' in the Polish ghettos – Mordechai Chaim Rumkowsky of Łódź, Moses Merin of Sosnowiec and Jacob Gens of Vilna – published in 1953–54, he made the following observations:

The question of the Judenräte... has not yet been adequately discussed. Some writers judge them harshly, while others try to defend them. The entire Judenrat question deserves special treatment and careful analysis.... Many ghetto writers and chroniclers have regarded them as Nazi 'collaborators', enemies of their own people. This reaction is understandable, especially among victims of the Holocaust. Historically and sociologically, however, so simplistic and superficial an interpretation will not suffice. These ghetto leaders were not simply 'villains'. Their downfall was the result of complex internal conflicts, coupled with tremendous pressure from the German enemy.... Some of these leaders believed that they were chosen by God to play a special role in the deliverance of their people.

And:

The term 'false messiah' does not really suit those Jews who arose in the ghettos of Nazi-occupied Poland and took upon them the task of saving Israel. They were false saviours, not false messiahs.... The pseudo-saviours who emerged in the Polish ghettos derived not from the messianic tradition of Israel, but from foreign and profane sources.... The pseudo-saviours of the ghettos were, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by the great 'messianic' craze of the fascists, and aspired to be saviours of their people in ways that were devoid of Jewish spirit.⁸

Thus, two equations became rooted in popular discourse on the Holocaust:
 (a) Jewish leadership under the Nazi regime = Jewish Councils = collaboration;
 (b) the Jewish leadership's behaviour vis-à-vis the Nazi regime = failure. Not surprisingly, the result was to make the word *Judenrat* in Jewish discourse equivalent to 'treason' (or 'Quisling' in general discourse).

Terms and definitions

The above-mentioned images and approaches encompass several implicit assumptions and axioms that need to be clarified; in spite of the limited space at our disposal here, we shall try to deal with some of them.

The phenomenon of leadership is a much researched topic in a broad variety of disciplines: psychology (especially social psychology), sociology, political science and history. Even though researchers in these disciplines differ on the precise definition of 'leadership', all agree that in all aspects of social life there are situations in which certain people – thanks to their position or because of other means they utilize – mobilize others and cause them to respond in certain ways. Popular images tend to identify leadership foremost with the charismatic personality; sociological research, however, has proved that the *special* 'leadership characteristics' or 'capabilities' (whether inherited or acquired) are less important than commonly expected. In fact, any social life creates situations in which a leadership function is needed, and this function is manned through organized choice (election) or other procedures. The basic elements of the leadership situation are the following: the leader, the followers, the situation and the task. The basic functions of leadership are: (a) the preservation of the existence of the group (or society) and the strengthening of its internal solidarity and cohesion; and (b) the furthering of its goals and the proper coping with its internal needs.

In the light of these general features one has to pose the question: were the Jewish people in the 1930s and 1940s a cohesive, well-defined group or society, with a broadly accepted leadership? Additionally, one should ask whether the *Judenrat* phenomenon can seriously and simply be included in the concept of leadership as depicted above, and whether there were any other 'leaderships' in Jewish society.

The concepts of 'the Jewish people' and 'Jewish leadership'

Research on modern nationalism, which has flourished in the past two decades, has developed a number of analytical tools in order to understand better the national movements and nation-states that emerged, mainly in Europe, from the end of the eighteenth century. One of the issues that exercised researchers was the emergence among individuals of the consciousness (or sense) of belonging to broader groups, when real, daily contacts with most of the other members of that group do not exist. How can a citizen of southern France feel 'brotherhood' and 'identification' with somebody living in northern France, whom he has never known and will never meet? To explain this problem, Benedict Anderson introduced the concept of the 'imagined community', distinguishing it from communities in which the individual has direct contacts with fellow individuals (workplace, neighbourhood, etc.). According to Anderson and his

school, in the modern era a new consciousness of belonging, superseding the existing local and communal one, developed – partly as a result of the modern centralized state – and on this basis the modern nation emerged.⁹

It should be emphasized that contrary to the interpretation of certain researchers of modern nationalism (such as Eric Hobsbawm), who are not acquainted with Jewish thought or the Hebrew language and who think only of the Zionist movement as 'Jewish nationalism', a national Jewish consciousness or a consciousness of Jewish peoplehood emerged before the modern era. The sense and concept of a Jewish people based on and defined by a certain religion had crystallized in the very early days of Jewish history (long before the Christian era) and continued to be shaped during the Middle Ages, when Jews and Jewish communities were scattered throughout the Christian and Muslim worlds. It was precisely against the background of dispersion and enormous distances between the different Jewish communities – which nevertheless maintained contacts through exchange of rabbinical studies, *Responsa* literature and other *Halakhic* discourse, through the customary nomination of rabbis from distant places, through marriages of people from different communities and through commerce – that a mystical understanding of being part of the abstract body of 'Israel' or 'Clal Yisrael' (literally, 'the whole of Israel') became common (see especially the writings of the sixteenth-century Rabbi Judah Loew [Maharal] of Prague).¹⁰ This Jewish self-understanding preceded the similar Romantic views of nations that developed in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the Jews, most of whom were living in Europe in modern times (1825: 83 per cent, 1880: 88 per cent), became heavily influenced by the economic, social and political developments that engulfed the European continent in this period. The Jewish national movement, and especially its Zionist branch, which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, adopted aspects of both traditional Jewish national thought and modern European nationalism, emphasizing the national roots of the Jewish people, that is, their basic cohesion in spite of dispersal. This perception permeated Jewish historiography, resulting, among other things, in the writing of comprehensive, synthetic histories of the Jewish people. After the Shoah, when Zionism achieved its most impressive goals and turned – in the eyes of all – into *the* authentic representative of the Jews, the perception that the Jews had indeed been an organic and cohesive 'people' in the simple meaning of the term, became almost axiomatic.

However, the reality on the eve of the Nazi period was rather different. There was undoubtedly a sense of Jewish solidarity and Jewish singularity; which is documented in both Jewish actions and activities and in non-Jewish observations. But the feature that best characterized the interaction of Jews among themselves at this time was division, decomposition and an inability to agree even on basic aspects of identity (that is, what precisely 'Jewishness' is).

Jewish history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is characterized by an ever-intensifying process of dismantling of the sense of belonging to a Jewish collective, which is eager to keep its individuals together and has an agreed view regarding a common future. The process of secularization caused many to abandon the Jewish faith and its conceptions, while the process of emancipation encouraged integration into the surrounding society, leading many Jews to define Judaism merely as a religion (which clashed in some respects with secularization), to adopt the local language, change the community's nature into a religious denomination and, in many cases, cease to be a member of any Jewish organization. This aspect was expressed in western Europe through the change of the old term 'Jew' to the 'cleaner' term 'Israelite' ('Israëlit' in German and Dutch, 'Israélite' in French), which seemed to be detached from Jewish national connotations. Consequently, on the eve of the Holocaust, Jews were broad and geographically scattered groups, who quarrelled heatedly and intensively about the definition and essence of the Jewish entity and identity and about the proper way(s) in which individual Jews should design its and their future. Moreover, some of the Jewish groups and individuals (though not all, and apparently not even the majority) openly negated any effort to include them in 'the Jewish people'. In any case, as a result of the decomposition of the sense of 'all-Jewishness', no leading authority was accepted, meaning precisely that 'something' that could be called *the* Jewish leadership did not exist on the eve of the Nazi period. One can speak only of (many) Jewish leaderships, leading different and, in many cases, opposing Jewish religious, social or political groups. This reality would be catastrophic under the Nazi regime, precisely because the Nazis, following their antisemitic ideology, believed 'the Jews' to be a well-organized and threatening power (a 'state within the state'), headed by a sinister and well-organized leadership (the Elders of Zion, or 'rabbis', or some other obscure leadership).¹¹

Scholarly controversies regarding the Jewish Councils: 'leadership' and 'headship'

Another methodological problem is the commonly accepted identification and equation of Jewish leadership during the Holocaust with the Jewish Councils. Such an identification can be found not only in the writings of Hilberg and Arendt, but in most of the research literature on Jewish life during the Holocaust and especially about the Jewish Councils themselves. This is the case, for instance, in the American-Jewish historian Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat* (1972),¹² the most comprehensive study of the *Judenrat* phenomenon so far written (though limiting itself to eastern Europe), and in the overwhelming majority of the contributions to both the colloquium of 1967 on 'Jewish Governing Bodies'¹³ and the Yad Vashem conference on 'Jewish leadership' which convened in 1977.¹⁴ One may assume

that precisely because there is an agreement regarding the leadership *status* of the Councils, fierce controversies regarding the Councils' *behaviour* have accompanied research throughout the past six decades: one has certain expectations from 'leaders', and the Councils' policies were thus assessed according to these expectations (see, for instance, the clear tone of disappointment in Arendt's above-quoted verdict).

Two major 'schools' can be discerned in the research literature on the Jewish Councils: the 'Hilberg school' and the 'Trunk–Weiss school'. The first followed Raul Hilberg's depiction of the Holocaust as a 'machinery of destruction', in which the Councils were presented as necessary cogs, instruments that did the bidding of the Nazi administrative system. The other, named after Trunk and the Israeli historian Aharon Weiss, emphasized the positive role these Councils played in Jewish society in trying to preserve its existence in spite of persecution. Both schools accepted the fact of nomination by the Germans, as well as that the Councils also served the Jewish community. The two, however, differed regarding the emphasis they put on the two functions (service to the Germans or sustaining Jewish life), and consequently regarding a positive or negative evaluation of the people who served on the Councils. Scholars belonging to either one of these schools usually also differ considerably regarding the sources they utilize: while the Hilberg school usually uses predominantly German documentation, that is, takes the point of view of the authorities, scholars of the Trunk–Weiss school usually employ a broad variety of Jewish sources (written in Yiddish or local languages), including post-Holocaust memoirs and questionnaires.¹⁵

Yet, in spite of the differences and polemics, both schools agree on the 'leadership' status of the Councils. This should be challenged, however, when taking into consideration findings of general organizational research. Sociologists make a distinction between leadership and 'headship'. C.E. Gibb has pointed out, that (1)

headship is maintained through an organized system, and not by spontaneous recognition by fellow group members of the individual's contribution to group locomotion; (2) The group goal is...not internally determined by the group itself; (3) in the...headship relation there is little or no sense of shared feeling or joint action in pursuit of the given goal;... (5) Most basically, the two forms of influence [leadership and headship] differ with respect to the source of authority which is exercised. The leader's authority is spontaneously accorded him by his fellow group members. The authority of the head derives from some extra-group power which he has over the members of the group, who cannot meaningfully be called his followers. They accept his domination on pain of punishment, rather than follow.¹⁶

Jewish Councils, by the very fact of their nomination by the outside power, are clearly defined first of all as 'headships'. This, of course, does not rule out the fact that they could – and did – also fulfil leadership functions. This, however, could not be their major commitment.

The two schools have another hidden assumption in common: that there was a harmonized, linear (intended or escalating) German anti-Jewish policy, of which the Jewish Councils were an essential corollary. Therefore, when speaking about the very fact of their establishment and who instigated it, the general formulation 'the Germans' is almost always used. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that the Nazis' anti-Jewish policy led to the Final Solution; and under the impact of this knowledge the Jewish Councils are usually seen from this perspective (see especially Arendt, but also most of the studies on local Jewish Councils). Thus it is assumed that they were part of the ghettoization and isolation process that preceded the implementation of the Final Solution, and therefore existed 'everywhere'.

Hilberg, Arendt, Friedman, Trunk and others whose views shaped research on the Jewish Councils, conceived and wrote their studies in the early stages of Holocaust research, that is, before the end of the 1960s. Their perceptions contained assumptions regarding the functioning of Hitler and the Third Reich and the linear path in which anti-Jewish policies developed, which were common during that period. These assumptions, however, have since been challenged, first by the 'functionalists' and, since the 1990s, by (what I would call) the 'integrationists', that is, a younger generation of scholars who criticize the 'functionalists' for having gone too far, but do not return to old-fashioned 'intentionalism'. The most important changes in research on those contextual issues that have to be taken into account are: (1) that – following Karl Schleunes' formulation¹⁷ – 'the road to Auschwitz' was 'twisted', that is, that there were ups and downs, trials and failures, and not a constant, linear escalation; and (2) that anti-Jewish policies, even while having an overall framework and general direction set by Hitler and the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, were shaped by the continuous power struggles between different power centres in the Third Reich, who 'worked towards the Führer'.¹⁸

If this is true, certain questions regarding the Jewish Council phenomenon that have not been given serious consideration since the early 1970s, should be raised: (1) Who conceived of the idea – 'the Germans' (or 'German authorities') in general or some specific body or person(s) in the bureaucracy? (2) Why did the idea emerge – as part of the course towards the Final Solution, or because of some other purpose? (3) When and how did the idea emerge – during the first weeks of the occupation of Poland (with Heydrich's *Schnellbrief* of 21 September 1939),¹⁹ as asserted in research literature, or in a different way and at a different moment? (4) Was it indeed implied 'everywhere'? (5) Were there no other 'leaderships' on the Jewish scene?

New insights into the emergence and essence of the Jewish headships

A closer, Europe-wide examination of the documentation shows that the idea of establishing a Jewish 'headship' was not an inherent imperative of anti-Jewish policies, and emerged only in certain circumstances. At the beginning of April 1933 an inter-departmental committee suggested the legal segregation of the Jews, allowing them to continue to live in Germany within a Jewish organization, the *Verband der Juden in Deutschland*, which would be headed by an elected board called the *Judenrat*. This idea of a Jewish forced organization (*Zwangsorganisation*) met opposition from different quarters and faded from view for a while. However, in 1937 it resurfaced within the circles of the Jewish Department of the Security Service of the SS (SD II 112), of which Adolf Eichmann was an employee. The idea was then part of a broader intention to hasten the implementation of anti-Jewish policies, mainly Jewish emigration. The experts of the SD Jewish Department believed that former anti-Jewish policies – legal, economic and other – had not been effective because they had been aimed at the Jews as individuals. They expressed contempt for the Reich authorities that had conducted policy-making until that point, and believed that the best way to exert pressure on the Jews and make them behave according to the interests of the regime, would be through treating the Jews as a collective. They also believed that the people who knew best how to deal with the Jews were the experts of the SD and Gestapo. This understanding led to the idea of attaching all Jews to one organization, headed by authoritative leaders; a 'Central Office' controlled by the SD would have authority over this organization and these leaders.

Initial steps to realize this idea were taken in Germany in 1937 and the beginning of 1938. But with the annexation of Austria in March 1938 a golden opportunity presented itself to implement it for the first time. Eichmann was sent to Vienna, where he reorganized the Jewish community and was later allowed to establish the longed-for controlling body, the *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* ('Central Office for Jewish Emigration'). With the success of this structure (they succeeded in forcing almost 50,000 Jews to emigrate in six months), the suggestion was made (at the well-known meeting of senior Reich officials at Göring's office on 12 November 1938)²⁰ to establish a similar body in the 'Old Reich'. Because of the different power structure there, this organization took a different shape: a country-wide organization, the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (Reich Union of Jews in Germany), which began work in February 1939, but only became finally anchored in the law on 4 July 1939. Parallel to the developments in Germany proper, the Vienna model was imposed in both the Nazi-controlled free city of Danzig and in Prague, the capital of the newly occupied and annexed Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

(the occupied Czech lands). Thus, on the eve of the Second World War, two headship models had developed: a local one (in Vienna, Prague and Danzig) and a country-wide one, in Germany proper. The Jewish experts of the security apparatus were always the driving force behind the establishment of the headships, but they preferred the first model, which was local and not legally anchored, leaving much room for manoeuvre to the controlling authority.

From the very first days of the invasion of Poland, more than two weeks before the *Schnellbrief*, Jewish Councils were established on orders of *Einsatzgruppen* representatives, but it was not a written rule and there was no clear procedure. Heydrich's *Schnellbrief* standardized the establishment of Councils in the occupied area, and within two months more than half of the Jewish population were living under the *Judenrat* system. However, with the partition of German-occupied Poland into an annexed area and a General-Government at the end of October, the process was slowed down. General-Governor Hans Frank tried to recover his authority over the Jews in his jurisdiction from the SS by issuing his own order regarding the establishment of *Judenräte* (28 November 1939).²¹ However, this order had only a limited effect, and a relatively small number of Councils was established, leaving a number of small Jewish communities in the countryside with no newly established Council. On the other hand, quarrels between the German authorities over the right to control and use Jewish Councils, especially in the big cities, raged throughout the General-Government. It has to be emphasized in this context that the establishment of Jewish Councils happened a long time before the emergence of the ghettos and was not linked to it. On the other hand, Councils were introduced in Jewish forced labour camps, which were established in the Lublin area in 1940. The two lines of anti-Jewish policies – ghettoization and Councils – tended to merge, as there were no ghettos without Jewish Councils (but there were Councils without ghettos). However, they had entirely different sources.²²

During the war and with the expansion of Nazi Germany, the headship system was applied in many places in the occupied territories (including in Tunisia), and it even spilled over to satellite countries, such as Slovakia, Romania, Vichy France and Algeria. But it never became complete and in many places there was no headship system (Croatia, Italy, Denmark, certain localities in Poland and in the Soviet Union); on the other hand, there were places – Vilna and Riga, for instance – with separate ghettos and two Jewish Councils. Moreover, in spite of the fact that representatives of the security forces were behind the initiative to establish headships, a clear division into and distribution of the two major models can be discerned: the *local* one (usually called the *Judenrat*), which was always established by a spoken order or a letter written to a certain personality and which was preferred by the security authorities; and the *country-wide* one called the Union (*Vereinigung*), which was always anchored in an official and legal procedure and which was a compromise between the security authorities

and other representatives of the Reich as well as local forces on the ground. There was a considerable gap in the effectiveness of functioning (in the eyes of the Nazis) between the two models, the *Judenrat* being more 'useful' because it was more dependent. Headships were usually used for the purpose of carrying out the Final Solution, yet they were never a pre-planned part of it, and in many cases, especially in the Soviet Union where the first stages of the Final Solution developed, the murder and deportation campaign was carried out before the establishment of and without the need for Councils.²³

Research about the functioning of the headships

A remarkable fact in the historiography on the headship (or *Judenrat*) phenomenon is that no comprehensive study has been carried out. The most 'comprehensive' one, quoted by every researcher, is Trunk's *Judenrat*, which deals only with the eastern European ghettos (with an emphasis on Poland). Indeed, all research efforts have been invested in studying headships in their local context. Although there is no comprehensive study, the literature is enormous, filling many bookshelves; it would be impossible to discuss it all. Some general observations, however, can be made.

First, for a number of reasons, research on headships throughout Europe and North Africa did not proceed at the same pace. Regarding Poland and Lithuania, research and writing on the major ghettos started at a very early stage, during the second half of the 1940s, and was carried out by historians mostly of Polish-Jewish origin. Because of the great emphasis that has been given to the fate of Polish Jewry (most Jewish Holocaust historians of the first generation were survivors who had some background of the Jewish historical tradition that had developed in Poland in the interwar period), we have a reasonable knowledge of the functioning of Jewish Councils in the major ghettos, usually interwoven into the general picture of ghetto life.²⁴ Archival material of some of the Jewish Councils survived and was found, and enabled the publication of protocols and other important material. Thus Yad Vashem published the protocols of the Lublin and Bialystok Councils,²⁵ as well as the full *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto* translated into Hebrew (Lucian Dobroszycki edited a selection of this Chronicle in English),²⁶ and Dina Porat and Martin Gilbert published Avraham Tory's diary from Kovno.²⁷ Of major importance is, of course, the diary of Adam Czerniakow, chairman of the Warsaw *Judenrat*.²⁸ Other sources shed light on the attitudes of ghetto inhabitants to the Councils. However, with regard to the vast number of Councils in villages, townships and so on, research has been lagging behind, and is in many cases negligible. Only scattered information can be found about them in *Yizkor Bicher* (memorial books to Jewish communities that perished), in the extensive series *Pinkas Hakehillot*, published by Yad Vashem,²⁹ and in personal memoirs. However, information in these publications

is often imprecise and should be carefully checked. Trunk relied on much of this information and was heavily criticized for doing so by the Israeli historian Mendel Piekarcz.³⁰

Regarding Councils in the former Soviet Union – with the exception of eastern Poland and the Baltic states, for which reasonable material and testimonies can be found in Israel and the West – research was blocked for five decades by Soviet policy. Research on Jewish life in these areas was still being compared to archaeology by the Israeli researcher Shalom Cholavsky in the 1980s. But since the fall of communism, when materials became accessible and opened the way to young researchers to study freely, many studies have appeared, albeit in Russian. In and on the more western countries of the former Eastern Bloc – Hungary, Slovakia and Romania – some research was being undertaken during the communist period,³¹ and has proceeded even faster than in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova) since the end of communism.

But even in western Europe research did not progress at an even pace. While in the Netherlands studies on the Amsterdam Jewish Council (*Joodsche Raad*) began to appear as early as the 1940s, and de Jong dedicated large sections of his 25-volume history of the Netherlands in the Second World War to it,³² in Belgium the first scholarly study of the *Association des Juifs en Belgique* – by Maxime Steinberg, in his comprehensive history of the Holocaust in that country – appeared only in the 1980s.³³ In Germany and France aspects of the *Reichsvereinigung* and the *Union Générale des israélites de France* (UGIF) were researched during the 1950s–1970s, but more general studies were published only in the 1980s and 1990s.³⁴ Regarding Vienna, Rosenkranz published a study with much material on the Vienna community and Council of Elders in the 1970s, but the first comprehensive, analytical and well-balanced study appeared only in 2000.³⁵

Second, studies on local Jewish Councils and Unions – regarding both their general functioning and the personality of their chairmen – which run into the hundreds, have recurrently shown how complex the functioning of each Council was, and how dependent on the local situation (local Germans, local ‘bystanders’ and local Jews) it was, that is, how careful one has to be with generalizations. Not much comparative research was carried out, but the little that was done, mainly by Aharon Weiss,³⁶ has shown that many Councils were not perceived by the Jews at the time or later as badly as post-1945 retrospection presented it.³⁷ It has also become clear that in many cases the German authorities changed the composition of Jewish Councils (sometimes several times) when these Councils were not ‘cooperative’ enough in their eyes, especially in the Final Solution period which began in the second half of 1941 and spread over Europe in 1942.³⁸ Moreover, the detailed studies on all headships have shown that, except for the tasks that were carried out on the orders of the

German authorities – the ‘headship’ tasks – the Councils and Unions always initiated additional activities and carried out tasks for the benefit of the Jewish population: social and medical care, education, religious services, literary activities, and so on; by doing so they took on themselves some leadership functions. The many tasks and functions of the Councils, balancing between carrying out German orders, meeting Jewish needs and having to function in many cases as municipalities (keeping order, caring for sanitation, and so on), are reflected in their organizational structure.³⁹ Consequently, these bodies were almost never ‘ideal-type’ headships (but nor were they full-fledged leaderships). In line with the dominance of men in leading social positions, which was still the rule in European societies at the time, no female Jews are found in the first line of headship functionaries, and only a very limited number in second-line positions, such as administrative heads of departments (for example, Gertrud van-Tijn-Cohn, head of the emigration Department in the Amsterdam Jewish Council).

A special chapter related to the Jewish Councils is the Jewish Police, sometimes called the ‘Order Service’ (*Ordnungsdienst*). Trunk dedicated one chapter to this phenomenon in his book,⁴⁰ but the most comprehensive study remains Aharon Weiss’s PhD thesis.⁴¹ Since then, little mention has been made of the Jewish police forces in the studies on Councils or in general.⁴² Recently, excerpts from a most interesting document, a history of the Kovno Ghetto Jewish police written during the Holocaust by its own people, has been published, which sheds light on the self-perception of Jewish policemen.⁴³ Once again, the complex nature of this phenomenon resurfaces. Not every Jewish Council had a Jewish police force. Not all Jewish police forces functioned under the auspices of the Jewish Council; sometimes they were independent and directly subject to the German or Polish authorities. Even when officially subordinated to the Jewish Council, the police force acted independently and even competed with the authority of the chairman of the council; in Vilna, Jacob Gens, commander of the police, eventually became the head (or ‘representative’) of the ghetto.⁴⁴

Third, in spite of the fact that all studies show the complexity of the phenomenon, final verdicts tend to focus on the functioning of the headships from the point of view and, in their last stage, in the *extremis* of the Final Solution. The polemics always deal with the responses and decisions of the chairmen: did they know (and what did they know) about the wholesale murder? Did they disseminate the knowledge? How did they stand vis-à-vis the German authorities? Did they take personal advantage – saving themselves or their families and entourage? Did they have moral considerations and feel remorse? Did they consider resistance and what was their relationship with resistance groups? In this respect, historians have found and published several penetrating and heart-breaking original documents of the years 1941–43 presenting the dilemmas, open and hidden controversies of the time, and harsh decisions.⁴⁵ Chairmen and members of headships who survived the Holocaust have also published

their retrospective views of their own behaviour (in Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, the Netherlands and Germany).

Other forms of Jewish leadership under the Nazi regime

In any society varying forms of leadership coexist: political, religious, social, spiritual, etc. Similarly, next to the Jewish headships – who, as we have seen, also carried out leadership functions – other forms of leadership, inherited from the pre-occupation period, continued to exist in Jewish societies. The most important to be considered are: the communal and philanthropic/welfare leadership, the religious leadership and the youth movements.

Communal and philanthropic/welfare leadership

In most cases, the headships replaced the former community structure that existed before the arrival of the Nazis/Germans and absorbed or inherited its infrastructure. However, this was not the case everywhere. In Germany in the 1930s and in western Europe in the 1940s, the official communities and their country-wide umbrella organizations as well as welfare organizations continued to function until the headships were established. In Germany, shortly after the Nazi rise to power, a Central Office for Aid and Reconstruction (*Zentralausschuss für Hilfe und Aufbau*) was established (April 1933), using the infrastructure of several aid organizations. Later in that year it was incorporated into the newly established Reich Representation of German Jews (*Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden*; September 1933), a voluntary organization of both the major country-wide organizations of German Jewry and the communities.⁴⁶ The communities continued to exist and kept their autonomy, and even continued to receive subsidies from the government, until a law passed in April 1938 terminated this unacceptable (in the eyes of the Nazi authorities) situation. This caused the people already working together in the *Reichsvertretung* to consider the creation of a new overall organization of German Jewry (first called the *Verband der Juden in Deutschland*). This idea merged unintentionally with the proposal of the SD authorities to create an overall forced organization – ‘headship’ – of the Jews, which incorporated the communities and turned them into branches of the central organization.⁴⁷

In Amsterdam, the Jewish Council was established in February 1941, but its authority was extended to the entire country only in the autumn of that year; in Belgium and France the ‘unions’ were not set up until the end of November 1941 and started to work only during the first months of 1942. The communities and the umbrella organizations – the *Nederlandsch-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap* (Ashkenazi Synagogue Association) and the Sephardic (or ‘Portuguese’) *Portugeesch-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap* in the Netherlands, and the *Consistoire Central* in Belgium and France – continued their activities after the occupation and not

only until the headships were established, but subsequently too. They were not abolished and kept their administration, including their boards and rabbis. Thus these organizations fulfilled traditional leadership functions, but they lost their importance after the establishment of the headships, which were backed by the occupation authorities, and gradually became dependent on them. (The headships also took over some of the formal functions of the traditional organizations.) Literature on these organizations and their leaders is scarce, and information about them is usually to be found in studies on the headships.⁴⁸

Of special interest is the assistance extended by social welfare organizations and the social leadership thus conducted for the perpetuation of Jewish life in the deteriorating circumstances, including hunger, in Poland during the first period of German occupation (before the Final Solution). The branch of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the 'Joint') was already of major importance in the 1930s, but became central after September 1939. The Joint supported a series of Jewish aid and welfare organizations (CENTOS, TOZ, ORT, ŹTOS), which looked after orphans and organized vocational training, schools, public kitchens, and so on. For a while these organizations, being independent of the Jewish Councils, competed with them to some extent. In the General-Government a Jewish Self-Help Organization (*Yiddische Sotsiale Aleinhilf*, YISO), officially recognized by the German authorities for all Jews in the area, operated from the end of 1939 until July 1942. The organization, headed by Dr Michael Weichert, functioned directly under the German administration of the General-Government in Cracow. Weichert, whose activities caused controversy during and after the Holocaust, thus also competed with the Jewish Councils.⁴⁹

Religious leadership

Jewish religious leadership is traditionally identified with rabbis, although in modern times some non-rabbinical Jewish thinkers – philosophers and educators, such as Martin Buber – have also attracted followers and are thus spiritual leaders. However, this latter form did not play a significant role during the Holocaust. On the other hand, one has to be aware that the term does not pertain only to a person serving as 'minister' of a community. 'Rabbi' is a title used since ancient times to describe a recognized scholar of the *Halakha* (oral law). During the early Middle Ages the process of ordaining rabbis declined, but was renewed and anchored in the fourteenth century. The criterion for ordination is knowledge of certain authoritative chapters. Some rabbis serve the community, others are heads of *Yeshivas* (higher institutions for Talmudic learning); however, not all ordained rabbis fulfil functions in the community or in a certain social circle. Thus, the overall term 'rabbi' represents a variety of functions. This has become even more complicated in modern times because of the emergence of

a variety of religious movements, groups and tendencies (some of them not committed to the orthodox *Halakha*). Thus, on the eve of the Holocaust, there were officially appointed communal rabbis (orthodox or non-orthodox); rabbis with no official function, but accepted as *Halakhic* and spiritual leaders because of their knowledge and personality; heads of *Yeshivas*; and *Admorim* (Hasidic *rebbes*, i.e. leaders of Hasidic courts). But, because of secularization, many Jews did not accept the authority of rabbis, and because of the parting of religious ways, many religious factions did not accept the authority of rabbis of other groups.

On the other hand, in the eyes of antisemites in general, and consequently in the eyes of the Nazis, 'rabbis' were perceived as one of the major forms of Jewish leadership. In the 1930s in Germany – when official policy towards the Jews was to isolate and segregate them from German society and force them to emigrate – the authorities usually treated rabbis with respect. With the expansion of Germany, when anti-Jewish policies escalated and new echelons of bureaucrats were recruited to administer the occupied territories, the attitude deteriorated, especially in eastern Europe. From the conquest of Poland onward, rabbis were often molested, especially by SS men, who often harboured the most extreme anti-Jewish views. Nevertheless, in the *Schnellbrief* of 21 September 1939 concerning the establishment of Jewish Councils, Heydrich emphasized that the Councils should be 'composed of the remaining persons having authority, and rabbis'. In fact, the order was applied only in a limited number of Councils in Poland and elsewhere, a result not of German intentions but of the diminished status of rabbis within Jewish society.

From the Jewish point of view, the role of rabbis as social workers and spiritual mentors grew in importance, and in many cases headships incorporated rabbinic activities into their framework and consulted rabbis on issues of major importance. Several sermons and homilies that were written down and preserved were published after the Holocaust. Sometimes rabbis also played a tragic role in the fate of the communities. They were called on to supply *Halakhic* answers to a wide variety of daily and unheard of problems resulting from the extreme conditions in which they found themselves – from issues of *Kashrut* (i.e. food according to the Jewish dietary laws), through marital problems to questions of the right to draw up deportation lists. What some rabbis did vis-à-vis persecution and death, especially concerning rescue, has caused much controversy. This is the case with the escape and self-rescue of some Hasidic leaders (of the Gur, Belz and Satmar courts); with the conduct of chairmen of headships (rabbis Leo Baeck in Germany and Theresienstadt, Koretz in Salonika and Ullman in Belgium); and with the hiding and later conversion to Catholicism of Chief Rabbi Zolli of Rome. (It should be noted that, in recent years, research and publication of documents on issues of religious life, which lagged behind for decades, have begun to flourish.)⁵⁰

Youth movements

An entirely new form of leadership in Jewish society was that of the political youth movements, both Zionist and non-Zionist. Jewish youth movements emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, following the example of German youth movements and to some extent because of the antisemitic character of the gentile youth movements (which were usually nationalist and Romantic). In the interwar period the phenomenon of Jewish youth movements was adopted throughout the Jewish communities of Europe and North Africa, and represented a varied spectrum of political views, with the socialist element being of major importance. The youth movement represented a radical attitude on the part of youth towards existing society (including their own parents), in some even leading to a breakdown of the relationship; in the general and Jewish social and economic crisis of the interwar period, this phenomenon matured. Moreover, because of their social activities and extreme political worldviews, youth movements became family substitutes for their members. Thus, leaders in and of those movements usually had an immense influence on their constituency.

The Holocaust created a situation in which the radical element of the youth movements and their leaders became attractive to many youngsters as an alternative society. Especially in the Polish ghettos between 1939 and 1942, underground activities were developed, leading to armed resistance, as in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 1943). In the final period of Jewish existence this signalled a challenge to the approach of headships in many places, and sometimes caused a clash (for instance, in Vilna). But elsewhere too – in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Hungary – youth movements helped Jews go into hiding and organized escape plans, which represented another form of resistance. Among the different movements there was often rivalry and even enmity, non-Zionists refusing to cooperate with Zionists, Socialist-Zionists refusing to cooperate with Revisionist-Zionists, and so on. Nevertheless, what they had in common was that they all proposed an independent mode of existence, even if not offering a real alternative to the headships, as was sometimes argued in hagiographic literature of the 1950s and the 1960s. A relatively high proportion of youth movement members survived the Holocaust.⁵¹

Jewish leadership in the free world

The leadership of Jewish communities and international Jewish organizations in the free world is another aspect of the picture of Jewish leaderships vis-à-vis the assault on Jewish existence. This issue will not be dealt with here, as it is included in other chapters in this book. It should, however, be emphasized that the issue at stake in all historiography dealing with this aspect focuses on aid and rescue activities carried out by the leadership, and their lobbying of

governments and world leaders on behalf of their persecuted brethren. Most literature is critical. However, once again the background of dispersion and division among the Jewish groups has to be taken into account, for it played a major role. Furthermore, how much they knew and the problem of grasping the enormity of Nazi anti-Jewish policies are important considerations which are not always properly dealt with in research and pseudo-scholarly literature. In many countries, and especially in Israel, cyclical debates on what the Jewish leaderships did continue to recur to this day. However, in spite of the criticism that can be levelled against the conduct of aid and rescue activities by Jewish leaderships in the free world, a comparison with the help extended by other, much more powerful bodies (such as governments, the Catholic Church, and so on), shows that they usually rate higher in sensitivity and efforts invested.

Epilogue

Jewish leadership during and vis-à-vis the Holocaust has been one of the most sensitive and controversial issues in almost six decades of historiography – and writing in general – on the Holocaust. Indeed, scholarly study and emotional evaluation have always been – and are still – interwoven. This has to be ascribed to the incomprehensibility of the enormous losses of Jewry and to the impact this has had on the Jewish self-image on the one hand, and to still deeply engraved misunderstandings of the realities of Jewish life on the eve of the Holocaust and the modes of functioning of the Third Reich on the other. It is to be expected that evaluation of the functioning of the many Jewish leaderships vis-à-vis the gradually changing policies of Nazi Germany and its allies will only slowly become more balanced.

Notes

- 1 L. Yahil, 'Jewish Resistance – an Examination of Active and Passive Forms of Jewish Survival in the Holocaust Period', in *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Conference on Manifestations of Jewish Resistance, Jerusalem, 7–11 April 1968* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971), p. 36.
- 2 L. Yahil, *Hatzalah Hayehudim Bedanya: Demokratiya She-amedah Bemivhan* (Jerusalem: Magness, 1967); English translation: *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969).
- 3 L. Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- 4 See, for instance, N.K.C.A. in 't Veld, *De Joodse Ereraad* ('s Gravenhage: SDU, 1989).
- 5 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), pp. 662–6; see also his recently published *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 105–17.
- 6 H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1963), p. 125.

- 7 R. Hilberg, 'The Judenrat: Conscious or Unconscious "Tool"', in *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933–1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, April 1977*, ed. Y. Gutman and C.J. Haft (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), see especially p. 32.
- 8 Quoted from the translated versions of these articles, included in P. Friedman, *Roads to Extinction. Essays on the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980), pp. 353, 333–4.
- 9 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); A.D. Smith, *The Nation in History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), pp. 53–60.
- 10 H.H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 709.
- 11 For more about these aspects, see D. Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), pp. 61–6, 252–3.
- 12 I. Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
- 13 *Imposed Jewish Governing Bodies under Nazi Rule*, YIVO Colloquium (New York: YIVO, 1972).
- 14 Y. Gutman, ed., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980).
- 15 For an overview of the historiographical polemics, see A. Weiss, 'The Historiographical Controversy Concerning the Character and Functions of the Judenrats', in *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period: Proceedings of the Fifth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, March 1983*, ed. Y. Gutman and G. Greif (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1988), pp. 679–96.
- 16 C.E. Gibb, 'Leadership', in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, vol. 4, 2nd edition (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), pp. 212–13.
- 17 K.A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970).
- 18 For this interpretation of the evolution of Nazi policies see I. Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), pp. 527–91.
- 19 Y. Arad, Y. Gutman and A. Margaliot, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), pp. 173–8.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 108–15.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 191–2.
- 22 For ghettoization policies in Poland, see C.R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 28–56. For Jewish Councils as part of ghetto life, see G. Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos. Voices from a Beleaguered Society, 1939–1944* (London: Arnold, 2002).
- 23 For more particulars about this reevaluation of basic issues about the Jewish Councils, see Michman, *Holocaust Historiography*, pp. 159–75; D. Michman, 'Judenrat', in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. W. Laqueur (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 370–7; idem, 'The Uniqueness of the *Joodsche Raad* in the Western European Context', in *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 3, ed. J. Michman (Assen: Institute for Research on Dutch Jewry and Van Gorcum, 1993), pp. 371–80; idem, 'Re-evaluating the Emergence, Function and Form of the Jewish Councils Phenomenon', in *Ghetto Symposium, Conference Papers* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, forthcoming).
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Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980); S. Bender, *Mul Mavet Orev. Yehudei Bialystok Bemilhemet Ha'olam Hashniya, 1939–1943* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997) on Bialystok; Y. Peled, *Krakov Hayehudit 1939–1943: Amida, Mahteret, Ma'avak* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1993) on Cracow; D. Silberklang, 'Yehudei Lublin, 1939–1943' (PhD thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2003) on Lublin; T. Fatal-Kna'ani, *Zo Lo Ota Grodna. Kehillat Grodna Usvivata Bamilhama Uvashoa, 1939–1943* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001) on Grodno; E. Yones, *Ashan Baholot. Yehudei Lvov Bamilhama, 1939–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001) on Lvov/Lemberg; to name some of the best monographs (most were written as PhD theses in Hebrew).

- 25 N. Blumenthal, *Darkp shel Judenrat. Te'udot Migetto Bialystok* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1962); idem, *Te'udot Migetto Lublin. Judenrat Lelo Derech* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1967).
- 26 A. Ben-Menachem and J. Rab, eds., *Kronika shel Getto Lodz*, vols 1–4 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986–89), with introductions by L. Dobroszycki and I. Gutman; L. Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto 1941–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
- 27 A. Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust. The Kovno Ghetto Diary* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 28 A. Czerniakow, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow. Prelude to Doom*, ed. R. Hilberg, S. Staron and J. Kermisz (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999).
- 29 Since the beginning of the 1970s more than 20 volumes of this 'encyclopedia of Jewish communities from their foundation till after the Holocaust' have been published, and this enterprise is not yet finished; recently an abridged version was published in English, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002).
- 30 M. Piekarcz, 'Judenrat: Mehkar Muzar' ['Judenrat: A Strange Study'], *Molad*, 41 (1982), 249–65.
- 31 See the many studies by Randolph Braham on Hungary, as well as several studies by Ladislaw Lipscher and Miroslav Karny on Czechoslovakia.
- 32 L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vols 1–25 ('s Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1969–92). See also J. Presser, *Ashes in the Wind* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), and W. Lindwer (in cooperation with J. Houwink ten Cate), *Het fatale dilemma. De Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 1941–1943* ('s Gravenhage: SDU, 1995).
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- A. Cohen, *Persecutions et sauvetages. Juifs et Français sous l'Occupation et sous Vichy* (Paris: Cerf, 1993).
- 35 H. Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung* (Vienna: n.p., 1978); D. Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht. Wien 1938–1945: der Weg zum Judenrat* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000).
- 36 For instance, A. Weiss, 'Ledarkam shel hayudenratim bidrom-mizrah Polin' ['On the policies of the *Judenräte* in South-East Poland'], *Yalkut Moreshet*, 15 (1972), 59–122.
- 37 See also Trunk's questionnaire, in *Judenrat*, appendix I.
- 38 See A. Weiss, 'Judenrat', in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, ed. I. Gutman (New York: Macmillan, 1990).
- 39 See, for instance, a photocopy of an original diagram of the Vilna *Judenrat* in M. Dworzecky, *Yerushalayim de-Lita* (Tel-Aviv: n.p., 1948).
- 40 Trunk, *Judenrat*, chapter 18.
- 41 A. Weiss, *Hamishtara hayehudit baGeneral-Gouvernement uvi-Shlezia Ha'ilit bitkufat ha-Shoa* [The Jewish Police in the General Government and Upper Silesia during the Holocaust] (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1973).
- 42 Yahil, *The Holocaust*, at several places.
- 43 Dov Levin, 'How the Jewish Police in the Kovno Ghetto Saw Itself', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 29 (2001), 183–240 and photographs.
- 44 Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*.
- 45 See Arad, Gutman and Margaliot, *Documents*, nos. 103, 109, 119, 129, 199; Trunk, *Judenrat*, chapter 16; de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 5 (1974), pp. 573–8; idem, vol. 6 (1975), pp. 229, 230; J. Michman, 'The Controversial Stand of the *Joodsche Raad* in the Netherlands: Lodewijk E. Visser's Struggle', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 10 (1974), 9–68; Czerniakow, *Diary*, entry of 20 July 1942.
- 46 There is extensive literature on this organization and its activities. Some has been quoted above, see note 34. For an extensive and updated bibliography on the issue, see especially: Kulka, *Deutsches Judentum*.
- 47 See above, on the creation of the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* in 1939; additional literature is extensive and scattered; see among others: *Pinkas Hakehillot: Germania – Bavaria* (1973), *Württemberg/Hohenzollern/Baden* (1987), *Hessen/Hessen-Nassau/Frankfurt* (1992); Benz, ed., *Juden in Deutschland*; Margaliot and Cochavi, *Toledot Hashoah: Germania*; and articles and bibliographies in the many volumes of the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*.
- 48 See especially R.I. Cohen, 'Dat umoledet – ledarka shel ha-konsistoriya hamerkazit betzrufat bitkufat hamilchama' [Religion and Fatherland: The Central Consistory in France During the Second World War], in *Bein Yisrael La-Umot* [Israel and the Nations. Essays Presented in Honour of Shmuel Ettinger], ed. S. Almog et al. (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1987), pp. 307–34.
- 49 For an overview of all these issues, see Y. Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1939–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), pp. 67–92.
- 50 For instance, S. Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1987); E. Farbstein, *Beseter Ra'am* [Hidden in Thunder. Perspectives on Faith, Theology and Leadership during the Holocaust] (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2002); T. Rahe, *Höre Israel. Jüdische Religiosität in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); P. Schindler, *Hasidic Responses to the Holocaust in the Light of Hasidic Thought* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1990); E. Schweid, *Wrestling until Daybreak* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); D. Michman, 'Problems of Religious Life in The Netherlands during the Holocaust', in *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 1, ed.

J. Michman and T. Levie (Jerusalem: Institute for Research on Dutch Jewry, 1984), pp. 379–99; idem, 'Jewish Religious Life', in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. Laqueur, pp. 351–4; idem, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective*, pp. 251–99.

- 51 Literature on this issue is also extensive, but often written by survivors of the movements and uncritical; for some volumes of major importance, see R. Perlis, *Tnu'ot hano'ar hahalutziot be-Polin hakevusha* [The Pioneering Zionist Youth Movements in Nazi-Occupied Poland] (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1987); A. Cohen and Y. Cochavi, eds., *Zionist Youth Movements during the Shoah* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994); L.A. Sarid, *Bemivhan ha-enut vehapedut* [Ruin and Deliverance] (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1997); D. Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Bund in Poland, 1939–1949* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003); see also R. Rozett's contribution to this volume.

15

Jewish Resistance

Robert Rozett

The concept of Jewish resistance in the historiography of the Holocaust has evolved over time. Towards the end of the Second World War, two opposing positions surfaced regarding its nature. Over the next two decades, the often emotionally charged debate spilled over the borders of academic discourse and engendered distorted notions that became entrenched in many quarters of the Jewish world and beyond. By the 1970s, consensus was forming among many scholars for an approximate and inclusive definition of the concept of Jewish resistance. By the end of the twentieth century, researchers began considering Jewish resistance less and less as a special category of behaviour, and started to discuss it in the context of a broader exploration of the life of Jews under the Nazi domination.

Writers have touched on the subject of Jewish resistance in many different formats. It has been the theme of articles in newspapers and magazines, and is often a significant topic in the memoirs of Holocaust survivors as well as in memorial books. This essay is concerned primarily with how Jewish resistance has been treated in scholarly discourse, although some popular publications are also addressed, because they were seminal for later scholarship.

Glorious armed resistance

In his groundbreaking study about the legacy of the Holocaust in Israel during the first two decades of the Israeli state, Roni Stauber clearly demonstrates that the issue of Jewish heroism and its commemoration was tightly bound to the notion of Jewish resistance, and to the idea that Jews living in Israel were a new breed, different in their behaviour from their brethren in the Diaspora.¹ Many early writers considered armed resistance to the Nazis to be the only legitimate response for Jews, who had shed their Diaspora-like behaviour. Those who did not resist with arms (or at least flee in the face of the Nazi onslaught) were denigrated, and they were bunched together under the rubric of having gone

to their deaths 'like sheep to the slaughter'. This became a common view in Israel of the behaviour of most Jews during the Holocaust.

In many publications this viewpoint led to the exaltation of Jewish armed resistance. Veneration for Jewish fighting is evident in some of the statements contained in the published proceedings of the first international scholarly conference at Yad Vashem, in 1968, which focused on the subject of Jewish resistance. Glorification can be heard in the words of Edward E. Gelber, a representative of the Yad Vashem directorate, who addressed the conference: 'Were they [the Jews in the Holocaust], indeed, like sheep to the slaughter, or did they perhaps display resistance and courage to a degree almost inconceivable in the conditions of that dreadful time?'² Such a tone is even more pronounced in the statement made by Arieh Tartakower of the World Jewish Congress:

Among the numerous facets which merit our attention there is one which has such overpowering significance that it casts all others in the shade, regardless of their own intrinsic importance. I refer to the Jewish resistance to the Nazi oppressor and his collaborators, which reached its supreme expression in the ghetto revolts and the warfare of the partisans, though it flourished in many other forms as well. The fact is that at the very height of the Hitler period the principal victim rose up against it armed only with his bare hands – since almost no assistance from the outside was forthcoming – and this victimized people accomplished what no other nation under similar circumstances ever did.³

In particular, by making barehanded resistance seem like the rule and not the exception it was, Tartakower appears less concerned with historical accuracy than with rhetorical flourish.

The exaltation of Jewish armed resistance did not occur only in Israel in the first decades after the Holocaust; nor was it always regarded as symbolic of a new kind of Jew. The American-based Jewish historian Phillip Friedman, author of an early history of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, deems the Uprising a significant milestone in the long legacy of combating tyranny. Writing in 1954, when the Cold War was at freezing point, he claims that the Warsaw Uprising has the moral impact of the Spartans' battle against the Persians at Thermopylae, and stands as a reminder of the murderous possibilities inherent in totalitarian regimes. Given the time when he was writing, it is clear that Friedman is talking about the danger he considered inherent in the Communist Bloc.⁴ In France, too, until the late 1960s, Jewish resistance, if it was mentioned at all, was seen as part of the splendid tradition of the *Maquisards* – underground armed combat for the sake of the 'real' France.⁵

If Jewish resistance was perceived as glorious, the six million victims of the Holocaust were often seen as anything but. Around the time of Adolf Eichmann's

trial in Jerusalem, three books appeared which forcefully attacked the Jews for their ostensibly shameful conduct during the Holocaust. Raul Hilberg's seminal volume, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Bruno Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart* and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* make common cause by attributing part of the blame for the Holocaust to the Jews themselves.⁶ Hilberg and Arendt reproach Jewish leaders for having collaborated with the Nazis. Bettelheim and Hilberg claim that most Jewish response, totally inadequate to the challenge of the Holocaust, was conditioned by the long years of exile. Bettelheim caustically remarks:

Millions of Jews who did not or could not escape in time or go underground as many thousands did, could at least have marched as free men against the SS, rather than to first grovel, then wait to be rounded up for their own extermination, and finally walk themselves to the gas chambers.⁷

A flurry of publications that sought to refute Hilberg, Arendt and Bettelheim, among them important scholarly monographs on the Jewish response to the Holocaust, were published in response to these attacks.

An important genre of writing, anthologies of Jewish resistance, began to appear in the 1950s in Hebrew, developed more fully in English during the 1960s, and continued to be produced well into the 1980s. These seek to demonstrate that Jews did not go to their deaths passively, but offered a good deal of armed resistance to the Nazis and their allies. Among the earliest books that sought to chronicle Jewish armed resistance was *Sefer Hapartizanim Hayehudim* (The Book of Jewish Partisans), published in Israel in 1958. It was followed by *Lexicon Hagvurah* (Lexicon of Heroism), published in two volumes by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem between 1965 and 1968.⁸ In the Introduction to one of the earliest and best known of the anthologies to appear in English, Yuri Suhl articulates the focal point of the book, using terms that exalt Jewish fighting:

The full dramatic story of Jewish resistance to Nazism during World War II has yet to be told, and the need for telling it is now more compelling than ever, not only to set the record down but also set it straight.... Only when assessed in the light of the inhuman conditions of life in the ghettos and camps does the full grandeur of Jewish resistance emerge.⁹

In the mid-1980s, Isaac Kowalski struck a similar note in his four-volume anthology, although he also recognizes that armed resistance was not the only form of Jewish resistance to the Nazis.¹⁰

A comparison of the version of the story of the Tuczyn Ghetto Uprising in Suhl's book and Shmuel Spector's account, written a decade and a half later, highlights many of the differences between the handling of armed resistance

in the anthologies, as opposed to later scholarly monographs. In the essay by Mendel Mann, which appears in Suhl's book, the basic facts of the uprising are the following. Three thousand Jews were living in the Tuczyn Ghetto when, on 23 September 1942, the Gestapo ordered them to congregate in the synagogue. A Jew jumped onto the *Bimah* (raised platform) and made a spontaneous plea, calling out: 'Resist! Do not go voluntarily like sheep!' That night, barrels of kerosene were somehow found and the Jews set fire to the main street. Fleeing to the nearby forest, about 2,000 ghetto residents reached safety. The Nazis and their collaborators captured many Jews who had made it to the forest; others were lured to return or returned on their own initiative. All those who returned were killed. But a large number stayed in the forest. On 17 January 1944, the Red Army liberated Tuczyn and a handful of surviving Jews were transferred to Rovno, where other Jewish survivors from the region of Volhynia had congregated. Mann writes: 'The flames of the Tuczyn Ghetto revolt illuminated not only the towns of Volhynia; they were also a bright moment in the martyrdom of East European Jews.'¹¹

Reflecting more thorough scholarship, and a greater and more sober historical perspective, Spector's account differs from Mann's on some major points. He explains that the uprising was not spontaneous, but had been planned by the Jewish leaders of the community. When the main street was set ablaze and Jews fled, Spector does not stress that 2,000 reached the forest, but that 1,000 died in the initial rush. He too tells of the returning Jews who were murdered, but unlike Mann, he writes of the terrible suffering of the Jews who remained in the forest. Most of them fell victim to its vicissitudes, and only twenty Tuczyn Jews were found in the region at liberation. Unlike Mann, Spector refrains from ending his narrative with an uplifting statement.¹²

Not all the anthologies are as sanguine as Suhl's. Lucien Steinberg and Ruben Ainsztein produced compendia of Jewish armed resistance, written in more scholarly tones and well referenced with source notes.¹³ The slant of Steinberg's book is clear from its title: *Not as a Lamb: The Jews against Hitler*. Harking back to the debates of the 1950s and 1960s, he uses a very narrow definition of Jewish resistance:

Nor will we, simply because it concerns Jews, broaden the meaning of 'resistance' to include those perfectly commendable, admirable, praiseworthy phenomena which have no real place within the concept of resistance: for example, to organize soup kitchens; to keep the synagogues open even in the most dangerous times; to set up strictly Jewish children's homes and orphanages so that even during the worse periods the children might have the sort of education that would encourage them to become worthy Jews; and many of those who devoted themselves to the success of these enterprises were arrested by the Gestapo or by its local representatives, deported,

or gassed; as indeed were the starving who came to eat at the soup kitchens; the faithful who came to pray in the synagogues; [and] the children and their teachers in the homes and orphanages.¹⁴

Steinberg also praises Jewish armed resistance, but in a more subdued and complex voice than his predecessors: 'By revolting against the Hitler regime which intended to exterminate the entire Jewish population, the Jews were not engaging in acts of heroism, they simply wished to preserve the material and moral substance of their people. Their success won them immortality.'¹⁵

For his part, Ainsztein states outright that his book is a response to Hilberg, Bettelheim and Arendt. In an historical survey that stretches from the Bar Cochva rebellion against the Romans to Jewish self-defence against pogroms in the First World War, Ainsztein refutes those who claim that the Diaspora conditioned Jews against active self-defence. The rest of the book is devoted to showing the public just how much Jewish armed resistance there was during the Holocaust. But in a sense, Ainsztein is not so different from those he seeks to refute. He too attacks Jews for not offering armed resistance to the Nazis, in this case Hungarian Jewry in 1944–45.¹⁶ In so doing, he seems to be unaware that the large rescue operation that occurred in Budapest, in which Jews were closely involved, was an active response to their specific situation. To a certain extent this is understandable, because the first major monograph about that rescue appeared a decade after Ainsztein's book.¹⁷

Amidah

At the same time that many writers were attempting to glorify armed resistance and vilify other Jewish responses, some were pointing out that in addition to armed resistance there were other forms of Jewish resistance to the Nazis. This wider and more encompassing definition of resistance came to be known by the Hebrew term *Amidah*. *Amidah* translates as 'stand'. By the late 1960s it was being used more and more in lieu of the word resistance in Hebrew-language discussion, and the ideas it embodies were becoming more accepted within the scholarly community. In a pioneering essay, Dan Michman lays out the theoretical and political discussion underpinning the term. He also points out that *Amidah* is used less in English than in Hebrew, to a large extent because of the difficulty in translating it adequately.¹⁸

In his statements and writings just after the end of the Second World War, Berl Katzenelson declares that the struggle to maintain human dignity, often called 'spiritual resistance', is no less weighty than armed resistance. For Benzion Dinur, the first chairman of Yad Vashem, Jews' daily struggle for existence in the adverse conditions of Hitler's Europe was even more important than armed resistance. Moreover, Dinur stresses that armed resistance never stood a chance of succeeding. Others, like Nathan Eck, Zorach Warhaftig and Mark Dworzecki,

agree that armed resistance was by no means the only legitimate form of Jewish response to the Holocaust.¹⁹

In the published proceedings of the 1968 Yad Vashem conference on Jewish resistance, whose title in Hebrew includes the word *Amidah*, Mark Dworzecki defines the term:

The concept of ‘stand’ is a comprehensive name for all expressions of Jewish ‘non-conformism’ and for all the forms of resistance and all acts by Jews aimed at thwarting the evil design of the Nazis – a design to destroy the Jews, to deprive them of their humanity, and to reduce them to dregs before snuffing out their lives.²⁰

Most of the discussion at the conference suggests that armed resistance is far from the only kind of resistance in which Jews engaged during the Holocaust, although the parameters of what should be included under the heading of resistance, and the preferred terminology for discussion, remained subjects of debate in the proceedings.

Leon Poliakov, an important early author of works about the Holocaust, suggests that two terms can be used: armed resistance and passive resistance. In his view, expressed at the Yad Vashem conference, anything that does not include fighting is passive. So hiding, using forged papers and even flight are all forms of passive resistance.²¹ This is obviously at odds with the more common understanding of passive resistance, which denotes the kind of civil disobedience practised by Gandhi and his followers in India, or by the followers of Martin Luther King during the struggle for civil rights in the United States.

As the conference proceedings show, neither Leni Yahil nor Sarah Neshamit thinks the term passive resistance appropriate. Moreover, Neshamit believes that:

Not every attempt to crawl into a hole of some kind constitutes resistance. Not every act performed in order to remain alive, falls under the category of resistance Resistance is every act, which is designed to thwart the enemy even though it may possibly clash with the will to survive I do not rule out unarmed resistance. On the contrary, there were many forms of resistance – armed as well as unarmed. However, I do not accept the definition which speaks of passive as well as active resistance.²²

Writing several years later, and trying to clarify different types of active Jewish response to the Nazis, Yehuda Bauer makes a clear distinction between acts taken before the onset of murder and those taken after. He suggests that Jewish responses to persecution before they understood they were to be murdered by the Nazis should be called *Kiddush Hahayim* (the sanctification of life), a term

first popularized by Nathan Eck.²³ In his essay on Jewish responses in France, written in 1980, Hillel Kieval makes a similar distinction. The aid that Jewish groups proffered to children in France, he says, became resistance only when raids on children's homes began to take place. Until then, activities that were conducted above board, even including moving children to more secure places, cannot be considered resistance.²⁴

The *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, published in 1990, can be seen as one of the first major attempts to present a comprehensive summary of our understanding of the Holocaust and the events associated with it. The *Encyclopedia* provides a broad definition of Jewish resistance, which is not all that different from Dworzecki's definition of *Amidah*. As author of the entry, I wrote that Jewish resistance was:

planned or spontaneous opposition to the Nazis and their collaborators by individual Jews or group of Jews. In the Nazi system, within which Jews were faced with a process of dehumanization that ultimately culminated in death, any act that opposed that process can be regarded as resistance. In response to this system, Jewish resistance to the Nazis took many forms and worked on many different levels.²⁵

In the more recent major encyclopedia on the Holocaust, edited by Walter Laqueur, the subject of Jewish resistance is presented in two separate parts, one for eastern Europe, the other for western Europe. The authors, Nechama Tec and Eli Tzur, respectively, discuss *Amidah*, without ever using the term.²⁶ The proceedings of another important conference on Jewish resistance, published in 1998, also use a wide definition of the term, akin to *Amidah*. Ruby Rohrlich, the editor of the volume, writes:

What constitutes resistance? The definition is far from simple; the term embraces a variety of operations, actions and movements performed by individuals, groups and nations. Sociologist Nechama Tec, herself a survivor, and the author of numerous books and articles about the Holocaust, defines acts of resistance as 'motivated by the intention to thwart, limit or end the exercise of power by the oppressor over the oppressed.' For Jews during the Holocaust, simply surviving can be considered a form of resistance to the German goal of Jewish extermination.²⁷

It seems that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the concept of *Amidah*, if not the word itself, had become an almost undisputed keystone for our understanding of Jewish resistance.

Armed resistance: towards objective scholarship

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s books continued to appear that focused on the subject of armed resistance, although generally they no longer look at it as the only legitimate form of Jewish response. Among them are serious scholarly attempts to understand the phenomenon on a local or regional level. In a number of valuable studies about individual ghettos or regions, the subject of Jewish armed resistance is also discussed at length. The thrust of these is to set the facts straight and analyse different aspects of Jewish armed resistance within the context of more localized history.

In his monograph on Jewish armed resistance in Lithuania, based on doctoral research carried out at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Dov Levin contrasts and compares three venues of Jewish armed resistance: the Lithuanian Division, which was formed in the Soviet Union, the armed undergrounds in the larger ghettos of Lithuania, and partisan units.²⁸ Levin explains that the Lithuanian Division was made up primarily of Jewish refugees who had fled to the Soviet interior in the wake of the German attack of June 1941. He cites a variety of reasons why Jews joined the Division. Among them were: the hope of finding other Jews; the hope of uniting with family and friends in the unit; the desire to escape a currently bad predicament; the hope of returning to Lithuania sooner by way of the Division; and, most saliently, the desire to fight the Nazis because of their crimes against the Jews.²⁹

Levin explores the growth of Jewish underground units in four large Lithuanian ghettos – Vilna, Kovno, Shavli and Svencian. In contradistinction to Bauer, he makes the salient point that Jews practised many forms of resistance in these ghettos even after they had experienced murder at close range:

After recovering from the initial shock of the first unexpected wave of murders, the Jews adopted various forms of retaliation before the final liquidation of the ghettos in Lithuania. These reactions, the majority of which were not violent, were, consciously or unconsciously, attempts to oppose the murder, starvation, and many other forms of destruction around them. All of these acts were impressive, some were even effective, and they ranged from the Jew who dipped his finger in his blood as it flowed and wrote 'VENGEANCE' in blood on the wall, to the Jews who, on the brink of the pits, tore their money to shreds instead of surrendering it to the Germans. A considerable proportion of the resistance took place within the framework of daily life, and in particular in the supply of essential requirements and services...³⁰

Levin points out that the aims of the ghetto undergrounds were largely the same: self-defence in the face of the liquidation of the ghetto; combat against

the enemy under any circumstance; and rescue by escape to the forest to save Jewish lives. But the emphasis on these aims varied from ghetto to ghetto, or within different groups of a given underground, and, as a result, there were often acrimonious debates about priorities. Nevertheless, the ideas of *Überleben* – surviving to see the end of the war – and armed resistance coexisted.³¹

Lastly, Levin discusses Jews among the partisan units. He explores the emergence of Jewish partisans and the so-called family camps in Lithuania, as well as the integration of Jews into Belorussian and Lithuanian partisan units. He highlights the problems of discrimination against Jewish partisans in these units and sets that discrimination in a wider context. Besides overt antisemitism, there was a certain rationale for some of the anti-Jewish attitudes, he notes. Since the peasants hated Jews, having too many Jews in the unit made all contact with them, which was essential, more complicated. The emphasis on fighting was detrimental to Jewish non-combatants and led to callousness towards them on the part of partisan commanders, including Genrikas Ziman (Jurgis), who was himself a Jew from Kovno.³²

How far Levin has moved away from the tendency to glorify Jewish armed resistance, and his attempt to offer objective analysis, is clear from the following: ‘the urge to fight was more emotional than logical; the preferred course of action was the honorable one, even when it was not necessarily the most practical or productive for the rescue of large numbers of Jews.’³³

Shmuel Krakowski carried out his doctoral research in Israel in the 1970s, and his book on Jewish armed resistance in Poland is based on his thesis. Like Levin, Krakowski recognizes that armed resistance is only one form of Jewish resistance to the Nazis. Like Levin, who sought out fundamental details, the focus of Krakowski’s study is ‘to determine the basic facts and clarify the extent of the Jewish armed resistance movement in the *General Government* and to analyze its character, its uniqueness and its results’.³⁴ Krakowski also explores the motivations and goals of Jews who offered armed resistance to the Nazis. He shows that the ghetto undergrounds, the camp undergrounds and the Jewish partisans in Poland each had different goals:

The major objective of resistance efforts in the ghettos – and especially in the Warsaw Ghetto – was the expression of armed protest against the German murderers’ actions, a protest under conditions which absolutely precluded any hope of saving the trapped ghetto inhabitants, with the exception of the rare miracle of an individual escape or rescue . . . The objective of armed resistance operations in the extermination camps was the destruction of the mass murder installations [gas chambers] and the creation of the opportunities to rescue prisoners by breaking out of the camps and escaping to the partisans . . . Jewish fighting groups in the forest were made up of fugitives from the ghettos and camps, who had not had the opportunity of preparing

in advance for the struggle. Their major task was to fight for survival, both for the groups themselves and for the unarmed Jews hiding under their protection.³⁵

One of the most important concepts that Krakowski demonstrates is how difficult it was for Jews to survive in the forests. His research suggests that timing was a crucial factor – most Jewish partisan units in Poland came into being in 1942, before there was a significant Polish partisan movement and the support framework it stimulated. Local support is another factor, and most Jewish partisans lacked the local backing that Polish partisans enjoyed. Moreover, the Polish Government-in-Exile and much of the Polish underground discriminated against the Jewish partisans, and this too made life in the forests hard. Ultimately, Krakowski shows, being a partisan was extremely arduous and usually far from glorious. In the Parczew forest, for example, only about 5 per cent of the 4,000 Jews who fled there lived to see the end of the war.³⁶

A number of significant studies of ghettos, regions, camps and organizations were published between the 1970s and the beginning of the twenty-first century. In many, a chapter, or chapters, about the emergence of armed undergrounds and the issue of armed resistance is included. Inevitably they include material about *Amidah* as well.³⁷ Four of the earlier studies, published in English in the 1980s, have become classics: in addition to Spector's book, which has already been mentioned, are Israel Gutman's study of the Jews of Warsaw during the Holocaust and Yitzhak Arad's books on Vilna and the 'Operation Reinhard' camps.³⁸ Each goes into great detail regarding the growth of armed resistance organizations in their specific contexts. Each explores the options open to Jewish leaders, the choices they made, and why.

In his book on Vilna, Arad shows that the Zionist youth movement members read the situation very differently from the leaders of the Jewish Council and the Jewish police. The Jews of Vilna faced mass murder almost from the moment the Germans arrived in summer 1941. After an initial wave of killing, they set up two ghettos. One housed the weaker elements in the Jewish community and the other the stronger. By December, the weaker ghetto and its residents had been eliminated, and the weaker members of the stronger ghetto had also been murdered. The Zionist youth, led by Abba Kovner, were convinced that the course of the murder in Vilna in the second half of 1941 spelled the destruction of all Jews in Europe.³⁹ The official leaders, led by Jakob Gens (the Jewish police chief and later head of the Jewish council), believed that the Nazis were interested in keeping Jewish workers alive. Kovner and his people established an armed underground, whereas Gens sought to safeguard the ghetto by making it productive. Both groups, however, came to believe that armed resistance should not be initiated until the final liquidation of the ghetto was imminent. The ultimate tragedy in Vilna would occur when the underground misread German

intentions and launched an uprising. The very fact of the uprising led to the swift liquidation of the ghetto by the Germans in reprisal.

Several important monographs, based on doctoral dissertations written at Israeli universities, have been published during the last decade; these are available only in Hebrew. They continue in the same manner of research as Spector, Gutman and Arad. Among these works are those by Danial Blatman on the Bund, Yael Peled on Cracow, Sarah Bender on Bialystok, and Tikva Fatal Knaani on Grodno.⁴⁰

As Israel Gutman explains in an interview with Daniel Blatman, published in *Yad Vashem Studies*, several important concepts have come into sharper focus because of newer research.⁴¹ Gutman discusses the central role played by members of the Jewish youth movements in the various undergrounds that emerges from these studies. Moreover, he argues, information was key in the formation of armed undergrounds. Until people had information about the murder – in the case of Warsaw it arrived in stages and culminated in the terror of the deportations to Treblinka in the summer of 1942 – armed undergrounds did not really coalesce.

Gutman takes issue with the terms ‘uprising’ and ‘revolt’ to describe what happened in Warsaw. In Gutman’s words:

Uprising? I don’t know if this is the right word. Jews did not revolt in Warsaw, they made preparations for resistance, for battle against the Germans. But it’s not that, one day, all of a sudden they decided to revolt. They said that if the Germans returned, there would be no surrender, no resigning themselves to their fate. Jews turned to the option of fighting as their only recourse.⁴²

Like Dov Levin and Shmuel Krakowski, Gutman stresses that, for the most part, Jews in the ghetto undergrounds did not think of rescue as their primary goal. The small glimmer of hope that existed at the beginning that rescue might be possible was snuffed out immediately once the fighting began. In some ghettos, according to Gutman, because of their specific situation, people believed survival was still possible, and thus the undergrounds focused on escape to the partisans and not fighting within the ghettos.

Sarah Bender’s study is a good example of how research and writing about the relationship between the ghetto underground and the official ghetto leadership have become more balanced over the years. She shows how tightly bound together the two subjects are and, like Arad before her, how divergent readings of events led to different survival strategies. In Bialystok, as in Vilna, the underground and the official Jewish leadership focused on diverse rescue strategies and, as in Vilna, agreed that fighting should not break out in the ghetto until the final liquidation was at hand. Bender demonstrates, however, that when the end came into view and the underground was poised to fight, Ephraim Barasz,

head of the Jewish Council, could not commit himself to armed resistance. She neither berates him nor judges him, but tries to explain his point of view:

It is plausible that when he realized he had failed, he could not bring himself to believe in armed struggle or in any good that could come of it. It is possible that Barasz, who made rescue his first priority, could not distinguish between an honorable death and death like 'sheep to the slaughter', and therefore did not change his opinion even during the last hours of the ghetto's existence.⁴³

This analysis of events, which is concerned with ideas like 'sheep to the slaughter', is light years from the accusatory and painful tones that often dominated discussion in Israel and abroad in the first two decades after the Holocaust.

Among the most fundamental questions concerning Jewish resistance, is: when is an act considered Jewish resistance or resistance by Jews? Among others, Henri Michel, Yehuda Bauer, Dov Levin and Dan Michman address this issue. Especially concerning Jewish participation in the French communist underground, French researchers and former members of the Resistance have also debated this issue. For example, Georges Wellers does not consider Jews who participated in the French communist underground as part of Jewish resistance, whereas David Douvette and Adam Rayski do.⁴⁴ In her work on Jews in France during the Second World War, Renée Poznanski writes from a somewhat different angle, that of the forces that motivated Jews to join the French Resistance: 'It was only natural that the initial decision to resist was an individual rather than a collective decision for French Jews.... And they joined the Resistance as French citizens... In a sense, this was another way of refusing the enemy's efforts to single them out.'⁴⁵

Dov Levin, as has been noted, suggests many reasons why Jewish men joined the Lithuanian Division, but the bottom line is that their Jewish identity played a significant role in their decision. Bauer concurs, but adds that when the fighters define themselves not as Jewish fighters, but as members of the resistance who happened to be Jews, we must respect their self-identification.⁴⁶

According to Michman, there was a fundamental difference between Jewish armed resistance and the armed resistance carried out by other groups against the Nazis. They had different aims and were carried out in totally different contexts. Non-Jewish armed resisters primarily sought to 'oust the occupier'. Jews, as we have seen from the writing of Krakowski and Levin, among others, had very different goals most of the time. Michman underscores that a central reason for these different goals was that Jews fought the Nazis alone; they did so in scattered units and therefore could not possibly have hoped to oust the government. Moreover, the Jews who resisted were far from a homogeneous group, and individual bodies had to expend much effort in achieving some sort of unity.⁴⁷

Rescue as resistance

In 1945, while events were still fresh in his mind, Rafi Benshalom (Friedel), a leader of the Shomer Hatzair youth movement in Hungary during the war, wrote his memoirs. In his account, Benshalom describes the underground activities of the members of his organization. They distributed myriads of false papers to Jews, stating they were under the protection of various international agencies and foreign governments. They obtained food and medicines on the black market. To safeguard children from the Germans and Hungarian fascists, who were determined to murder them, they manned special houses for children, which enjoyed international protection and extraterritorial status. They even impersonated Hungarian fascist military personnel in order to intercept columns of Jews who were being brought to the banks of the Danube to be shot, and they brought them back to the relative safety of the Budapest Ghetto. Owing to the popular mood in the new state of Israel – to which he emigrated after the war – where armed resistance was glorified and other acts of resistance and rescue hardly mentioned, if not maligned outright, Benshalom held back publication of his book. It was finally published in 1977, by which time the idea of *Amidah* had begun to infiltrate the popular imagination and one could openly discuss rescue, which occurred in lieu of armed resistance.⁴⁸

On the heels of Benshalom's memoir came the first scholarly studies of the Zionist youth underground in Budapest, one by Asher Cohen and the other by the author of this essay in the 1980s. Cohen published an article about the rescue in 1982 in *Yad Vashem Studies*, and his book appeared in 1984 in Hebrew and 1986 in English.⁴⁹ Based on my doctoral research, I published a number of articles about the Zionist youth movement in Hungary and rescue in Budapest.⁵⁰ These were followed by research about the rescue in Hungary by Avihu Ronen, Haim Gnizi and Arieh Ben-tov, each looking at a specific youth movement or organization.⁵¹

These studies make two central points. First and foremost, large-scale rescue activity carried out by Jews is a form of resistance. Second, such resistance requires outside help to succeed, which means one cannot study this aspect of Jewish resistance only from the point of view of Jewish activity. In the case of Hungary, the help primarily came from foreign diplomats, among them Friedrich Born of the International Red Cross, Charles Lutz the Swiss Consul in Budapest, Angelo Rotta the Papal Nuncio in Budapest, and Raoul Wallenberg, a member of the Swedish legation in Budapest; all these men and the bodies that backed them need to be explored to understand mass rescue in Budapest.⁵²

In counterpoint to the cooperative rescue effort in Budapest, Gila Fatran, among others, portrays the virtually solitary efforts of the semi-underground Slovak Jewish leadership, the Working Group, to effect mass rescue. Trying every tactic from intercession with the Slovak authorities to negotiations with

the Nazis, the fostering of flight to Hungary and the support of armed cells within Slovakia, they failed in their attempts to achieve large-scale rescue. Ultimately, their futile exertions provide one of the most cogent examples from the Holocaust about the underlying concept of Jewish powerlessness. Jews, when bereft of significant allies, could do little if anything to escape their fate.⁵³

In his impressive monograph on Jewish rescue in France, Lucien Lazare discusses the theoretical underpinning for his title and main thesis: *Rescue as Resistance: How Jewish Organizations Fought the Holocaust in France*. Lazare surveys the development of attitudes to Jewish resistance in France, beginning with the nascent understanding of Henri Michel in the 1960s that after all there might have been something specific about Jewish resistance. He continues through Georges Wellers in the 1980s, who differentiates more clearly between 'National Resistance' and 'what was done to save the Jewish community from the collective death that was already set in action'.⁵⁴ Without using the term *Amidah*, Lazare invokes different definitions of it, such as Hillel Kieval's, mentioned earlier, and Jacques Adler's, who says only clandestine activities can be considered as resistance.⁵⁵

Lazare himself offers a very broad definition of Jewish resistance in France, similar to that of the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. He writes:

The history of Jewish resistance [in France] is that of Jewish groups active between 1940 and 1944 organized to sustain the morale of the Jewish population on the religious, spiritual, cultural and political levels, and to ensure their physical survival by distributing means of subsistence, often clandestinely, by rescuing Jews from internment and deportation, and, finally, by carrying out military operations. Hundreds of the resisters in these networks, mainly young men and women, were subjected to torture, execution, and deportation.⁵⁶

Lazare illustrates the evolution among many Jewish organizations from legal relief work to rescue. The importance of spiritual resistance, especially among the Zionist youth, he notes, took place alongside their rescue activities. No less important, he points out that the hub of their activities, and all French Jewish rescuers, was the rescue of children as soon as they were threatened by deportations.⁵⁷

Lazare seeks to provide a balanced view of the activities of Jewish leadership groups, especially the official French Jewish leadership, the UGIF. In so doing, he refers to the early canard that all Jewish leaders were collaborators, as well as to the discussion at the Yad Vashem conference on *Amidah* in 1968:

Just as it would be incomplete and excessive to view every Jewish charity or cultural project as a resistance movement, so too it would be outrageous and

unjust to see them as an instrument at the enemy's disposal from the moment they were absorbed, whether submissively or not, within the UGIF.⁵⁸

The relationship between large-scale rescue and acts of armed resistance at first glance seems to be that of opposite poles of a spectrum. As Levin, Krakowski and others demonstrate, most armed resistance had little to do with rescue. Yet sometimes, in certain circumstance, they were closely bound together. In my own writing I suggest that, in the case of Slovakia, Jewish armed resistance was meant to foster rescue. Because the Jewish fighters took part in the Slovak National Uprising, they were not participating in a desperate, suicidal battle for the sake of history, like the fighters in the ghetto revolts. As part of a wider rebellion, their battle had some chance of success, and such success would lead to the ousting of the murderous regime and the rescue of all surviving Jews. In the case of Slovakia, this did not happen, since the uprising, after a brief initial success, was quashed mercilessly and the remaining Jews deported to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt.⁵⁹

Lucien Lazare shows that in France too armed resistance and rescue were tightly bound together. First of all, many of the people involved in fighting also took part in rescue activities. Their motivation was similar to that of Slovak Jews. Lazare writes:

The Jewish resistance movement took part in guerrilla action against the Germans not only because it identified with the strategic thinking of the Allies, including the French Resistance, who held that the only way to halt the war crimes committed by the Nazis against civilian populations was to crush Germany by force of arms. In addition, the Jewish movement wished, of course, to save Jews from extermination, so that bearing arms against German troops was but one aspect of the struggle. Its military role is therefore inseparable from its determination to contribute to the defeat of the Nazis. The imperative of salvation and taking up arms were not always in accord.... However, the two goals ultimately coincided at the end of the road, with the launching of the assault against Hitler's forces and their French auxiliaries.⁶⁰

From a very different position, Nechama Tec, writing on the Bielski partisan unit, shows how Jewish armed resistance and rescue were sometimes intricately woven together during the Holocaust. Her introduction is somewhat overstated and rather retrograde in its tone, revealing the author's lack of familiarity with the evolving historiography. Nevertheless, it does clearly articulate the focus of her book:

My research about the Nazi annihilation of European Jews alerted me to a serious omission and an equally serious distortion. The omission is the conspicuous silence about Jews who, while themselves threatened by death,

were saving others. The distortion is the common description of European Jews as victims who went passively to their death. This book is based on evidence that correct both. It shows that under conditions of human degradation and suffering, Jews were determined to survive – they refused to become passive victims...⁶¹

More than any author before her, Tec provides a detailed description of the largest Jewish partisan unit and Jewish family camp in eastern Europe. She demonstrates clearly that acts of combat were secondary in the minds of the unit leaders, the Bielski brothers. Fighting was necessary for the survival of the unit, but the goal was to protect as many Jews as possible until the end of hostilities. This is not to say that all Jewish partisan commanders focused on rescue. Tec notes that some, like the legendary Yeheskal Atlas, focused on combat. In the words of another leading Jewish partisan, Hersch Smolar: 'Atlas stood for revenge and Bielski for life.'⁶² Like other works that focus on rescue as resistance, Tec makes it clear that the Bielski group could never have survived without the support of outside agencies. Central to its survival was the goodwill of the local Soviet partisan commander General Platon, who made several crucial decisions that were favourable to the unit.⁶³

Jewish resistance in perspective

In the 1990s two books appeared that explore Jewish life during the Holocaust, Renée Poznanski's extraordinarily detailed and closely argued work on life as a Jew in France, *Être juif en France pendant la seconde guerre mondiale* (1994; English translation, 2001) and Marion Kaplan's vivid study of Jewish life in Germany, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (1998). Neither work focuses on Jewish resistance, but both include a great deal of material about it. In addition to specific chapters on Jewish armed resistance, rescue and welfare work, at the turn of many a page one encounters expressions of *Amidah*.

A common theme in both volumes is the gradual shift by many Jews to a clandestine existence and the adoption of 'illegal' means to survive and rescue others. Poznanski describes some of this activity in a chapter aptly titled 'Playing Games with Reality'. She shows how Jews as individuals often led a double life. Sometimes they would remove the Star of David from their clothing or listen to a hidden radio for news. A similar kind of double life was led by organizations, which had a legal façade, but engaged in clandestine activities.⁶⁴

Aid workers are an example Poznanski employs to illustrate the slide from legal into illegal activities:

Many aid workers tried to bend the rules in desperate attempts to save someone from being put in the cattle wagons. They tried anything that might work: they would fudge the age of an adolescent, make false documents that could allow some individuals to be exempted, disguise a girl as a nurse or a boy as a Scout in order to get them out of a camp, hide Jews slated for departure in some corner and then in an 'official' vehicle, or supply some drug that would allow someone to fake an illness. Aid workers also tried to appeal to various officials And although they were not spared, the 'baptized' received special attention from priests and pastors.⁶⁵

'Diving', or going underground, became a common strategy of resistance and survival in both France and Germany. Kaplan explains it like this:

Most Jews waited until the last moment to 'dive', once they were certain the Nazis intended to kill them. Hiding may have been somewhat easier for women than men, but it was extremely dangerous and nearly impossible for all Jews. They lived in dread, fearful for their own safety and that of the people who hid them. Since 'the prospect that Europe's Jews saw before them was not one of simply holding out until a preordained liberation date set for May 1945 at the latest', they showed enormous courage in defying the fate the Nazis had prepared for them. The Germans who hid them showed compassion and daring, revealing the possibility of resistance to genocide.⁶⁶

Kaplan then spells out some of the mechanics of living an underground life: the necessity of trying to camouflage 'Jewish looks', of finding a place to sleep, of obtaining false papers and ration cards and food from the black market, and the need for money. The act of 'diving', she stresses, usually initiated by the Jew himself, could not succeed without the help of a Gentile, or more commonly, many of them.

It is clear from both Kaplan and Poznanski that *Amidah* was an integral part of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, even in situations as different as Germany and France. It was not always possible, however, for Jewish leaders to foster *Amidah* on a community-wide scale. In his reflections on the Holocaust, written after devoting several decades to its study, Yehuda Bauer applies much thought to *Amidah*. At one point he summarizes the necessary factors for *Amidah* on the community-wide level: a very large ghetto or place where Jews were not starving; continuity in traditional Jewish leadership or other strong leadership; and the nature of the German regime (which allowed *Amidah* to take root).⁶⁷ Similar conditions were necessary for the more particular form of *Amidah*, armed resistance, which, in Bauer's words, 'took place wherever there was the slightest chance that it could, which did not happen too often'.⁶⁸

More recent writing on Jewish resistance, however, does not always maintain the more objective tone that has come to dominate most of the scholarly literature, nor does it always reflect the evolution in our understanding. In a work entitled *Holocaust and Memory*, based primarily on interviews with 22 survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto, Barbara Engelking, a scholar working in Warsaw, explores Jewish behaviour during the Holocaust. As part of her discussion about daily life in the ghetto, she mentions many acts that come under the heading of *Amidah*, without ever noting that they constitute resistance. She focuses instead on the idea that Jews were passive, using Hannah Arendt as a point of reference. Engelking does not attack the Jews for their alleged passivity, as previous authors have done. Rather, she seeks to explain the origins of Jewish passivity mainly in light of the situation in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Ultimately, as thought-provoking as her work is, it is deeply flawed and her analysis skewed. This is because Engelking's investigation chiefly rests on only 22 interviews, when hundreds of testimonies were available. Second, she does not relate nearly enough to the large body of literature that discusses Jewish responses to the Nazi assault in Poland, and Warsaw in particular, and thus her study took place in a vacuum.⁶⁹

In several of the republics of the former Soviet Union, material is being produced about Jewish armed resistance. Generally, the tenor of these texts is reminiscent of earlier publications that sought to prove that Jews resisted with arms; these stand at the opposite end of the spectrum from Engelking. It seems that, for the Jews in these countries, it is important politically to establish the fact that Jews contributed to anti-Nazi armed resistance.⁷⁰

Some western writers also still use terms of veneration. Roger S. Gottlieb's article in a compendium titled *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees: Historical and Ethical Issues* (1997), retains such a saccharine flavour:

The greatness of Jewish resistors, we see, lies not only in their courage, but in their capacity to call forth out of themselves that which is most holy: a love of life and of other people, and the capacity to manifest that love in a way which is both gloriously selfish and selfless at the same time. . . . To resist was to recover one's humanity in the face of a Nazi machine bent on destroying it...⁷¹

So it is not surprising that Bauer cautions us to consider *Amidah* and its sub-category, armed resistance, in their proper perspective. Both are worthy of attention, but need not overshadow our understanding of the heart of the Holocaust, which is comprised of terrible suffering, impossible dilemmas and death. We should refrain from falling into the trap of regarding armed resistance in a 'triumphalist fashion', while at the same time we need not purge every shred of admiration we may justifiably feel. He writes:

Emphasizing *Amidah*, or resistance, does not conflict with recognizing that the experience of Jews, as individuals and as communities, during the Holocaust was hell and that the pressure brought to bear was such that part of the population did not behave in a heroic manner. It is easy, and right, to condemn the behaviour of Jewish policemen and others who yielded to the temptation of betraying even their closest kin in order to have a chance of survival; the rest of us can only hope that we would have acted differently. But there is no justification for turning Holocaust history into a hagiography of the victims. It is wrong to demand, in retrospect, that these tortured individuals and communities should have behaved as mythical heroes. The fact that so many of them did is a matter of wonderment.⁷²

Michael Marrus does a great service in 'Varieties of Jewish Resistance', a paper on Jewish resistance presented at the 1993 Yad Vashem conference.⁷³ Employing a system for classifying resistance, first presented by the Swiss historian Walter Rings, Marrus elucidates the different types of Jewish resistance without judging them or creating a hierarchy of merit. He provides examples of Jewish resistance for each of Rings' categories: 'Symbolic Resistance, or I remain what I was; Polemic Resistance, or I tell the truth; Defensive Resistance, or I aid and protect; Offensive Resistance, or I fight to the death; [and] Resistance Enchained, or freedom fighters in camp and ghetto.'⁷⁴

The evolution of the historiography of Jewish resistance has helped us to understand some very important concepts. We can appreciate acts of physical resistance without glorifying them. We can grasp that most Jews were murdered without blaming them for being like sheep. We can recognize that armed resistance rarely led to lives being saved, and that saving lives often in and of itself constitutes resistance. We can understand that the Holocaust was a nightmare, but within it sometimes people acted heroically and that their heroism took many forms. We can observe that the most successful instances of Jewish resistance occurred because a force from outside lent its support. Lastly, Jewish resistance, in its many diverse forms, should neither be placed on a pedestal nor hidden in a dark corner. Each instance, in its own context, deserves thoughtful examination under the light of historical scrutiny.

Notes

- 1 R. Stauber, *Lekach Ledor* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2000), pp. 20–33.
- 2 *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust, Proceedings of the Conference on Manifestations of Jewish Resistance, Jerusalem, April 7–11, 1968* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971), p. 18.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 13–14.
- 4 P. Friedman, ed., *Martyrs and Fighters, The Epic of the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954).

- 5 S. Friedländer, Foreword to L. Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance: How Jewish Organizations Fought the Holocaust in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. ix–x.
- 6 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961); B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in the Mass Age* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960); H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).
- 7 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 276
- 8 *Sefer Hapartizanim Hayehudim* (Merhavia: Sifriyat Hapoalim, 1958); Y. Granatstein, *Lexicon Hagvurah* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1965–68).
- 9 Y. Suhl, ed., *They Fought Back* (New York: Paperback Library, 1967), p. 12.
- 10 I. Kowalski, ed., *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945* (Brooklyn, NY: Jewish Combatants Publishers House, 1985–91).
- 11 Suhl, *They Fought Back*, p. 171.
- 12 S. Spector, 'Tuchin', in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, ed. I. Gutman (New York: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 1518–19. This is based on a longer account in S. Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jewry* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990).
- 13 L. Steinberg, *Not as a Lamb: The Jews Against Hitler* (Andover: Saxon House, 1974); R. Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe: With a Historical Survey of the Jew as Fighter and Soldier in the Diaspora* (London: P. Elek, 1974).
- 14 Steinberg, *Not as a Lamb*, p. 8.
- 15 Ibid., p. 339.
- 16 Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance*, pp. xxv–xxvi.
- 17 The first such monograph was A. Cohen, *The Hehalutz Resistance in Hungary* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1986); the original version in Hebrew was published in 1984 and an article on the subject appeared in *Yad Vashem Studies* in 1982.
- 18 D. Michman, *Hashoah Vechechra, Hamusgah, Minuach, Vesugiat Yesod* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1998), pp. 160–89. Michman shows how in German historiography the discussion of resistance to the regime also included a discussion about what constitutes resistance. In many ways this was similar to the discussion about Jewish resistance.
- 19 Stauber, *Lekach Ledor*, pp. 29–33.
- 20 *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust*, p. 153.
- 21 Ibid., p. 285.
- 22 Ibid., p. 66.
- 23 Y. Bauer, *They Chose Life: Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1973), p. 32; Michman, *Hashoah Vechechra*, p. 161.
- 24 H.J. Kieval, *From Social Work to Resistance, Relief and Rescue of Jewish Children in Vichy France*, unpublished honours thesis presented to Harvard College, 1973, pp. 83–4.
- 25 R. Rozett, 'Jewish Resistance', in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, p. 1265.
- 26 N. Tec, 'Resistance in Eastern Europe', and E. Tzur, 'Resistance in Western Europe', in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. W. Laqueur (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 543–56.
- 27 R. Rohrlich, Introduction to *Resisting the Holocaust*, ed. R. Rohrlich (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 1.
- 28 D. Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941–1945* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985). Levin's PhD dissertation was submitted in 1970.
- 29 Levin, *Fighting Back*, p. 31.
- 30 Ibid., p. 99.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 137–40.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 179–92.

- 33 Ibid., p. 228.
- 34 S. Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984), p. ix.
- 35 Ibid., pp. 293–4.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 294–303.
- 37 For example, Isaiah Trunk's seminal study of the *Judenrat* discusses the attitude of the official Jewish leadership to armed resistance, as does Dan Michman's volume for the Open University in Israel on Jewish leadership. Regarding Belgium, in a more recent work, Dan Michman brings together several articles that explore *Amidah* in that country. D. Michman, ed., *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998); idem, *Hahanhaga Hayehudit* (Tel Aviv: Hauniversita Hap'tucha, 1987); I. Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). Menachem Shelach's volume on the Jews of Yugoslavia includes a chapter on Jewish partisans. It offers little in-depth analysis and is similar to the approach of the anthologies. M. Shelach and Y. Lowinger, 'Yehudim Beshurot Hapartizanim', in *Toldot Hashoah: Yugoslavia*, ed. M. Shelach (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), pp. 427–64. Jewish participation in Yugoslav partisan units is also the focus of Jase Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941–1945. Zrte genocide I ucesnici Nardnooslobodilackog rata* (Belgrade: Jevrejski Istoriski Musej, 1980).
- 38 I. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943, Ghetto, Underground Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Y. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames, The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1982); Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
- 39 For more information on Abba Kovner, see D. Porat, *Mavar Legashmi, Parshat Chayav Shel Abba Kovner* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000).
- 40 D. Blatman, *Lema'an Herutaynu Veherutchem, Habund Bepolin, 1939–1949* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996); Y. Peled, *Cracow Hayehudit, 1939–1943* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1993); S. Bender, *Mol Mavet Orev: Yehuda Bialystok Bernilchemat Haolam Hashniya, 1939–1943* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997); T.F. Knaani, *Zu Lo Od Oto Grodno, Kehilat Grodno Vesvivatah, Bemelchamat Obeshoah* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001).
- 41 D. Blatman, 'Youth Resistance Movements in Historical Perspective', Israel Gutman Talks to Daniel Blatman', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 23 (1993), 1–72. This interview reflects several of the works mentioned above, which had been presented as PhD theses for which Gutman was supervisor.
- 42 Blatman, 'Youth Resistance Movements in Historical Perspective', p. 49.
- 43 Bender, *Mol Mavet Orev*, p. 298.
- 44 Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, pp. 26–7.
- 45 R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 421.
- 46 Y. Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 139.
- 47 Michman, *Hashoah Vechechra*, pp. 175–80.
- 48 R. Benshalom, *Neavaknu Lema'an Hahayim* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1977); English translation, R. Benshalom, *We Struggled for Life: The Hungarian Zionist Youth Resistance during the Nazi Era* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2001).
- 49 A. Cohen, 'Hap'ilot Hamachteret Hahalutzit Behungaria, Mertz-August 1944', in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 14 (1982), 189–203; idem, *Hamachteret Hehalutzit Behungaria, 1942–1944* (Tel Aviv: Bet Lochamai Hagetaot, 1984); idem, *The Halutz Resistance in Hungary, 1942–1944* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1986).

- 50 R. Rozett, 'The Protected Children's House Rescue' (MA thesis, Hebrew University, 1981); idem, 'The Relationship Between Rescue and Revolt, Jewish Rescue and Revolt in Slovakia and Hungary during the Holocaust' (PhD thesis, Hebrew University, 1987); idem, 'Child Rescue in Budapest, 1944–1945', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 2, 1 (1987), 49–59; idem, 'Jewish and Hungarian Armed Resistance in Hungary', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 19 (1988), 269–88; idem, 'From Poland to Hungary, Rescue Attempts, 1943–1944', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 24 (1994), 177–93; idem, 'Jewish Armed Resistance in Hungary, A Comparative View', in *Genocide and Rescue: the Holocaust in Hungary*, ed. D. Cesarani (New York: Berg, 1997), pp. 135–45; idem, 'International Intervention: The Role of Diplomats in Attempts to Rescue Jews in Hungary', in *The Nazis' Last Victims: the Holocaust in Hungary*, ed. R.L. Braham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), pp. 137–52.
- 51 A. Ronen, *Hakrav Al Hahayim: Hashomer Hatzair Behungaria, 1944* (Givat Haviva: Yaad Yaari, 1984); H. Genizi, 'The Rescue Activities of Bnei Akiva in Hungary during the Holocaust', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 23 (1993), 173–212; A. Ben-tov, *Facing the Holocaust in Budapest: The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Jews in Hungary, 1943–1945* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1988).
- 52 Rozett, 'International Intervention'.
- 53 For more on the Working Group, see Y. Bauer, *Jews For Sale: Nazi–Jewish Negotiations, 1933–1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); J. Campion, *In the Lion's Mouth, Gisi Fleischmann and the Jewish Fight for Survival* (New York: University Press of America, 1987); G. Fatran, *Haim Maavak Hisardut? Hanhagah Yehudai Slovakia Beshoah* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1992); A. Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry: the Gripping Story of Rabbi Weisman* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1984); Rozett, 'The Relationship between Rescue and Revolt'.
- 54 Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, pp. 24–5.
- 55 Ibid., p. 25.
- 56 Ibid., p. 31.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 172–215.
- 58 Ibid., p. 79.
- 59 Rozett, 'Jewish Armed Resistance in Hungary', pp. 140–2.
- 60 Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, p. 275.
- 61 N. Tec, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (New York: Oxford University, 1993), p. vii.
- 62 Ibid., p. 82.
- 63 Ibid., p. 180.
- 64 Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, pp. 341–3.
- 65 Ibid., p. 281.
- 66 Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 201.
- 67 Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, p. 164.
- 68 Ibid., p. 166.
- 69 B. Engelking, *Holocaust and Memory: The Experience of the Holocaust and its Consequences: An Investigation Based on Personal Narratives* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), pp. 81–214, 236–42.
- 70 For example, see D.M. Zektser, *Evreiskii Narod Sovmestno s drugimi narodami v bor'be s natsizmom v gody Velikol Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941–1945* (Kharkov: Rzneet, 2000); Mezhdunarodnyi simpozium 'Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennia Rossiia' (2-i: 1998: Moscow); *Ten' Kholokosta: Materialy II mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma 'Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennia Rossiia'* (Moscow: Fond Kholokost, 1998); *Plenum Evreiskogo Antifashistskogo Komiteta 'Evreiskii narod v bor'be protiv fashizma'* (3-i 1945: Moscow); *Evreiskii narod v bor'be protiv fashizma: Materialy III antifashistskogo mitinga predstavitelei evreiskogo*

naroda i III plenuma Evreiskogo Antifashistskogo Komiteta v SSSR (Moscow: Der Emes, 1945).

- 71 R.S. Gottlieb, 'Remembrance and Resistance', in *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees: Historical and Ethical Issues*, ed. J.J. Michalczyk (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1997), pp. 19–32.
- 72 Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, pp. 148–9.
- 73 M.R. Marrus, 'Varieties of Jewish Resistance', in *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust, Proceedings of the Ninth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, Jerusalem, June 1993*, ed. Y. Gutman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), pp. 269–300.
- 74 Ibid., p. 283.

16

Gender and the Family

Lisa Pine

'The road to annihilation was marked by events that specifically affected men as men and women as women.¹ Yet, the subject of gender is a relative newcomer in the wider field of Holocaust studies.² It is only in the last twenty years that this area has been explored. Before this time, the subject was barely touched for a number of reasons. First, the field of Holocaust studies itself was quite limited in its scope and development from the immediate post-war years until the 1960s and 1970s.³ Only as certain other issues and areas were researched did questions about women and the family come onto the agenda for research. Second, questions pertaining to gender simply were not asked. It took until the era of 'second-wave feminism' in the 1970s, with new developments and trends in historical awareness about the history of women and rendering them 'visible', for these issues to be raised. As a result of feminist scholarship, the concept of gender as an analytical tool developed. Third, the state of the available sources was not conducive to advancing research in this area. It took until the 1970s for a proliferation of survivors' memoirs to appear, as well as collected testimonies, which became an important source for researchers in this field. Gender studies of the Holocaust, therefore, appeared only once the field had developed to a certain point. They emerged as a response to existing research and available sources within the wider field of Holocaust studies, and indeed women's studies. Hence, asking what happened to women and using women's perspectives to comprehend the Holocaust have become important new developments in the field of Holocaust studies since the early 1980s. Pioneering articles published by Joan Ringelheim and Sybil Milton in 1984 signalled the way forward, but it is only much more recently that the area has begun to expand with conferences and books focusing exclusively on the subject.

In 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust', Ringelheim put forward the argument that women had been ignored in the literature on the Holocaust, which she termed 'gender-neutral'.⁴ Women had been either erased or obscured in the 'universal framework' of Holocaust experiences.

Ringelheim called for a reassessment of 'all generalizations and gender-neutral statements about survival, resistance, the maintenance or collapse of moral values, and the dysfunction of culture in the camps and ghettos' from the perspective of women.⁵ Indeed, the testimony of survivors and the early stages of research on the subject suggested that ways of resisting and surviving were, in fact, differentiated by gender. Women had different work, roles, relationships and capacities for survival from men. The memoir of Charlotte Delbo, a survivor of Auschwitz, attests to this, suggesting that even though women's conditions at Auschwitz were worse than those of men, women survived better. She attributed this mainly to the ways in which women bonded with each other.⁶ Delbo's understanding of survival in terms of simple acts of bonding provides a useful starting point. Ringelheim argued that women created or recreated 'families' in order to survive and that this was specific to women's culture: 'Women's culture (not their biology) provides women with specific and different conditions in which to make moral choices and act meaningfully'.⁷ Hence, there were distinctions between male and female responses, rather than simply universal responses. If women's relationships with other women were different from those of men with other men, then universal concepts, such as the isolation of prisoners and the destruction of values, are rendered inapplicable. Ringelheim argued that women's values needed to be explored and that the ways in which women 'constructed survival strategies and meaningful choices in varying conditions of powerlessness' needed to be analysed.⁸

Milton's research on survival patterns inside the camps after 1939 also pointed to specific behaviour patterns among women in their responses to Nazi persecution. She argued that 'women's specific forms of survival included doing housework as a kind of practical therapy... bonding and networks, religious or political convictions, the use of inconspicuousness, and possibly even sex'.⁹ Milton suggested that women's traditional gender roles 'aided them under conditions of extreme duress'. Women exchanged recipes. They cleaned in order to prevent the spread of disease, but also as a way of gaining control over their own space. The memoirs of female survivors have indicated that women responded to overcrowded and unsanitary conditions 'with cleaning, scrubbing and orderliness'.¹⁰ Some women also tried to repair their clothes and groom themselves, despite the unavailability of water for washing. Milton maintained that 'this imitation of normal behaviour was a conscious and rational attempt at survival'.¹¹ Hence, trying to engage in familiar routines was a distinctively female response to conditions in the Nazi camps.

In one of the most significant recent contributions to this emerging field, Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman argue that 'questions of gender lead us to a richer and more finely nuanced understanding of the Holocaust'.¹² Their book includes new scholarship combined with a presentation of personal testimonies from Holocaust survivors. They do not assert that women's experiences during

the Holocaust were totally different from those of men. Rather, they state that women's experiences provide the missing element in the overall picture of Jewish life during the Holocaust and they analyse the different ways in which men and women responded to it. Ofer and Weitzman start by defining four structural sources of gender differences: the pre-war roles of Jewish men and women; anticipatory reactions; German policy and treatment of men and women; and the responses of Jewish men and women to Nazi persecution.

In the pre-war period most Jewish families in western Europe corresponded to the bourgeois model, in which men were the breadwinners and women were responsible for the spiritual well-being and harmony of the family. Their roles and responsibilities involved them in different experiences, social environments and networks, which gave them different knowledge and skills with which to face the Nazi persecution and genocide. Their roles changed and relationships transformed as living conditions for Jewish people in Germany deteriorated throughout the 1930s.¹³ As Jewish shops and businesses were closed and Jewish men became unemployed, Jewish men were no longer in the position to make all the important decisions. As Raul Hilberg has stated: 'The newly isolated community consisted of men without power and women without support.'¹⁴ Women had to run their households and keep up the morale of their family members. They comforted their husbands and children who faced abuse and hostility outside the household.¹⁵ They tried to maintain a semblance of normality in the home at a time of growing uncertainty and persecution outside the home. Many also undertook voluntary work for Jewish women's organizations.¹⁶

Jewish women were generally less assimilated than Jewish men, who had non-Jewish business and professional contacts. They took refuge and solace in their domestic duties such as cooking. They also tried to retain their composure for the sake of their children.¹⁷ A gendered analysis of the desire to emigrate highlights distinctions between men's and women's priorities and perceptions. Women were generally more keen than men to leave Germany, being 'less status-conscious, less money-oriented...more confident of their ability to flourish on new turf'; but in practice, as Marion Kaplan states, 'fewer women than men left Germany', often because they ultimately chose to stay behind with their elderly parents.¹⁸

Interestingly, while in western Europe women were generally excluded from the world outside the home and community, in eastern Europe these gender differences were reversed. Here, Jewish women contributed to the income of the household. They were also more assimilated. Weitzman demonstrates that Jewish women's pre-war involvement in economic and cultural activities in Poland later gave them crucial networks for gaining false papers, employment, places to hide or live illegally outside the ghetto.

In terms of anticipatory reactions, most Jews, especially at first, believed that the Germans were 'civilized' and therefore, honouring traditional norms, would

not harm women and children. Hence, they formulated plans to save the men, whom they believed to be more in danger. Jewish families generally decided that the men should have priority in their plans for emigration, hiding or escape. Even in everyday activities, such as queuing for bread, the anticipation of German behaviour dictated that women should go, as Jewish men, especially those in traditional clothes, were easier to identify and harass. Many Jewish families believed it was safer for the women to go out.

Did the Nazis make this distinction in behaviour and treatment towards men and women as their victims anticipated? At first, they did appear to perpetuate some traditional norms – for example, assigning leadership roles in the Jewish Councils to men and forcing men to perform heavy manual labour. Men were also arrested and imprisoned earlier than women in both Germany and eastern Europe. But in the end, Jewish men and women were equally targeted for death. And contrary to the traditional norms of not harming women and children, the Nazis immediately killed pregnant women in the labour camps and concentration camps. In the death camps, the Nazis linked the destiny of women and children, as mothers holding the hands of their young children were among the first to be selected for the gas chambers. In addition, women were the targets of sexual assault and rape by their persecutors, even though this contravened Nazi racial policy. Myrna Goldenberg has explored the physical vulnerability of women, both as mothers and as objects of possible sexual assault.¹⁹

How did Jewish men and women differ in their responses to Nazi persecution? Men who lost their businesses and jobs, their financial security and their ability to provide for their families, experienced a loss in status. Women faced an increased physical workload and psychological duty to compensate for this. Women in both the Warsaw and the Łódź ghettos found means to feed their families, displaying great courage and resourcefulness. They traded, bartered and smuggled; many tried to keep their children alive by giving them their own inadequate food rations. At the Skarzysko labour camp, women continued to pay attention to personal hygiene and to mend their clothes, while many men stopped washing and shaving.²⁰

Ruth Bondy describes how women at Theresienstadt tried to make their bunks feel like a ‘surrogate home’ by covering the mattress with a coloured sheet and hanging photographs on the wall. At Auschwitz too,

only a day after their arrival, the differences between the sexes was already striking. The men, in hats with cut-off brims and in trousers and coats thrown to them at random – too short, too long, too wide, too small – looked like sad black storks. The women, also wearing garments that had been distributed to them at random, had somehow succeeded in only twenty-four hours in adjusting them to their bodies and sewing up the

holes, using needles made out of wooden splinters and threads pulled out of the one blanket allocated to them.²¹

Michał Unger's analysis of the Łódź ghetto considers why the mortality rate there was higher for men than for women.²² Men's work was often harder than women's and this accounted in part for the higher mortality of men. Yet, Unger demonstrates that although they were paid less than men, women coped better with the harsh conditions of ghetto life, for example, making soup out of potato skins, baking 'cake' from ersatz coffee, mending clothing and displaying an ability to adapt to their changing situation. This is given as part of the explanation for the difference between women's and men's mortality rates. Once the women in the ghetto started to work outside the home, they continued to do all their housework as well. Unger's article also shows that it was often young women – particularly if they were single parents – that were the first to be deported to the death camps. Such women and their children were the poorest group in the ghetto and a drain on scarce resources, hence a disproportionate number of them were targeted for deportation.²³

Ofer's research on the experiences of women in the Warsaw ghetto reaches similar conclusions about women's experiences. Her sources – diaries and interviews – reveal a 'tremendous endeavour to carry on everyday life' and beyond that a strong will to survive. Ofer highlights women's resourcefulness, inventiveness and resilience in trying to obtain food for their families. Some women bartered their household goods in exchange for food; others went outside the ghetto walls to purchase goods that they could resell in the ghetto. Their knowledge of Polish and connections with Poles aided them in this.²⁴ Some women engaged in smuggling, taking great risks in order to procure food for their families. Others worked in factories and soup kitchens. Yet others used sex, forming relationships with men in positions of power in order to survive.²⁵

Weitzman examines the experiences of Jews who survived in Poland outside the ghettos. Most of these Jews were women, some working as couriers for the resistance, but the majority individuals who were not part of an organization and were endeavouring to survive.²⁶ It was illegal for Jews to live outside the ghettos, hence living on the Aryan side meant living under the constant fear of being recognized and handed over to the Gestapo, which would result in death. Despite the risks involved, some Jewish men and women decided to escape from the ghettos and try to pass on the Aryan side. In a gendered analysis, Weitzman suggests that men were more likely to make the decision to pass on their own, while women were more likely to have been influenced or aided by a family member to pass. More women than men were helped by non-Jewish friends or contacts in their decision to escape and pass. Once on the Aryan side, men confided less in others and received less help than women.²⁷ One of the reasons that more women than men passed, or even took

the decision to try to pass, was the greater cultural assimilation of Jewish females in Poland before the war. Jewish boys and girls had been educated separately – the boys in special Jewish schools, the girls in the Polish schools. This meant that Jewish girls had learned Polish culture, language and literature. Their education in Polish schools later provided them with the knowledge and the contacts to pass outside the ghetto.²⁸

Goldenberg argues that women's and men's experiences of the Holocaust were not the same, describing them as 'different horrors' within the 'same hell'. Her analysis of three Auschwitz testimonies indicates some gender-specific skills which helped women to cope with their situation, such as the formation of surrogate families and 'camp sister' relationships, the sharing of recipes, cooking methods and memories of Sabbath and Festival meals. She points out the adaptation of homemaking skills into lifesaving skills, such as sewing a pocket in which to save bread. Goldenberg argues that the sharing of recipes and cooking tips was significant psychologically because it indicated a commitment to the future.²⁹ Kitchen memories also reminded women of their former position in their families and communities and reaffirmed their own sense of value. They reminded them of their strengths as nurturers, homemakers and cooks.

Social bonding, in groups of two or more, helped women to keep up their struggle to survive. Such surrogate families cared for each other, sustaining life. Goldenberg points to the adoption of 'camp sisters' as improving women's chances of survival. The formation of surrogate families was described by one survivor as 'the best way to survive'.³⁰ Lucie Adelsberger describes her camp family in which her 'daughters' provided her with clothing and food whenever they could. She states that members of such families often put their own lives at risk and that even for those who did not survive 'the friendship and love of a camp family eased the horror of their miserable end'.³¹ This kind of bonding was not exclusive to women, but appears to have been much more prevalent among women.³² The same view is expressed by S. Lillian Kremer, who notes that 'in male Holocaust writing, interdependence is exceptional rather than commonplace'.³³ In addition, Judith Baumel has demonstrated that gender socialization contributed greatly to the degree and manner of mutual assistance in the ghettos and the camps. Her case study of Płaszów shows that women's mutual help was motivated by gender and by religious belief. Women followed the teachings of both the Torah and the Talmud to the effect that Jews are responsible for each other's lives.³⁴

The works of male writers such as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, which provide interpretations of the Holocaust experience, are now considered to be incomplete as the experiences of women were not included in any detail. Goldenberg maintains that 'to represent the Holocaust more fully, we must therefore examine the memoirs of women as well as those of men'.³⁵ She argues that by assuming

the universal Holocaust experience was the male one, scholars have until recently ignored the voices of women survivors. The voices of female survivors have enhanced our understanding of the diversity and complexity of victims' Holocaust experiences.³⁶

Hence, the memoirs of women who survived the Holocaust form an important part of the literature on the subject. They underline and underpin research that has been carried out on women and the Holocaust. In *Smoke over Birkenau*, Liana Millu – like Primo Levi – wrote of her experiences at Auschwitz and described what women had endured and witnessed. She states that 'even in Auschwitz, it was clear the men were treated better than the women', yet they seem to have coped with their suffering somehow better than the men did.³⁷ Motola suggests that 'life in the Birkenau camp for women was less dreadful and anguished than it was for men in Auschwitz'.³⁸ In *Seed of Sarah: Memoirs of a Survivor*, Judith Isaacson described life in the German camp at Lichtenau, where, despite their appalling conditions, women remained optimistic, 'still singing and even dancing at times'.³⁹ Love and succour provided some consolation to the persecuted. Etty Hillesum's diary notes her experiences at the Westerbork concentration camp: 'Against every new outrage and every fresh horror, we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness, drawing strength from within ourselves'.⁴⁰ The memoirs of an Italian Holocaust survivor, Giuliana Tedeschi, also emphasize the human relationships that helped her to survive.⁴¹ It seems that this kind of nurturing love did not exist among men. Caring between men, when it existed, took the form of sharing one another's burdens. This meant that men's anguish was much more internalized, and it was not eased in the way women's was by an unchanging belief in the power of loving and nurturing actions. While men's testimonies and recollections – such as the writings of Primo Levi – stress the shame they felt during their ordeals, those of women emphasize the nurturing love that was there before and that they somehow managed to maintain, so that they were better able to preserve their moral universe. One memoir tells of a woman's inability to be an assistant *kapo*, because she could not be sufficiently violent to satisfy the requirements of the position. Her mother, rather than regretting her loss of privileges, was proud of her daughter for being unable to satisfy the brutal and immoral acts demanded of her.⁴²

Yet, the field remains one of considerable debate. The utility of a gendered approach in our understanding of the Holocaust has been much disputed. One of the main doubts about a gendered approach to the study of the Holocaust is that a differentiation of the victims by gender detracts from the fact that all Jews – men, women and children – were equally destined for murder by the Nazi regime. Lawrence Langer argues that gendered behaviour played a greatly reduced role during the Holocaust and that women and men alike were living in extreme and difficult circumstances in which they had no choice. He argues

thus against creating a 'mythology of comparative endurance'. He states that although there are more examples of sisters than brothers staying together, this may have been because brothers were separated more often by the nature of their work – hence he describes it as 'an example of situational accident, not gender-driven choice'.⁴³ Langer disputes the need for a gendered approach and maintains that the Holocaust bears witness to universal suffering.

Another argument against a gendered approach is that it permits a feminist agenda to 'take over the Holocaust'. Gabriel Schoenfeld has directed this criticism against Joan Ringelheim in particular. Ringelheim attacks the 'Holocaust establishment' for ignoring the role and experiences of women for so long and points to the lack of attention given to gender in the historiography of the Holocaust. Schoenfeld argues that 'feminist scholarship on the Holocaust is intended explicitly to serve the purposes of consciousness raising'.⁴⁴ Ringelheim's contention is that while gender may not define the Holocaust, 'it is not trivial either'.⁴⁵

A further concern is that the focus on gender diminishes the significance of the Holocaust as a unique event and thereby leads to its trivialization. Against this, it can be argued that rather than rendering the Holocaust banal, details of everyday life 'restore individuality and humanity to the victims'.⁴⁶ Another criticism is that an approach that differentiates among victims deflects attention from the horrors of Nazi policy. Against this, Ofer and Weitzman emphasize that 'rather than distracting us from the Nazi brutality against all Jews', a gendered approach enhances our understanding of it 'by locating it in the specificity of individual experiences'.⁴⁷

Horowitz adds that we need to take into account the place of gender in relation to men as well as to women.⁴⁸ Just as Nazi policy attacked Jewish women as Jews and as women, so it attacked Jewish men as Jews and as men. For example, circumcision made Jewish men easily identifiable and therefore vulnerable. Their beards and sidelocks also identified them as Jewish and they were subjected to abuse because of them. On a psychological level too, men felt damaged in their capacity to act as men, for example as protectors of their wives and children. They could not fulfil this traditional role and it was an assault on their sense of manhood.⁴⁹

Most recently, Anna Hardman has expressed concern over the methodology of much of the research in this field, in particular the way in which 'critics have tended to read women's testimony selectively, identifying what they consider to be "female" experience'.⁵⁰ She argues that Goldenberg and others have gathered 'random de-contextualised quotations from memoirs or...oral testimonies of female survivors', which have been used to authenticate their position.⁵¹ Hardman is also doubtful about the way in which 'a handful of women's accounts' are presented as 'definitive'. In addition, she argues that studies such as Brana Gurewitsch's collection of women's oral testimonies,

which tend to homogenize women's experiences and identities, are misleading.⁵² Hardman suggests that Gurewitsch defines Jewish women as mothers, sisters and nurturers, 'with a very particular notion of what constitutes female behaviour'.⁵³ Horowitz also challenges the type of interpretation that 'erases the actual experiences of women and, to an extent, domesticates the events of the Holocaust'.⁵⁴ Hardman cites examples of women fighting for their own existence at the expense of others.⁵⁵ Yet, women who did not behave according to traditional female gender norms are not discussed by historians, even though some survivors have mentioned such women; there has been a taboo in treating them. The same is true of references to lesbianism.

Zoë Waxman has also argued that assumptions that women had motherly and care-giving roles only 'obscure the diversity of women's Holocaust experiences'.⁵⁶ She further argues that the valorizing of sacrifice also means that the struggles surrounding temptation are 'glossed over'. Waxman states that because many people do not wish to confront the full horrors of the Holocaust, the literature has tended to overlook the desperate actions undertaken by victims in order to survive under the appalling conditions in which they found themselves. Instead, the literature has projected Holocaust testimonies as 'epics of love and courage' and, Waxman argues, can be 'deeply misleading' as a result.⁵⁷

Another area of recent concern is the question of what constitutes reliable testimony. The nature of testimony is problematic in itself – do women's (or for that matter men's) memories and presentations of themselves during the Holocaust differ from reality? Is there an underlying reason for what they say? Hardman uses the case study of the dispute between two survivors of the women's orchestra at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Fania Fenelon and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, to emphasize both the subjectivity of survivors' accounts and the need for scholars 'to negotiate more closely the relationship between the actuality of the individual's Holocaust experiences, and the ways in which they choose to represent it'.⁵⁸ Both Hardman's and Waxman's challenges are interesting. They both seek to change the nature of the debate on gender and the Holocaust. Their work is also perhaps the obvious next step in the growth and development of this comparatively recent field of research and points the way for further advancement of the field in the future.

The paucity of research on the subject of children in the Holocaust makes this an area for future investigation.⁵⁹ Children were the most vulnerable and fragile of victims. Yet in some ways they exhibited great strength and developed strategies of survival of their own. The experiences of children during the first phase of social ostracism and pauperization matched those of their parents. This meant restrictions of space when Jewish families were forced to move out of their homes, limits on freedom of movement and restrictions on the availability and variety of food. Just as Jewish adults were targeted in the world of work, Jewish children were targeted at school. If they were unable

to emigrate, which applied to the majority, they were trapped in a sombre and fearful situation along with their parents. With the process of ghettoization in eastern Europe, greater privations and restrictions were imposed on them. Children, and especially infants, suffered first and most.

Hilberg has described the high and rapid mortality rate for children in the ghettos.⁶⁰ At Łódź, between 1 May 1940 and 31 December 1941, of 1,390 babies born, 416 died. The main causes of their deaths were premature birth, diseases of the lungs or digestive system, food poisoning, malnutrition and dysentery. Starvation was another major cause of death. In the ghettos, children saw their parents deprived of their rights and subjected to indignities. They saw them in a position of powerlessness. Children roved around in groups or gangs in many ghettos. Older boys were propelled into adult roles as beggars, smugglers, apprentices or workers in order to try to improve their families' circumstances.⁶¹ When the deportations began, families were usually sent to the death camps together, although there were cases in which children went either before or after their parents. In the shooting operations in the East, children were shot with their mothers and fathers. In the death camps, children had almost no hope of survival. Some teenagers pretended to be older than they were in order to be selected for work and thereby extend their possible lifespan.

While we know how children were treated by the Nazis and their collaborators, very little is known about their responses to the terrible conditions they faced or about their daily lives. Recent research has shown that they developed unique strategies for survival, including fantasy, creativity and play. Yehudit Inbar asserts that children used play for more than momentary comfort, consolation and distraction; 'fantasy, creativity and play were the manifestations of a basic instinct for survival'.⁶² The museum at Yad Vashem holds a number of items that belonged to children including dolls, marionettes, clay sculptures and a Monopoly game from Theresienstadt, playing cards made at Majdanek, dolls from Auschwitz, as well as embroidered pouches containing Torah scroll fragments.

While it is difficult to reconcile the paradox of the world of play and the world of the Holocaust, George Eisen notes that 'children's play was not divorced from reality' and that children's play reflected their reality.⁶³ He describes the setting up of makeshift playgrounds, the organization of play days and chess tournaments as 'rational and necessary' activities. They confirmed the need to establish a defensive perimeter by every possible means, especially in conditions in which the scope for action was severely restricted. Play activities could screen children – albeit temporarily – from realities, heighten their self-esteem and foster their will to survive. Eisen argues that 'children responded almost everywhere to the destruction of their familiar universe by creating a new world or reformulating the old one'.⁶⁴ The motivation for setting up

playgrounds in the ghettos and camps is described by Eisen as 'part of an active and conscious search for normalcy amid the... dislocations of a deeply traumatised society'.⁶⁵ But such attempts to ameliorate the lives of the children were short-lived. Parents 'had no complete power to insulate the children from reality, and they could not erase the knowledge of the inevitable doom'.⁶⁶ In the early stages of the Holocaust, children largely relied on their parents to create a play world for them, but later, with the forced separation of families and the loss of parents, many children had to invent a play world for themselves. Their games and pastimes came to reflect their altered conditions, whether in hiding, in ghettos or in camps. For example, in the Vilna ghetto, games reflected ghetto life. The same was true of children's play in the camps.

There has been very little research on the subject of Jewish families, both during the initial and ongoing stages of Nazi persecution of the German Jews between 1933 and 1939, and during the Second World War and the 'Final Solution'. My own work on the experiences of Jewish families in Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1939 has outlined distinctions based on their backgrounds, circumstances and attitudes.⁶⁷ My analysis of testimonies shows the responses of Jewish families both to Nazi antisemitic legislation and to informal social ostracism throughout the 1930s. In particular, the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, which affected Jewish professional and social life, had a profound impact on family life. The *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom was a major disruption to family life for many, with their homes destroyed and adult males taken away to concentration camps. Thereafter, the total 'Aryanization of the economy' removed the source of income from those families who still owned businesses or whose members were still employed at that time. Although Jewish families suffered as collective units during the Nazi regime, an analysis of testimonies demonstrates the differences in the impact of Nazi persecution upon men, women and children.⁶⁸

Much of the testimony given by men initially focused on a sense of betrayal by their fatherland, and then described the stresses placed on them in trying to support their families under increasingly difficult financial circumstances. In contrast to that of men, the testimony of women often highlighted their unselfish concern and worry for the welfare of their children and husbands, particularly at times of physical separation, for example when men were taken to concentration camps or children sent to safe havens abroad. Women also described in more detail the impact of the physical destruction of their homes. Both men and women recounted their despair at the worsening situation and its impact on their children in particular. The most salient features to emerge from children's testimony were the growing sense that the situation was beyond the control of their parents, the difficulty in understanding the changes to their lives and the need to grow up ahead of their time in the face of the circumstances of their persecution.

There is no clear-cut correlation of the effects of persecution on Jewish families and their responses to it in the period up to 1939.⁶⁹ Experiences differed enormously according to a variety of factors, including age, class, religious orientation and location. In certain cases, the Jewish home seemed unable to shelter its members from the situation, and tensions arose between spouses and between parents and children. Frustration, fear and indecision often led to friction in the home. Parents often felt unable to maintain their position as protectors of and providers for their offspring, and children sometimes experienced a loss of respect for their parents for not fulfilling this role. Yet, in other cases, families did pull together, and the Jewish home provided a shelter against the discrimination and persecution that individual family members had to face outside.

There is also little research into the experiences of Jewish families still living inside Nazi Germany in the war years. I have argued elsewhere that the changed relationships and roles between parents and children which were noted in the earlier period of Nazi persecution presented themselves even more strikingly in the transit camps, concentration camps and death camps, where children saw their parents in a different light imposed by the abnormal circumstances and by those in charge.⁷⁰ Families faced important choices and had to make major decisions. While still in their homes, parents had to decide – when it was still possible to do so – whether to try to emigrate as a family or to send their children to safe havens abroad. Debórah Dwork has shown that while still at home Jewish children were subjected to Nazi policies of segregation, isolation and later differentiation. They were separated from the rest of the community, excluded from schools, parks and marked with a yellow star. They adapted to these conditions by making friends with other Jewish children and attending Jewish schools. They played in their own homes and gardens. While they had to get used to wearing their yellow stars, at least ‘their familial world was still intact’.⁷¹

On the eve of the deportations, German Jews were a decimated, over-aged, socially declassified and impoverished population group. Almost everyone lost close relatives through the deportations. One survivor, Ilse Rewald, describes how selfless friendships and the spirit of sacrifice developed.⁷² Another survivor recounts that ‘Families were separated, married couples were torn apart, children dragged away, parents left behind’, when the Jews from Berlin were first taken to transit camps.⁷³

After they were forced to leave their homes, they had to decide if they were going to hide as a family or separately. Older children also had decisions to make – should they leave their parents and seek their own fate? Once they were thrown out of their homes, their situation changed more drastically. Those living in hiding were separated from their families. While some formed close attachments to their hosts, Dwork argues that most did not.

In the ghettos, many children were at first able to continue with certain aspects of their lives, for example, attending schools and maintaining friendships. Younger children played together in the streets. Older children went to youth clubs and Zionist groups. And while they were no longer in their own homes, still the immediate family remained as a unit. In the ghettos, families were still faced with major decisions. Children had to decide whether to risk leaving the ghetto to obtain food, and parents had to decide which 'resettlement' transport would be best for the family.

Unger describes how in the Łódź ghetto, most family members including children aged ten and over worked. This meant that the father's role as chief provider for the household and status as head of the family was sometimes significantly diminished. Family tensions often built up in circumstances in which the mother and child or children worked and the father did not. Unger states that 'hunger and hardship were the main factors that affected interactions among family members'.⁷⁴ Some families were united by the hardship they faced, maintaining their integrity and cohesion, and displaying great solidarity, for example, giving up rations for a weak relative or selling their food to procure medicine for family members that were ill. Whilst the conditions in the ghetto made it difficult to maintain normal family activities, 'many families went out of their way to eat at least one meal together, setting the table as they had in normal times and sharing their scanty rations'.⁷⁵ Some symbolically marked the Sabbath and high holy days by lighting candles, praying or cooking something different. 'In many cases, the family structure and support did much to sustain the members' morale and struggle for survival. And in most cases the living spirit in this struggle was the mother.' However, there were also cases in which 'family relations deteriorated, quarrels erupted, and family units dissolved'. Unger cites a case in which the father, without self-restraint, ate his children's rations, for which his wife did not forgive him, despite his sense of guilt afterwards.⁷⁶ In several cases, quarrels between spouses ended in divorce. Conditions of overcrowding, insufficient calorie intake and lack of hygiene led to men becoming impotent and to women ceasing to menstruate.⁷⁷ These circumstances only served to heighten tensions in marital relationships. In her discussion of Theresienstadt, Bondy indicates that some marriages became stronger in the ghetto, but that others did not withstand the strains of ghetto life.⁷⁸

With the dissolution of the ghettos, forced labour round-ups, deportations and violence tore families apart. In transit camps family members had to decide whether or not to accompany relatives who were called to go on transports. Once in transit camps, there was no longer a long-term plan for survival. Designs for survival became, as Dwork has described, 'just quotidian demands'.⁷⁹ From this stage onwards, their project was daily existence. Family structures disintegrated under the strain of Nazi persecution. Men and women

were separated and families torn apart. The camp inmates lived in barracks. Dwork argues that 'memory of family life was a source of strength and solace'.⁸⁰ Children separated from their parents and siblings remembered them as they were at the time of parting. Throughout their ordeals they maintained the hope that they would be reunited and that their former lives would be restored. After the war, very few nuclear families were united completely and no extended family emerged without losses.⁸¹ In the transit camps, confinement, hunger and illness led to a sense of shame and degradation among parents and a grave deterioration in family structures. In the circumstances of the camps, where adults were forced to obey orders and subjected to arbitrary insult and assault without respite, traditional family relationships altered dramatically.⁸² The concept of parental power disappeared.

In Bergen-Belsen, parents were 'nothing anymore' in the sense that children no longer respected them.⁸³ The radical change in children's perception of their parents resulted from the fact that camp inmates were in a situation of absolute powerlessness. A father became 'just another person'.⁸⁴ Hence parental authority diminished and filial respect dwindled. Yet in some cases, parents were still, in certain senses, able to provide emotional support and a semblance of normality, especially for younger children who were less aware of the powerlessness and debasement of their parents. Dwork has cited examples of children who felt reassured by the presence of their parents. Esther Levi's situation in the transit camp 'remained familiar' because her mother was always there and the pattern from home was preserved in this sense.⁸⁵ Even for older children who recognized their parents' lack of power, the very presence of one or both parents, coupled with the fact that the family was still together, created a feeling of comfort and, despite the hardships, love and tenderness remained a part of life. Where possible, families ate together and tried to maintain some semblance of normal life. Karl Ochsenmann describes his experiences at Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. At first, in Westerbork, families could eat together. But later this changed and this led to increasing demoralization among the inmates.⁸⁶ At Bergen-Belsen, 'family units were destroyed After a whole day at work... mothers and fathers came back to their barracks in the evenings apathetic and full of despair.... The children loafed around, often unwashed and uncombed, in shabby clothes with worn shoes.'⁸⁷ The context of family relationships was completely transformed in the concentration camps. As Dwork argues: 'The young people were no longer in a position to be the children of their parents, and the adults were defeated in their attempts to protect their progeny'.⁸⁸ One former inmate of Belsen recalled that women there often displayed a 'practical and community minded attitude, chiefly for the sake of their children'.⁸⁹

Inmates remained together with their families and friends for as long as possible. But the splitting up of families was part of the Nazis' attempt to sap any

vestiges of morale their victims may have had and was part of the process of isolation and dehumanization. In the concentration camps, inmates were deprived of all their usual systems of support, including their families.⁹⁰ Life in the camps was designed to eliminate the sense of identity and individuality of the inmates. Yet, Ringelheim has shown that women were able to 'transform their habits of raising children or their experience of nurturing into the care of the nonbiological family'.⁹¹ I have also argued that as isolation and the separation of families were deliberately imposed by the camp system, the creation of new 'families' helped inmates by giving them a system of mutual support and a source of material and psychological strength in place of their real families.⁹² Dwork has noted that in the twins block at Auschwitz, where children were separated from their parents, older girls became 'mothers' to smaller children.⁹³

In the death camps, family members had to make certain decisions (for example, children pretending to be older in order to be assigned to labour) that might forestall their deaths, or they could choose to stay with loved ones in the face of death. For example, the 17,500 inmates of Theresienstadt were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, to the family camp B/2/b in September 1943. This was the only Jewish family camp within the complex. Men and women were placed in separate barracks, but they could meet briefly while walking down the camp road to the latrines or secretly, but fleetingly, in the barracks. In June 1944, the family camp was liquidated and its inmates were gassed. Although a selection for work was held and mothers were allowed to present themselves for selection, the overwhelming majority opted to die with their children.⁹⁴

Recent research has begun to consider more specific aspects of the subject and to open the way for future scholarship. One such area is the study of Jewish female doctors and nurses in the ghettos, transit camps, labour and extermination camps. Ritvo and Plotkin demonstrate that these professionals managed to help others survive, despite the lack of medical supplies.⁹⁵ One doctor recalls that at Auschwitz she delivered babies 'on dark nights, when everyone else was sleeping – in dark corners of the camp, in the toilet, on the floor, without a drop of water'. She then bandaged the mothers and sent them back to their work assignments or diagnosed them with pneumonia.⁹⁶ Different accounts tell of newborn babies taken away from their mothers and killed by injection in order to save the lives of their mothers.⁹⁷

In the area of narratives, Marlene Heinemann's *Gender and Destiny* is a pioneering study of women's Holocaust memoirs that isolates gender-based experience and the manner in which women write about it.⁹⁸ Ruth Linden's *Making Stories, Making Selves* explores the processes of memory, narrative (or storytelling) and fashioning/refashioning the self. The book is based on her interviews with and her interpretations of survivors' accounts of the death camps and of the resistance.⁹⁹ Research into the role of women in resistance and rescue is

also expanding. The earlier works of Laska and Rossiter in the 1980s have been supplemented by new research.¹⁰⁰ Renée Poznanski has looked at the role of women in the French Resistance.¹⁰¹ Nechama Tec has examined the activities of women among the forest partisans.¹⁰² These contributions add to our knowledge of the subject of women in the resistance and point the way for further studies within this area.¹⁰³ There are also useful monographs on particular camps.¹⁰⁴

The perspectives of gender, children and the family are now becoming established within the broader field of Holocaust studies. They have added an entirely new dimension to the historiography and are of great significance to our understanding of the subject as a whole. A number of academics are currently engaged in original research, exploring areas that have been unexamined previously, and leading the way for ongoing scholarship in these areas.¹⁰⁵

Notes

- 1 R. Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (London: Lime Tree, 1993), p. 126.
- 2 On this, see J.T. Baumel, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), pp. 39–52.
- 3 On this, see R. Hilberg, 'Developments in the Historiography of the Holocaust', in *Comprehending the Holocaust: Historical and Literary Research*, eds. A. Cohen, J. Gelber and C. Wardi (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1988), pp. 21ff.
- 4 J. Ringelheim, 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, 1 (1984), 69.
- 5 Ibid., p. 73.
- 6 C. Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
- 7 Ringelheim, 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable', 81.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 S. Milton, 'Women and the Holocaust: The Case of German and German-Jewish Women', in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. R. Bridenthal, A. Grossmann and M. Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), p. 311.
- 10 H. Schramm, *Menschen in Gurs: Erinnerungen an ein französisches Internierungslager, 1940–1941* (Worms: Heintz, 1977), p. 88.
- 11 Milton, 'Women and the Holocaust', p. 315.
- 12 L. Weitzman and D. Ofer, 'The Role of Gender in the Holocaust', in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. D. Ofer and L. Weitzman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 1.
- 13 On this, see M. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 59–62.
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17

Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview

Ian Hancock

The motives invoked to justify the death of the Gypsies were the same as those ordering the murder of the Jews, and the methods employed for the one were identical with those employed for the other.

Miriam Novitch, *Ghetto Fighters' House*, Israel¹

It was the wish of the all-powerful Reichsführer Adolf Hitler to have the Gypsies disappear from the face of the earth.

SS Officer Pery Broad, Auschwitz Political Division²

Miriam Novitch refers to the motives put forth to justify the murder of the Romanies, or 'Gypsies', in the Holocaust, but in her small but groundbreaking book she is only partly right: both Jews and Romanies did indeed share the status – along with the handicapped – of being targeted for elimination because of the threat they were perceived to pose to the pristine gene pool of the German *Herrenvolk* or 'Master Race'; but while the Jews were considered a threat on a number of other grounds as well, political, philosophical and economic, the Romanies were only ever a 'racial' threat.

Earlier writings on the Holocaust, however, either did not recognize this at all, or failed to understand that the 'criminality' associated with our people was attributed by the Nazis to a genetically transmitted and incurable disease, and was therefore ideologically *racial*; instead, writers focused only on the 'antisocial' label resulting from it and failed to acknowledge the genetic connection made by the Nazi race scientists themselves. In 1950 the Württemburg Ministry of the Interior issued a statement to the judges hearing war crimes restitution claims that they should keep in mind that 'the Gypsies were persecuted under the National Socialist regime *not* for any racial reason, but because of their criminal and antisocial record', and 21 years later the Bonn Convention took

advantage of this as justification for not paying reparations to Romanies, claiming that the reasons for their victimization during the Nazi period were those of security only. Not one person spoke out to challenge that position, the consequences of which have hurt the survivors and their descendants beyond measure, though at that time the French genealogist Montandon did observe that 'everyone despises Gypsies, so why exercise restraint? Who will avenge them? Who will complain? Who will bear witness?'³

The past two to three decades have seen a tremendous increase in Holocaust-focused activities, in the establishment of museums and memorials, and in the creation of educational programmes for schools. Hand in hand with this has emerged an increasingly strident debate over how the Holocaust is to be defined, and who does or does not qualify for inclusion in it. The Anti-Defamation League's website defines *Holocaust* as 'the systematic persecution and annihilation of more than six million Jews as a central act of state by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945'. The programme for the 33rd Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches defines it as 'the Nazi attempt to annihilate European Jewry', and makes no mention in its pages of Romanies. In February 1987, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum organized a conference entitled *Other Victims* which included a panel on Romanies, but it included no Romanies in its organization or among its presenters; more recently an international conference entitled *The Roma, a Minority in Europe: Historical, Social and Cultural Perspectives* held at Tel Aviv University in December 2002 similarly had no Romanies among its organizers or speakers. It would be unthinkable to have a conference on the fate of Jews in the Holocaust, yet have no Jewish involvement. We should not be treated differently. Guenter Lewy⁴ has attempted to argue that not only were our people *not* a part of the Holocaust, but that our fate at the hands of the Nazis did not even qualify as an attempted genocidal action; a similar position has been taken more recently by Margalit.⁵ During the question-and-answer session at a talk I gave in 2001,⁶ a member of the audience called out following my statement that the Romanies were only ever a racial threat 'and nothing more!' It is this competitive – and I must say meanly motivated and defensive – attitude which I want to question and challenge. It is unscholarly and unprofessional in the context of the Holocaust especially, and it serves no purpose to diminish the fate of the Romanies; instead it can only reflect badly on those who attempt to do so. If the Holocaust is to teach us anything, it is concern for the treatment of human beings at the hands of other human beings, and the wicked senselessness of hating others for being different. The present-day relevance of this is clear from a recent editorial in *The Economist* which stated that the Romanies in Europe were 'at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator: the poorest, the most unemployed, the least educated, the shortest-lived, the most welfare dependent, the most imprisoned and the most segregated'.⁷ More energy is expended on making their

case by those seeking to distance Romanies from the Holocaust than on examining the relevance of the Holocaust to the Romanies' present-day condition.

In an article published in 1996 I listed several of the arguments that have been made for diminishing the *Porrajmos*, or Romani Holocaust,⁸ addressing each one in turn. In practically every case, statements were made which were simply wrong – the result of assuming a situation to have existed or not existed without bothering to check the historical record. Several writers, for example, have written that there was no Final Solution of the Gypsy Question, even though the earliest Nazi reference to the *endgültige Lösung der Zigeunerfrage* dates from March 1938.⁹

Without getting into what has been cynically called the 'Suffering Olympics', since my more subjective feelings on the matter have already appeared elsewhere,¹⁰ I will instead try to provide an overview of the details and sequence of Nazi action against Romanies for those for whom this information is new. I have paid a price for my outspokenness and have lost friends and support from some quarters, while certainly gaining it in others. I put it to those who have turned away from me to look deep into their own hearts and ask themselves why – *really* why – they have done so, when nothing I have written has been fabricated or ever written with malicious intent.

While it is true that all of the 'minimizing' rhetoric originates with some Jewish authors, I must hasten to add that most of the arguments in *support* of the Romani case originate with Jewish scholars too; indeed, practically the entire body of research on the Romani Holocaust is the result of Jewish scholarship. Despite the naysayers, the Jews are practically the only friends we have, and we recognize that.

The reasons for antigypsyism are complex, and are the result of several factors coming together over time. I have discussed these in more detail in another essay,¹¹ but briefly these are (a) the mistaken assumption that the first Romanies to arrive in Europe did so at the same time as, and because of, the Ottoman Turk takeover of the Christian Byzantine Empire; (b) the fact that Romanies were a non-white, non-Christian, alien population; (c) the fact that Romanies have never had claim to a geographical territory or have had an economy, militia or government; and (d) the fact that Romani culture itself maintains a strict social boundary between Romanies and the non-Romani world. These resulted in excessively barbaric methods of control, which included murder and torture, transportation and enslavement, from the very time of their arrival in Europe at the end of the thirteenth century. The greatest tragedy to befall the European Romani population, however, even greater than five and a half centuries of slavery in Romania, was the attempt to eradicate it as part of the Nazis' plan to have a 'Gypsy-free' land. Although it was not the first governmental resolution to exterminate Romanies (the German Emperor Karl VI had previously issued such an order in 1721), it was by far the most devastating, ultimately destroying over half of the Romani population in Nazi-occupied Europe. Romanies were

the only other population besides the Jews who were targeted for extermination on racial/ethnic grounds following the directives of a Final Solution.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, German laws against Romanies had already been in effect for hundreds of years. The persecution of the Romani people began almost as soon as they first arrived in German-speaking lands because, as outsiders, they were, without knowing it, breaking the Hanseatic laws which made it a punishable offence not to have a permanent home or job, and not to be on the taxpayers' register. They were also accused of being spies for the Muslims, whom few Germans had ever met, but about whom they had heard many frightening stories. It was not a criminal offence to murder a Romani and there were sometimes 'Gypsy hunts' in which Romanies were tracked down and killed like wild animals. Forests were set on fire to drive out any Romanies who might have been hiding there.

By the nineteenth century, scholars in Germany and elsewhere in Europe were writing about Romanies and Jews as being inferior beings and 'the excrement of humanity',¹² even Darwin, writing in 1871, singled out our two populations as not being 'culturally advanced' like other 'territorially settled' peoples.¹³ This crystallized into specifically racist attitudes in the writing of Dohm, Hundt-Radowsky, Knox, Tetzner, Gobineau, Ploetz, Schallmeyer and others.¹⁴ In the 1880s, Chancellor von Bismarck reinforced some of the discriminatory laws, stating that Romanies were to be dealt with 'especially severely' if apprehended.

In or around 1890, a conference on 'The Gypsy Scum' (*Das Zigeuner-geschmeiß*) was held in Swabia, at which the military was given full authority to keep Romanies on the move. In 1899 the Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who was the composer Richard Wagner's son-in-law, wrote a book called *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, in which he argued for the building of a 'newly shaped...and...especially deserving Aryan race'.¹⁵ It was used to justify the promotion of ideas about German racial superiority and for any oppressive action taken against members of 'inferior' populations. In that same year, the 'Gypsy Information Agency' was set up in Munich under the direction of Alfred Dillmann, which began cataloguing data on all Romanies throughout the German lands. The results were published in 1905 in Dillmann's *Zigeuner-Buch*,¹⁶ which laid the foundations for what was to happen to our people in the Holocaust 35 years later.

The *Zigeuner-Buch* is nearly 350 pages long and consists of three parts: first, an introduction stating that Romanies were a 'plague' and a 'menace' against which the German population had to defend itself by means of 'ruthless punishments', and which warned of the dangers of mixing the Romani and German gene pools. The second part was a register of all known Romanies, giving genealogical details and criminal records if any. The third part was a collection of photographs of those same people. Dillmann's ideas about 'race mixing' later became a central part of the Nuremberg Law in Nazi Germany.

In 1920, a psychiatrist, Karl Binding and a magistrate, Alfred Hoche, published a jointly authored book called *The Eradication of Lives Undeserving of Life*,¹⁷ using a phrase first coined by Richard Liebich with specific reference to Romanies nearly 60 years earlier¹⁸ and used shortly after him, again specifically referring to Romanies, by Rudolf Kulemann.¹⁹ Among the three groups that they said were ‘unworthy of life’ were the ‘incurably mentally ill’, and it was to this group that Romanies were considered to belong. Euthanasia and particularly non-propagation through sterilization were topics receiving a good deal of attention at that time in the United States; Nazi programmes were to an extent based on American research.²⁰ Perceived Romani ‘criminality’ was seen as a transmitted genetic trait, though no account was taken of the centuries of exclusion of the Romanies from German society, which made subsistence theft a necessity for survival. A law incorporating the phrase *lives undeserving of life* was put into effect just four months after Hitler became Chancellor of the Third Reich.

During the 1920s, the legal oppression of Romanies in Germany intensified considerably, despite the official statutes of the Weimar Republic which stated that all its citizens were equal. In 1920 they were forbidden to enter parks and public baths; in 1925 a conference on ‘The Gypsy Question’ was held which resulted in the drafting of laws requiring unemployed Romanies to be sent to work camps ‘for reasons of public security’, and for all Romanies to be registered with the police. After 1927 everyone, even Romani children, had to carry identification cards bearing their fingerprints and photographs. In 1929, The Central Office for the Fight against the Gypsies in Germany was established in Munich, and in 1933, just ten days before the Nazis came to power, government officials in Burgenland, Austria, called for the withdrawal of all civil rights from the Romani people.

In September 1935, Romanies became subject to the restrictions of the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, which forbade marriage between Germans and ‘non-Aryans’, specifically Jews, Romanies and people of African descent. In 1937, the National Citizenship Law relegated Romanies and Jews to the status of second-class citizens, depriving them of their civil rights. Also in 1937, Heinrich Himmler issued a decree entitled ‘The Struggle against the Gypsy Plague’ which reiterated that Romanies of mixed blood were the most likely to engage in criminal activity, and required that all information on Romanies be sent from the regional police departments to the Reich Central Office. In their book published in 1943, the Danish sociologists Erik Bartels and Gudrun Brun echoed this position, evidently unaware that the sterilization of Romanies had been underway for a decade:

The pure Gypsies present no great problem, if only we realise that their mentality does not allow of their admittance to the well-ordered general society... the mixed Gypsies cause considerably greater difficulties (... nothing good

has) come from a crossing between a Gipsy and a white person... Germany is at present contemplating the introduction of provisions of sterilization in the case of such families.²¹

Calling a population vermin, or a disease, rather than recognizing them as part of the human family is a technique used to dehumanize it and to distance it from society. Such terms were constantly used to refer to Jews and Romanies in the Third Reich in an effort to desensitize the general population to the increasingly harsh treatment being meted out to them; after all, vermin and diseases need to be eradicated. Disturbingly, this language is still with us – in 1992 the *Badische Zeitung* carried the headline ‘A pure disease, these Gypsies!’²²

Between 13 and 18 June 1938, ‘Gypsy Clean-Up Week’ (*Zigeuner-aufräumungswoche*, also called *Aktion Arbeitsscheu Reich* and *Bettlerwoche* in the documentation) took place throughout Germany which, like *Kristallnacht* for the Jewish people that same year, marked the beginning of the end. For both populations it sent a clear message to the general public: there would be no penalty for mistreating Jews and Romanies, since the very body meant to safeguard German society – the police – was itself openly doing so.

Also in 1938, the first reference to ‘The Final Solution of the Gypsy Question’ (*die endgültige Lösung der Zigeunerfrage*) appeared in print in a document dated 24 March, and again in an order issued by Himmler on 8 December that year and announced publicly in the *NS Rechtsspiegel* the following 21 February. Thus in the *Auschwitz Memorial Book* we find ‘The final resolution, as formulated by Himmler in his “Decree for Basic Regulations to Resolve the Gypsy Question as Required by the Nature of Race” of December 8th, 1938, meant that preparations were to begin for the *complete extermination* of the Sinti and Roma’.²³ Also in 1938, Himmler issued his criteria for biological and racial evaluation which determined that each Romani’s family background was to be investigated going back for three generations. The Nazis’ racial motive for exterminating Romanies is clear from the fact that they even targeted Romani-like people, taking no chances lest the German population be contaminated with Romani blood. Kenrick writes:

In general, a person with one Jewish grandparent was not affected in the Nazi anti-Jewish legislation, whereas one-eighth ‘gypsy blood’ was considered strong enough to outweigh seven-eighths of German blood – so dangerous were the Gypsies considered.²⁴

This was twice as strict as the criteria determining who was Jewish; had the same also applied to Romanies, nearly 20,000 would have escaped death. On 16 December 1941 Himmler issued the order to have Romanies throughout western Europe deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau for extermination.

In 1939 Johannes Behrendt of the Office of Racial Hygiene issued a brief stating that 'All Gypsies should be treated as hereditarily sick; the only solution is elimination. The aim should therefore be the elimination without hesitation of this defective element in the population.'²⁵ In January 1940 the first mass genocidal action of the Holocaust took place when 250 Romani children from Brno were murdered in Buchenwald, where they were used as guinea-pigs to test the efficacy of the Zyklon-B cyanide gas crystals that were later used in the gas chambers.²⁶ In June 1941 Hitler ordered the extermination of all Jews, Romanies and communist political functionaries in the entire Soviet Union. Reinhard Heydrich, who was Head of the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) and the leading organizational architect of the Nazi Final Solution, ordered the *Einsatzkommandos* to kill all Jews, Romanies and mentally ill patients, although not all of the documentation regarding its complete details, relating to both Jews and Romanies, has so far been found. Müller-Hill writes:

Heydrich, who had been entrusted with the 'final solution of the Jewish question' on 31 July 1941, shortly after the German invasion of the USSR, also included the Gypsies in his 'final solution'.... The senior SS officer and Chief of Police for the East, Dr. Landgraf, in Riga, informed Rosenberg's Reich Commissioner for the East, Lohse, of the inclusion of the Gypsies in the 'final solution'. Thereupon, Lohse gave the order, on 24 December 1941, that the Gypsies should be given the same treatment as the Jews.²⁷

Burleigh and Wippermann write further:

A conference on racial policy organised by Heydrich took place in Berlin on 21 September 1939, which may have decided upon a 'Final Solution' of the 'Gypsy Question'. According to the scant minutes which have survived, four issues were decided: the concentration of Jews in towns; their relocation to Poland; the removal of 30,000 Gypsies to Poland, and the systematic deportation of Jews to German incorporated territories using goods trains. An express letter sent by the Reich Main Security Office on 17 October 1939 to its local agents mentioned that the 'Gypsy Question will shortly be regulated throughout the territory of the Reich'.... At about this time, Adolf Eichmann made the recommendation that the 'Gypsy Question' be solved simultaneously with the 'Jewish Question'.... Himmler signed the order dispatching Germany's Sinti and Roma to Auschwitz on 16 December 1942. The 'Final Solution' of the 'Gypsy Question' had begun.²⁸

Himmler's order stated that 'all Gypsies are to be deported to the Zigeunerlager at Auschwitz concentration camp, with no regard to their degree of racial

impurity'. The *Memorial Book* for the Romanies who died at Auschwitz-Birkenau also says:

The Himmler decree of 16 December 1942 (*Auschwitz-Erlaß*), according to which the Gypsies should be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, had the same meaning for the Gypsies that the conference at Wannsee on 20 January 1942 had for the Jews. This decree, and the bulletin that followed on 29 January 1943, can thus be regarded as a logical consequence of the decision taken at Wannsee. After it had been decided that the fate of the Jews was to end in mass extermination, it was natural for the other group of racially persecuted people, the Gypsies, to become victims of the same policy, which finally even included soldiers in the Wehrmacht.²⁹

In a paper delivered in Washington in 1987, at a conference on the fate of the non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust sponsored by the US Holocaust Memorial Council, Erika Thurner of the Institut für Neuere Geschichte und Zeitgeschichte at the University of Linz stated:

Heinrich Himmler's infamous Auschwitz decree of 16 December 1942 can be seen as the final stage of the final solution of the Gypsy Question. The decree served as the basis for complete extermination. According to the implementation instructions of 1943, all Gypsies, irrespective of their racial mix, were to be assigned to concentration camps. The concentration camp for Gypsy families at Auschwitz-Birkenau was foreseen as their final destination... opposed to the fact that the decision to seek a final solution for the Gypsy Question came at a later date than that of the Jewish Question, the first steps taken to exterminate the Gypsies were initiated prior to this policy decision.

This order appears to have been the result of a direct decision from Hitler himself.³⁰ Breitman reproduced the statement issued by Security Police Commander Bruno Streckenbach following a policy meeting with Hitler and Heydrich held in Pretsch in June, 1941, namely that '[t]he Führer has ordered the liquidation of all Jews, Gypsies and communist political functionaries in the entire area of the Soviet Union'.³¹ SS Officer Pery Broad, who worked in the political division at Auschwitz and who participated directly in the murders of several thousand prisoners there, wrote in his memoirs 25 years later that 'it was the will of the all-powerful Reichsführer Adolf Hitler to have the Gypsies disappear from the face of the earth'.³² At a party meeting on 14 September 1942 with Joseph Goebbels, Reichsminister of Justice, Otto Thierack announced that 'with respect to the extermination of antisocial forms of life, Dr Goebbels is of the opinion that Jews and Gypsies should simply be exterminated'. Former SS

General Otto Ohlendorf said at the postwar military tribunal at Nuremberg that in the killing campaigns, 'there was no difference between Gypsies and Jews'.

On 4 August 1944, some 2,900 Romanies were gassed and cremated in a single action at Auschwitz-Birkenau, during what is remembered as *Zigeunernacht*.³³

Determining the percentage or number of Romanies who died in the Holocaust has not been easy. Bernard Streck noted that 'any attempts to express Romani casualties in terms of numbers...cannot be verified by means of lists or card-indexes or camp files; most of the Gypsies died in eastern or southern Europe, shot by execution troops or fascist gang members'.³⁴ Much of the Nazi documentation still remains to be analysed and, as Streck intimates, many murders were not recorded since they took place in the fields and forests where Romanies were arrested. Nor are there accurate figures for the pre-war Romani population in Europe, though the Nazi Party's official census of 1939 estimated it to be about two million, certainly an under-representation. Regarding numbers, König says:

The count of half a million Sinti and Roma murdered between 1939 and 1945 is too low to be tenable; for example in the Soviet Union many of the Romani dead were listed under non-specific labels such as *Liquidierungsübrigien* [remainder to be liquidated], 'hangers-on' and 'partisans'.... The final number of the dead Sinti and Roma may never be determined. We do not know precisely how many were brought into the concentration camps; not every concentration camp produced statistical material; moreover, Sinti and Roma are often listed under the heading of remainder to be liquidated, and do not appear in the statistics for Gypsies.³⁵

In the eastern territories, in Russia especially, Romani deaths were sometimes counted into the records under the heading of Jewish deaths. The *Memorial Book* also discusses the means of killing Romanies:

Unlike the Jews, the overwhelming majority of whom were murdered in the gas chambers at Birkenau, Belzec, Treblinka and all the other mass extermination camps, the Gypsies outside the Reich were massacred at many places, sometimes only a few at a time, and sometimes by the hundreds. In the *Generalgouvernement* alone, 150 sites of Gypsy massacres are known. Research on the Jewish Holocaust can rely on comparison of pre- and post-war census data to help determine the numbers of victims in the countries concerned. However, this is not possible for the Gypsies, as it was only rarely that they were included in national census data. Therefore it is an impossible task to find the actual number of Gypsy victims in Poland, Yugoslavia, White Ruthenia and the Ukraine, the lands that probably had the greatest numbers of victims.³⁶

The 1997 figure reported by Sybil Milton, then senior historian at the US Holocaust Memorial Research Institute in Washington, put the number of Romani lives lost by 1945 at 'between a half and one and a half million'.³⁷ Significantly, the same figure appeared in a November 2001 report issued by the International Organization for Migration (the IOM), a body designated to locate and compensate surviving Romani Holocaust victims. The brief states that 'Recent research indicates that up to 1.5 million Roma perished during the Nazi era'.³⁸ It is certainly a fact that interviews in the past four years by trained Romani personnel who have obtained testimonials at first-hand from claimants throughout central and eastern Europe have shed startling new light on this issue: the number of Romani survivors is far in excess of anything previously estimated. By extrapolation, and from the same eyewitness accounts documented in recent years, the numbers of Romanies who perished at the hands of the Nazis have also been grossly underestimated. Eventually, these revised figures will find their way into the public record.

Since the end of the Second World War, Germany's record regarding the Romani people has been less than exemplary. Nobody was called to testify in behalf of the Romani victims at the Nuremberg Trials, and no war crimes reparations have ever been paid to Romanies as a people. Today, neo-Nazi activity in many parts of central and eastern Europe makes the Romanies its prime target of racial violence. Kenrick summarized the situation after 1945 very well:

In the first years following the end of the Nazi domination of Europe, the Gypsy community was in disarray. The small [Romani] educational and cultural organizations that had existed before 1939 had been destroyed. The family structure was broken with the death of the older people – the guardians of the traditions. While in the camps, the Gypsies had been unable to keep up their customs – the Romanía – concerning the preparation of food and the washing of clothes. They solved the psychological problems by not speaking about the time in the camps. Only a small number of Gypsies could read or write, so they could not tell their own story. But also they were unwilling to tell their own stories to others, and few others were interested anyway. In the many books written describing the Nazi period and the persecution of the Jews, Gypsies usually appear as a footnote or small section.³⁹

We still have a long way to go both with our understanding of the *Porrajmos* and with achieving its proper acknowledgement in the classroom; including a section on the *Porrajmos* must be viewed as essential to any Romani Studies – and Holocaust Studies – curriculum. One such workbook, the Facing History and Ourselves organization's Holocaust *Resource Book*⁴⁰ lists just five pages in the index for 'Sinti and Roma', but 18 under 'Armenians' – who weren't victims of

the Holocaust – while the question following the section on the Romanies, which consists solely of a quote from Ina Friedman's *Other Victims*,⁴¹ asks what the 'striking differences' were between the treatment of Romanies and the treatment of Jews. Our history must be presented in its own context, and not as a corollary to that of another people.

An argument which is sometimes made is that the Romanies simply did not preoccupy the Nazis; we have been called an 'afterthought' in Nazi policy, even no more than a 'minor irritant'.⁴² This is neither fair nor true, and statements have been made in print about Romanies which, had they been made about Jews, would have been immediately condemned as antisemitic. Some of them can probably be accounted for by the fact that our people were far fewer in number, were much more easily identified and disposed of, and had already been the target of discriminatory policy before Hitler came to power. It required no massive effort on the part of the Nazis to locate and destroy a population that had no one to take its part. Haberer adds to this:

[Regarding] the persecution of Gypsies, it should be noted that their plight equaled that of the Jews. Their liquidation was part and parcel of the Nazis' agenda to eradicate 'worthless life'. Wrapped up in the Holocaust *per se*, the genocide of the Roma in the East is still very much an untold story. In some ways, their victimization was practiced even more ruthlessly because they held no 'economic value' and were traditionally considered a particular asocial and criminally inclined people [and] more alien in appearance, culture and language.⁴³

The United Nations too did nothing to assist Romanies during or following the Holocaust nor, sadly, were Romanies mentioned anywhere in the documentation of the US War Refugee Board. This is all the more puzzling since the situation was known to the War Crimes Tribunal in Washington as early as 1946, whose files contain the text of the meeting between Justice Minister Otto Thierack and Josef Goebbels on 14 September 1942, which stated plainly:

With regard to the destruction of asocial life, Dr. Goebbels is of the opinion that the following groups should be exterminated: Jews and Gypsies unconditionally, Poles who have served 3 to 4 years of penal servitude, and Czechs and Germans who are sentenced to death.... The idea of exterminating them by labour is best.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the situation is gradually improving. In Germany itself, the handbook and CD-Rom on Holocaust education prepared for teachers, and which

was issued by the Press and Information Office of the Federal government in 2000, makes clear that

recent historical research in the United States and Germany does not support the conventional argument that the Jews were the only victims of Nazi genocide. True, the murder of Jews by the Nazis differed from the Nazis' killing of political prisoners and foreign opponents because it was based on the genetic origin of the victims and not on their behaviour. The Nazi regime applied a consistent and inclusive policy of extermination based on heredity only against three groups of human beings: the handicapped, Jews, and Sinti and Roma ('Gypsies'). The Nazis killed multitudes, including political and religious opponents, members of the resistance, elites of conquered nations, and homosexuals, but always based these murders on the belief, actions and status of those victims. Different criteria applied only to the murder of the handicapped, Jews, and 'Gypsies'. Members of these groups could not escape their fate by changing their behaviour or belief. They were selected because they existed.⁴⁵

Notes

- 1 M. Novitch, *Le génocide des Tziganes sous le régime nazi* (Paris: AMIF and the Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel, 1968), p. 3.
- 2 P. Broad, 'KZ Auschwitz: Erinnerungen eines SS Mannes', *Hefte von Auschwitz*, 9 (1966), 41.
- 3 C. Bernadec, *L'Holocauste oublié* (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1979), p. 44.
- 4 G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 5 G. Margalit, *Germany and its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).
- 6 At West Chester University.
- 7 J. Ledgard, 'Europe's Spectral Nation', *The Economist* (12 May 2001), 29–31.
- 8 I. Hancock, 'Responses to the Porrajmos (the Romani Holocaust)', in *Is the Holocaust Unique?*, ed. A.S. Rosenbaum (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 39–64. Some of the arguments I have received include: the respective overall numbers of losses cannot be compared; some Romanies were spared death; there were family camps for Romanies; the Holocaust was a divine punishment specifically intended for Jews; 'generalizing' the Holocaust diminishes its gravity; 'generalizing' the Holocaust weakens justification for Israel's existence; Nazi methods of dealing with Romanies were more humane; Romanies were responsible for their own mistreatment. In the Romani language, the Holocaust is referred to as the *Baro Porrajmos*, or 'great devouring' of human life.
- 9 Reichsführer-SS-Dokument S-Kr. 1 Nr. 557/38. The words 'the final solution of the Gypsy question' first appeared on page 1 of the very first issue of *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1888, that question being 'what are the origins of the Romani people?', and its resolution the intended aim of that new organization.

- 10 'Gypsies, Jews and the Holocaust', *Shmate: A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought*, 17 (1987), 6–15; 'Uniqueness of the Victims: Gypsies, Jews and the Holocaust', *Without Prejudice: International Review of Racial Discrimination*, 1, 2 (1988), 45–67; 'Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands: a Chronology', in *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, ed. D. Crowe and J. Kolsti (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), pp. 11–30; 'The Roots of Antigypsyism: to the Holocaust and After', in *Confronting the Holocaust: A Mandate for the 21st Century*, ed. J. Colijn and M.S. Littell (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), pp. 19–49; 'Downplaying the Porrajmos: the Trend to Minimize the Romani Holocaust', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3 (2000), 56–63; 'Responses to the Porrajmos'.
- 11 In 'The Roots of Antigypsyism'.
- 12 This phrase, used by Tetzner, is documented in R. Hehemann, *Die 'Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens' im Wilhelminischen Deutschland und in der Weimarer Republik, 1871–1922* (Frankfurt am Main: Haag & Herschen, 1987), pp. 99, 116 and 127, and in W. Wippermann, *Das Leben in Frankfurt zur NS-Zeit: Die Nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung* (Frankfurt am Main: Kramer, 1986), pp. 57–8. Note that in Germany the traditional Romani population calls itself *Sinti*, and that the word *Zigeuner* is the German equivalent of 'Gypsy' and should be avoided.
- 13 In his *Die Abstammung des Menschen und die geschlechtliche Zuchtwahl* (Stuttgart: Scheitzerbartsche Verlag, 1871), p. 63.
- 14 C.W. Dohm, *On the Civic Improvement of the Jews* (Stuttgart, 1781); H. von Hundt-Radowsky, *Der Judenspiegel* (Munich, 1819); R. Knox, *The Races of Men* (London, 1850); A. de Gobineau, *L'Inégalité des races humaines* (Paris, 1855); A. Ploetz, *Grundlinie einer Rassenhygiene: Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen* (Berlin, 1895). W. Schallmeyer, in his 'Einführungen in die Rassenhygiene', in *Ergebnisse der Hygiene*, ed. W. Weichardt (Berlin, 1917), vol. 2, p. 455, argued for the regulated pairing of German men and women of 'suitable genetic quality' and the euthanizing of those of inferior heredity.
- 15 H.S. Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1899).
- 16 A. Dillmann, *Zigeuner-Buch* (Munich: Wildsche, 1905).
- 17 K. Binding and A. Hoche, *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1920).
- 18 R. Liebich, *Die Zigeuner in ihrem Wesen und ihre Sprache* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863).
- 19 R. Kulemann, 'Die Zigeuner', *Unserer Zeit*, 5 (1869), 843–71.
- 20 An excellent overview is found in D. Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002).
- 21 E. Bartels and G. Brun, *The Gipsies in Denmark* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1943), p. 5.
- 22 Issue for 28 August.
- 23 State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Memorial Book: the Gypsies at Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1993), p. xiv, emphasis added.
- 24 D. Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1998), pp. 74–5.
- 25 J. Behrendt, 'Die Wahrheit über die Zigeuner', *NS-Partei Korrespondenz*, 10 (1939).
- 26 E. Proester, *Vraždění čs. Cikánů v Buchenwaldu*. Document No. ÚV ČSPB-K-135 of the Archives of the Fighters against Fascism, Prague (1940).
- 27 B. Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies and Others, 1933–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 58–9.
- 28 M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 121–5.
- 29 State Museum, *Memorial Book*, p. 3.

- 30 S. Milton, 'Nazi Policies towards Roma and Sinti 1933–1945', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 5th series, 2, 1 (1992), 10.
- 31 R. Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991), p. 164.
- 32 Broad, 'KZ Auschwitz'.
- 33 D. Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1979). A Jewish Auschwitz survivor now living in Los Angeles remembered *Zigeunernacht* and revealed recently that the Nazis told the Romani men that if they would agree to fight for Germany on the Russian front their lives, and the lives of their families, would be spared. The men agreed and were separated from the women and children, and shot. Nearly all those who were subsequently gassed were Romani women and children. The purpose in doing so was that, as Ulrich König makes clear in his *Sinti und Roma unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (Bochum: Brockmeyer Verlag, 1989), pp. 129–33, Romani families being eradicated together became completely unmanageable for the guards. See also Hancock, 'Responses to the Porrajmos', p. 50 for further discussion.
- 34 Quoted in G.A. Rakelmann, ed., *Loseblattsammlung für Unterricht und Bildungsarbeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1979).
- 35 König, *Sinti und Roma*, pp. 87–9.
- 36 State Museum, *Memorial Book*, p. 2.
- 37 J. Latham, 'First US Conference on Gypsies in the Holocaust', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, No. 3-23928 (Washington, DC: Voice of America, 1995).
- 38 M.-A. Heine, *Roma Victims of the Nazi Regime May Be Entitled to Compensation* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, Office of Public Information, 2001), p. 1.
- 39 Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 4.
- 40 *Resource Book: Holocaust and Human Behavior* (Brookline: The Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 1994).
- 41 I. Friedman, *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990).
- 42 Y. Bauer, 'Gypsies', in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Y. Gutman and M. Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 441–55.
- 43 E. Haberer, 'The Second Sweep: Gendarmerie Killings of Jews and Gypsies on January 29th, 1942', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3 (2001), 212.
- 44 USGPO, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. 3 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946).
- 45 U.-K. Heye, J. Sartorius and U. Bopp, eds., *Learning from History: The Nazi Era and the Holocaust in German Education* (Berlin: Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 2000), p. 14.

18

From Streicher to Sawoniuk: the Holocaust in the Courtroom

Donald Bloxham

A burgeoning scholarly literature is concerned with the relations between memory, justice, the law and history. The record of state-sponsored atrocity has been at the forefront of this wave of inquiry, and within that the genocide of the Jews in particular. Yet the focus on the legal reckoning with the Holocaust seems to spring from slightly different origins from that on other mass human rights abuses or 'administrative massacres'.¹ In the latter cases, the emphasis is more on the nature of 'transitional justice', the shift from discriminatory, generally authoritarian rule to pluralist regime. Legal or quasi-legal proceedings, including truth commissions, have been examined more for their function in restoring or unifying civil society within the borders in which they occur, and thus their importance is defined firmly in terms of time and space.² Though the first great prosecution of Nazis at Nuremberg was arguably equally an example of transitional justice, it was also much more than that, and subsequent 'trials of the Holocaust' have been much further chronologically and conceptually removed from the immediate desiderata of post-war purging and 're-education'. In studies of the trials of the Holocaust, 'memory' and 'justice' have tended to be esteemed more for their own sake, often in abstract senses, than for their immediate reintegrative value. This is due primarily to the latter-day rise to iconic status of the Holocaust and the interest around it in all matters representational.

Mark Osiel and Lawrence Douglas have made fascinating observations on the relationship between the law and the specific representational problems presented by genocide, showing the sometimes ingenious legal mechanisms brought into existence to accommodate the magnitude of the subject matter. Douglas in particular has found much that is praiseworthy in the innovations of the two best-known prosecutions of Nazis, the 'trial of the major war criminals' at Nuremberg in 1945–46 and the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961.³ This

chapter, however, seeks to move away from the legal-theoretical approach, and instead will emphasize the influence wielded over any given trial by the political milieu in which it is conducted. The history of the legal accounting for the Holocaust is the history in rarefied form of the way in which each prosecuting power has dealt with the Nazi past, a truth reinforced by the fact that the most significant Holocaust trials have been shaped *ad hoc*. Each Holocaust trial may tell us something of the Holocaust, but it tells us at least as much about the imprint of the Holocaust on the society bringing the trial, and the latter factor dictates the former. What emerges from any given trial in terms of a 'representation' of the Holocaust owes more to politics than to the law, and so the 'accuracy', 'appropriateness' or otherwise of that representation is largely a matter of utility.

'The law', in so far as we can apply such an all-encompassing label to a host of disparate and fluid doctrines, is clearly not inherently judicious. But nor does it appear in each Holocaust trial as a neutral, fully adaptable mechanism awaiting the appropriate implementation for the representational demands of the crime; it comes pre-shaped and manipulated, ready to serve specific ends among which the historical record is a wild card, sometimes useful, sometimes not, but never to be addressed in its totality or complexity. This will be illustrated with reference to trials of Holocaust perpetrators from the end of the war to 1999 across the continent of Europe and in Israel, and by comparison and contrast across these case studies of a series of criteria relating to the forms and use of evidence, the legal scope of charges lodged, and the profile of the defendants. The cumulative outcome provides considerable grounds for scepticism about the ability of the courtroom to serve faithful historical purposes as opposed to political purposes.

The post-war decade

By far the greatest concentration of prosecutions of Nazi criminality occurred in the five years following the end of the war. In that period the British authorities in Europe tried more than 1,000 Axis nationals, primarily Germans, for war crimes, and the US tried more than 1,800. Neither would convict another war criminal until the London trial of the Belorussian collaborator-murderer Anthony Sawoniuk in 1999. Soviet figures are imprecise, but we know that in May 1950, Soviet camps held 13,532 inmates convicted of war-related offences. In the same five-year period, in the Soviet zone of Germany, later the DDR, there were 12,177 convictions for Nazi- and war-related crimes; thereafter, there were only 630 such convictions up to 1964, and thence only 54 convictions to 1978. The French authorities in occupied Germany and in French military courts tried more than 2,000 individuals for war crimes and crimes against humanity from 1945 to 1954, the majority in the first half of the period; the

gauntlet was not picked up again until 1987, with the trial of the Gestapo officer Klaus Barbie in Lyons. In Austria, 1945–55 saw 13,607 convictions, to be followed in the succeeding 17 years by only a further 18.

It is entirely natural that the immediate aftermath of war should have seen such a reckoning, as passions for retribution ran high and suspects were more easily identified. But what precisely were these suspects tried for? As Adalbert Rückerl observes, where figures are available, they indicate that the scale of trials for collaborators is of a different order from that of trials of war criminals proper.⁴ In Poland, the ratio was approximately 2:1; in western Europe, collaboration trials accounted for thousands and tens of thousands rather than tens or hundreds as was the case with war criminals. In the immediate aftermath of the liberation of the Netherlands, for instance, a staggering 450,000 Dutch citizens were arrested. And the ‘purification’ – ‘l’épuration’ – of collaborators in France was much more important symbolically to the French people than the trials of German war criminals, quantitatively much more significant and touched the lives of many more people. Before the establishment of the post-liberation French government after August 1944, some 9,000 French citizens were executed summarily or after ‘kangaroo’ trials. From 1945 onwards properly constituted French courts passed another 1,500 death sentences and 40,000 prison sentences.⁵

The countries that had been under occupation by Germany were more interested in purging themselves of fascists and collaborators – or at least giving the appearance of a purge – than they were with charting substantive crimes.⁶ Indeed, there was a fundamental dissonance between the *national* cleavage of the various trial programmes in existence and the *international* nature of Nazi criminality in terms of both the locus of the crimes and the profile of the victims.⁷ Britain, a ‘bystander’ state, tried its cases under a conservative statute that permitted only consideration of infringements of the laws of war as traditionally defined, and against ‘nationals’ of countries previously at war with or under occupation by the Axis powers. By those terms, crimes against German Jews could not be considered in a courtroom;⁸ and the ground was prepared for a bizarre indictment of suppliers of the poison gas Zyklon B to Auschwitz for their complicity not in the murder of Europe’s Jews and Romanies but of ‘Allied nationals’.⁹ In this sense, as in others, the fate of the Jews (and Romanies) as a diaspora community was thus the emblematic Nazi crime; but as a dispersed minority, who was to take up the cause of Jewish suffering in a world in which the emphasis was on the restoration of state boundaries and sovereignty?

Further, in states which had colluded by omission or commission in the ‘Final Solution’, proper confrontation with that crime was a victim of the logic of state reformation based on the myth of opposition to Nazism and its crimes. The latter imperative would be reinforced only as, approximately from mid-1947 onwards, the Cold War began to descend on Europe. States in the West were

now 'allowed', if not encouraged, to put aside awkward wartime memories while emphasizing their anti-communist credentials; states in the communist East were encouraged to overplay wartime anti-fascism and resistance. On both sides many state functionaries compromised in the war years were kept in post.¹⁰

In the absence of a national state infrastructure, Jews could press for a legal reckoning for crimes committed against Jews only by proxy, using the offices of the former Allied states, which generally proved reluctant to comply. Few trials of the immediate post-war era addressed the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' as a primary concern. Thus, for example, of the 12,807 convictions in East German courts for 'Nazi and war crimes' between 1945 and 1964, 3,115 concerned mass crimes, respectively, against 'anti-fascists' in 1933, in concentration camps, during the *Kristallnacht* pogrom or against prisoners-of-war or the civilian populations of occupied Europe.¹¹ This broad official classification of some of these offences makes it difficult to ascertain precisely what was being prosecuted, but that very lack of clarity suggests the marginalization of 'race'-specific crimes in favour of infringements of 'national' interests, however they might be defined. Using an example from western Europe and the erstwhile Allied side, the British trial programme was also notable for avoiding the crime of genocide. The chief categories of defendant in the British trials were personnel from the German concentration camps (not, therefore, the genuinely genocidal Polish extermination camps), Gestapo prisons, and so-called 'work-education camps' and, increasingly over time, murderers and maltreaters of British soldiers or airmen. Like most other European countries, the British were pre-eminently concerned with repaying their own debts.¹²

There were some significant exceptions to these generalizations. In eastern Europe, for instance, Polish courts tried Rudolph Höß, the former commandant of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, and examined in some detail the operations of Chełmno in the Warthegau area of western Poland, during the trial of Artur Greiser, the former governor of that region.¹³ In 1951, West German courts used the authority devolved to them the previous year to try guards from the Treblinka extermination centre.¹⁴ And in 1947–8, in a successor case to the Nuremberg trial, a US court tried a number of former leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* and their subdivisions, while other such courts looked as part of a broader brief at aspects of Nazi antisemitic policy including the organization of the concentration camps, slave labour programmes, 'Aryanization', theft of property from deportees, propaganda, deportation, hostage-taking and 'reprisal executions' in the Balkans, and the 'race defilement cases' conducted in Nazi courts.¹⁵ However, these instances tend to highlight the rule that Nazi Jewish policy was not subjected in its specificity to extensive judicial examination directly after the war.

Besides, like the trials in Hungary of Hungarian leaders for involvement in massacre and deportation of Jews, the Polish extermination camp trials made

little impact outside that country, and the Frankfurt Treblinka trial of 1951 might as well never have occurred, judging by the revelatory public reaction to the Düsseldorf proceedings against guards of the same camp nearly two decades later.¹⁶ As for the *Einsatzgruppen* trial, like most of the Nuremberg successor trials, it was conducted in the absence of the vast publicity that had accompanied the original 1945–6 ‘trial of the major war criminals’, and in virtual media silence outside Germany. When it did receive attention in West Germany, like most trials after the opening spate, it was met sometimes with indifference and increasingly with outright hostility as an exercise in victor’s justice and a symbol of Allied vindictiveness.¹⁷

For the most part, when they were considered, crimes against Jews *qua* Jews tended to be subsumed within the larger whole of Nazi atrocity, left ill-defined within the mass of murder, enslavement and war-related destruction affecting other groups in Europe. This was certainly the case in the first trial conducted by British occupying forces in Germany in 1945, the ‘Belsen trial’, which tellingly retained that epithet despite the fact that many of the defendants had also served at Auschwitz.¹⁸ More importantly, the same absence of clarity prevailed in the major trial of the period, the Nuremberg proceedings.

The ‘Final Solution’, along with the other Nazi campaigns of racist murder, all subsumed within the bigger new legal charge of ‘crimes against humanity’, was treated by the dominant American prosecution at Nuremberg as a subsidiary act to the supposedly ‘supreme crime’ of aggressive war. The concentration camps liberated in Germany by the western Allies remained more prominent than the much larger dedicated extermination centres in Poland which had either been liberated by the Soviets or destroyed. And finally, Jewish survivors – indeed survivors in general – were incapable of illuminating the general picture because of a prosecution strategy that favoured documents above fragile memory.¹⁹

But the prosecution’s strategy was not based on legalism and practicality alone. There was also an ideological element at play. For just as the British and US official reactions to the ‘Final Solution’ as it was unfolding were characterized by a reluctance to recognize the specificity of Jewish suffering or to act on that recognition lest the Allies be seen to be fighting a ‘Jewish war’, so too the prosecution of Axis criminality was based on wrongly applied principles of liberal universalism which refused to give appropriate weight to the particular antisemitic thrust of Nazi racism.²⁰

The major long-term legacy of the trial to the memory of Nazi genocide was the provision of documents for the historical profession and of a statutory basis in the innovative charge of ‘crimes against humanity’ for future prosecutions of Nazis and other *génocidaires* elsewhere. At the same time, the court’s limited engagement with the Jews’ fate bequeathed a simplistic, determinist interpretation of the development of the ‘Final Solution’, which would influence the later

'intentionalist' school of Holocaust historiography. In the short term, the documentary approach failed to engage the public audience in Germany or elsewhere.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Nuremberg and other allied trials during the occupation period failed to stimulate extensive German self-examination. Despite the American Nuremberg staff passing on leads and documents on unfinished cases to the West German authorities, as the 1950s began the more powerful impulse from Washington was for the embryonic Federal Republic to reconstitute itself as an integral part of western European defence. Mass 'revision' of sentences and release of prisoners from Allied jails in Germany underlined the new direction, and undermined much of the moral-didactic work of the earlier trials; by 1957–8 British and American prisons were empty, and those several hundreds blessed with premature liberation included the surviving *Einsatzgruppen* leaders convicted in 1948.²¹ This rhetoric and practice only fed the self-exculpatory trend that would become popular among East Germans that they had put their house in order and that the West was a refuge for former Nazis.²²

The truth was, of course, very different. An important factor in the ability of East Germans to obfuscate their failure to pursue Nazi criminals from the early 1950s was the elision of the most extreme Nazi crimes. The murder of the Jews was accorded lesser importance in Stalinist doctrine, as was that of other groups persecuted on 'racial' grounds, while the Nazi persecution of left-wingers was greatly exaggerated.²³ Where Soviet and East German courts and propagandists did consider orchestrated mass murder they depicted the victims not as objects of a racist policy, but as nationals of whatever country of which they were citizens. The Soviets particularly wished to underline the suffering of Soviet citizens as a whole in the 'great patriotic war', and probably also feared that emphasizing Jewish suffering might enhance Zionist aspirations.²⁴ What really emerges from comparative consideration of the period, though, is the ability of all regimes of whatever political persuasion to 'master' their own pasts in the interests of the present by distorting the history of the war years in one way or another, and to do so in very short order and with remarkable synchronization.

By the end of the 'post-war decade' of 1945–56,²⁵ most prisoners on either side of the 'Iron Curtain' had been released in the pursuit of national cohesion by collective displacement. What led Soviet prosecutors to label a group of Sachsenhausen guards 'tools of monopoly capitalism',²⁶ what was in France called the 'Vichy syndrome',²⁷ and what led the BRD government of Konrad Adenauer to emphasize the suffering of 'Volksdeutsche' refugees from eastern Europe, and of POWs languishing in Soviet jails,²⁸ were all to some extent manifestations of this trend. The liberal democracies were not free of the tendency either. Perhaps partly from a desire to believe that a fellow western culture had not been totally corrupted,²⁹ the leaders and publics of Britain and

the US came to accept the fiction of the distance between the Nazi leaders and the majority of the German people, as was best illustrated by the rapid rehabilitation of the image of the German army, despite ample evidence adduced at Nuremberg as to the *Wehrmacht's* complicity in crimes against humanity in eastern Europe.³⁰

So the situation in the postwar decade was not, as has often and lazily been asserted, of a simple lack of interest in putting together the evidence of the Holocaust, or of weariness with war and atrocities. Almost everywhere there were very real political and socio-cultural imperatives to direct attention away from the suffering of Jews. And almost everywhere too, whatever imprint select war crimes trials made on national consciousnesses in the first instance was rapidly erased in the political 'readjustment' from 1947 onwards.

Change or continuity? From the 1960s onwards: Part 1

Surprisingly, perhaps, to western Europeans schooled in thinking that communist orthodoxy inevitably prohibited proper investigation of the racist thrust of Nazi genocide, Poland maintained arguably the most consistent record over the post-war decades of trying war criminals. Poland also tried an unusually large number of Germans, as opposed to the general European record of trying indigenous collaborators: of the 5,450 war criminals tried up to 1977, 5,358 were German nationals and many of these were perpetrators of the Holocaust, including at least 617 former personnel of Auschwitz-Birkenau.³¹ Undoubtedly there was a political element of trying to portray the murder of Polish Jews as part of a larger Polish national wartime tragedy, but within the courtrooms this agenda did not preclude identification of specifically anti-Jewish crimes. After the Höß and Greiser trials before the extraordinary 'national tribunal', ordinary courts using the pre-war Polish penal code tried guards from Auschwitz, Majdanek and Stutthof; the erstwhile *Reichskommissar* of the Ukraine, Erich Koch; Hans Biebow, the administrator of the Łódź ghetto; and Jürgen Stroop, the leveller of the Warsaw ghetto. Moreover, particularly from the 1960s, the Polish authorities made their archives available for prosecutions elsewhere.

West German courts did not seize with alacrity on this new source material. Nor were they overflowing with indicted Nazis, which will come as no surprise given the reaction to the occupation.³² Yet the history of West German trial policy was not simply the history of delay, obfuscation and lack of political will, as it has sometimes been portrayed.³³ Contrary to assertions from Hannah Arendt onwards, for instance, the famous 1963–65 Frankfurt trials of Auschwitz personnel were not triggered by the Eichmann trial. Investigations had begun around 1957 and preparations were well underway by 1961.³⁴ As well as helping to return some public focus to the Nazi genocide through the prism of 22 guards

and *kapos*, one of the most valuable offshoots of the trials was the publication of the findings of four scholars commissioned to give the historical and institutional background to the defendants' roles. *Anatomie des SS-Staates* (*Anatomy of the SS State*) remains a classic work on the persecution of the Jews and the camp system.

The unusual length of the trials' preparation nevertheless did epitomize problems in the legal system of the BRD. Until the establishment in 1958 of a central investigating and documentation agency for Nazi crimes – the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltung zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* – prosecutions were enacted on a regional basis with potential for great differentials in both effort and success. The personal initiative of individual prosecutors was vital, for instance that of (the Jewish) Fritz Bauer, the Frankfurt prosecutor who brought the Auschwitz case, and of the Stuttgart prosecutor Erwin Schüle, the first head of the *Zentrale Stelle*. Like the trial that ultimately led to the establishment of the *Zentrale Stelle*, they were also dependent on luck in identifying suspects; the so-called Ulm *Einsatzgruppen* trial, like the Auschwitz case, derived in the first instance from a chance identification by a survivor. And despite the innovation of the *Zentrale Stelle*, prosecutions of Nazi crimes in Germany remained impeded by the terms of the German penal code of 1871, which was readopted after the war.³⁵

As Rebecca Wittmann has observed, despite the peculiarities of the legal code, politicians and jurists in the Bundesrepublik were reluctant to revise it because of the recent experience of arbitrary and *ex post facto* legislation under Nazism.³⁶ Put briefly, in order for a killing to be declared outright murder under the code, as opposed to manslaughter, the prosecution was required to establish the 'base motive' of the killer. Obeying orders was not generally considered a motive within this category, which applied instead to actions committed over and above instructions. Likewise the issue of murder and the lesser crime of complicity in murder have been blurred, with the executioner sometimes put into the latter category despite firing the fatal bullet provided he was shown to have killed under instructions or institutional pressure.³⁷ These stipulations actually miss the essence of genocide as a state crime, with trials such as the Auschwitz proceedings featuring disproportionately large numbers of so-called *Exzeßtäter* at the expense of those who had oiled the wheels of the orchestrated, orderly and much more numerically significant process of administrative massacre.³⁸

As Raul Hilberg put it, the 'machinery of destruction' was 'structurally no different from organized German society as a whole'.³⁹ Inevitably different parts of the machine would operate according to different motivations, but each part was necessary. Not only did the distinction between types and motives of direct killing mean that many concentration camp personnel or SS and police shooting squad veterans able to work the system received what Friedrich derides as sentences similar to those handed out to forgers.⁴⁰ A graded statute

of limitations on prosecution from which only outright murder was finally made exempt⁴¹ meant that many criminals who occupied the huge space between these direct killers and the top of the Nazi power structure, as tried at Nuremberg, would never be tried because their motivation did not *prima facie* fit into the most serious category of a criminal code designed to deal with 'ordinary' criminality.

It was difficult anyway to establish the precise responsibility of an operative in the middle ranks of a power structure: what they had known or what freedom of movement or executive responsibility they had had. The scope for uncertainty, and also for a legal defence to exploit perceived uncertainties, was all too evident in German courts as elsewhere, as in the trial of Maurice Papon in France in 1997–98. A final impediment to the prosecution of 'white-collar' Nazi criminals in particular was the fact that large numbers of the jurists of the Federal Republic had been compromised under Nazism and were now well placed to see that neither they nor other members of the elite were brought to book. Cases involving so-called desk murderers comprised just 1 per cent of the total number of judgments passed down between 1958 and 1992.⁴²

The profile and disposition of the criminals tried in the BRD had ramifications for the popular impact of the trials. After the Auschwitz trial – and there is no reason to think the reaction unrepresentative – the West German public followed the logic of the hierarchy of charges. They assessed the defendants convicted of outright murder as monsters, while those convicted of lesser offences met with sympathy conditioned by a 'there but for the grace of God go I' sentiment, the mendacious line that in a 'totalitarian' system one had no choice but to do what one was told.⁴³ This sort of distancing was not dissimilar to the first reactions to the Nuremberg trials, when the guilt of Germany's political leaders was accepted, while top civil servants and military leaders were exculpated as apolitical recipients of orders. Besides, the German public still did not accept the sheer scale or diversity of participation in the 'Final Solution'. The 22 defendants of the Auschwitz trial were selected from around 900 suspects, while the numerous trials of, for instance, German civilian officials involved in ghetto clearances were conducted in obscurity.⁴⁴

In the light of these problems, at once self-serving and socio-psychological, it is unsurprising that *the* major breakthrough in the legal confrontation with the Holocaust came not from the former perpetrator nation, nor the continent that had given up the Jews, nor the Anglo-Saxon countries that had remained passive during their destruction. It came instead from representatives of the victimized people themselves, now in possession of the means with which to pursue their own legal and political agenda. David Ben Gurion described the Eichmann trial as the 'Nuremberg of the Jewish people'.⁴⁵ This was both an aspiration to reproduce aspects of the Nuremberg trial and an implicit criticism of it.

Change or continuity? Part 2

On the one hand, Nuremberg was a good model for a show trial in its scope and scale, in the relaxed rules of evidence, especially relating to hearsay evidence, and in the latitude given to the prosecutors to examine in much more detail than any other post-war trial the workings of the Nazi system. On the other hand, Ben Gurion was adjudging that whatever Nuremberg had done in the name of justice and the international community, it had inadequately served the needs of Jews as a collective. Beyond prosecuting a significant perpetrator, then, a perpetrator from precisely those middle ranks who had escaped prosecution at Nuremberg or in the BRD, the Eichmann trial was about making the law conform in a way that it had not yet done to the needs of the community of victims, potential victims and survivors.

One addition to the Nuremberg principle was the charge of 'crimes against the Jewish people', provided for in the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950. Another was the extensive use of survivors as witnesses. This served at once to re-humanize the catastrophe hinted at in the dry Nuremberg documentary strategy and to allow victims to contextualize the 'Final Solution' within their own personal narratives. There was a marked divergence here from the way survivor witnesses would be used at the German Auschwitz trials. In Frankfurt, with the exception of the first, exceptional witness, the Austrian Jew Otto Wolken, who provided something of an historical overview⁴⁶ (though even his testimony was preceded, and perhaps pre-empted, by the expert testimony of two historians⁴⁷), the camps' survivors were primarily used for the simple purpose of identification. Moreover, many of the Frankfurt witnesses had been Poles, Ukrainians or German criminals – that is, those inmates who, unlike the majority of Jews, had been in closer proximity to the guards because of their camp functions.⁴⁸

In Jerusalem, identification was not the problem. Everyone knew who Eichmann was, and approximately what he had done, and the defendant himself contested only his relative importance in the killing machine. Accordingly, the trial had a firm foundation on which to build a didactic edifice and avoided the huge potential pitfall of using the courtroom to educate Israelis about the Holocaust⁴⁹ which was exposed in the next generation, with the Demjanjuk trial. (Between 1987 and 1993, the Ukrainian John Demjanjuk was denaturalized from his erstwhile American home, extradited, tried as a Treblinka guard, convicted and sentenced to death, then released when on appeal the Israeli Supreme Court ruled he had been misidentified. In all probability he had been a guard at Sobibor.⁵⁰)

There was a conscious element of performance, a focus on impact, in the presentation of testimony. Survivors were selected from hundreds of applicants to give testimony on the basis of having rehearsed those testimonies previously

on paper (many had actually written published memoirs), the ability to cross-check to the written account, thus safeguarding against ‘mishaps’ on the stand.⁵¹ Only a few of the 108 witnesses called in the Jerusalem court could shed direct light on Eichmann’s actions, as both the defence and the court protested, but each would illuminate a fragment of the Jewish experience. They testified to different aspects of the isolation and murder process, be it the ghettos or SS and police shooting ‘actions’ or the extermination camps, and represented different countries or regions. They also counted among their number perhaps a disproportionate number of Zionists and resisters, and here we encounter the other main political subtext of the trial.

The courtroom was effectively used for the moral reassertion of the Jewish people. Not only did Jews now stand in judgment over one of their main erstwhile tormentors, they also had the opportunity to make a statement about what it was to be a Jew in a post-Holocaust world, and particularly in the new state of Israel. At a time of national insecurity, of perceived threat from the Arab world, and while Israel was not yet the main focus of international Jewish sentiment, the Eichmann trial presented a vital opportunity to depict Jewish, especially Zionist, struggle and survival. The logical inference was that Israel was the embodiment of the enduring spirit of that nucleus of resisters.⁵²

If in the Israeli courts nationalist concerns were intertwined with the use of witness testimony, then elsewhere too the legal process could be co-opted for political ends. For both former perpetrator and bystander countries trials of their own nationals have been a double-edged sword. While they represent the threat of resurgent memory, of external attention and internal division, they also represent the opportunity to repackage the past in a more palatable form. A series of trials in France during the 1980s and 1990s highlighted each tendency.

Change or continuity? Part 3

Just as in Germany in the 1950s, the French legal confrontation with genocide was somewhat fortuitous, based on chance disclosures. Like the Israeli case, it was given impetus by the apprehending of a notorious war criminal – this time, Klaus Barbie, the ‘butcher of Lyons’, caught in 1983. Yet in many ways the French relationship to the Holocaust was more complicated than that of either of the other countries.

As with all bystander nations that had sometimes crossed the line into the realm of the perpetrator, France had to deal with the specific question of participation in the ‘Final Solution’ as well as the general question of collaboration and national fratricide. In the two decades after the war, the latter issue was the dominant symptom of the Vichy syndrome, and this was not without some justification, since Vichy’s complicity in the deportation and murder of the Jews was a contingent aspect of collaboration. (Unlike the passing of the

infamous anti-Jewish Statutes in 1940–41, which reflected the entrenched, though non-genocidal, antisemitism of the anti-Dreyfusards.)⁵³

The three trials of the 1980s and 1990s were to some extent representative of the *loci* of criminal culpability in wartime France.⁵⁴ Barbie, tried in 1987, was a Gestapo agent; Paul Touvier, tried in 1994, was an officer of the Milice, the paramilitary police of Vichy; Papon, tried in 1997–98, was a Vichy civil servant.⁵⁵ One common peculiarity was that the matters they examined, in terms of both Vichy's Jewish policy and the nature of collaboration and its counterpart, resistance, had already received pretty fulsome treatment in the historical literature. In each trial the tension between the 'memory' of the 'Final Solution' and that of collaboration and resistance would be played out with varying results, but with the common factor of serving to blur or falsely polarize the issues. As attempts by the state to make a statement, they were clumsy, compromised, in terms of their legal bases, and, in the Papon case, in terms of its outcome, in ways that mirrored the ongoing struggle in the socio-political sphere of the French with their past.

The Barbie case seemed the most straightforward, as a trial of a German rather than a Frenchman. The new Mitterrand government seized on the prospect in 1983 in an attempt to commemorate the Resistance, since Barbie's best-known crime (in France at least) had been the murder of the Resistance leader, Jean Moulin. However, Barbie had also presided over the arrest and deportation of more than 40 Jewish children who had been in hiding in the village of Izieu. And of the two crimes, the only one it was legitimate to try in the 1980s was the latter. The former, a more conventional 'war crime', was subject to an exhausted statute of limitations; only 'crimes against humanity' under the Nuremberg definition had been declared imprescriptible in French law, in 1964. That category had explicitly, if not entirely clearly, been set apart from war crimes at Nuremberg to cover the sheer extremity of Nazi campaigns of extermination of civilian populations, and did not extend to crimes committed against an irregular combatant force such as the Resistance.⁵⁶

In the event, in 1985, after lengthy debate, the Court of Criminal Appeals amended the definition of crimes against humanity. Now it read that crimes against humanity included:

inhumane acts and persecutions which, for the sake of a State practising a policy of ideological hegemony, were committed systematically not only against individuals because they belonged to a racial or religious group, but also against adversaries of this policy, whatever may be the form of their opposition.⁵⁷

While Israeli law had rejected the concept of 'crimes against humanity' in favour of a more exclusive 'crimes against the Jewish people', French law had

extended it to incorporate a very specific victim group: the Resistance. Barbie was sentenced to life imprisonment in July 1987, and the heroes of the Resistance had their day in court, but at the expense of the conflation in the French public mind of two very different categories of crime.

The Court of Criminal Appeals made one other significant amendment to the definition of crimes against humanity. As of the 1985 rewrite, such crimes could be committed only by a regime practising a politics of 'ideological hegemony'.⁵⁸ It effectively framed such crimes as within the sole purview of totalitarian states, and more specifically the Axis states, as specified in the Nuremberg Charter.

Involved, perhaps, in this somewhat bizarre definition was a reluctance to admit that agents of a French state could commit crimes against humanity; a French state that, whatever the reactionary 'aberration' of the Vichy regime, was still heir to the revolutionary tradition, in which France was a universal signifier of the aspirations of mankind, rather than almost the opposite. (In this connection the incorporation of crimes against the Resistance within crimes against humanity was a most useful symbol: French citizens suffering *and* fighting in another universal capacity.) But at least as important was the desire not to open up France to counter-accusations as a result of atrocities committed during its imperial ventures, specifically the Algerian war. Barbie's defence lawyer certainly picked up on the anomaly and made great play of French hypocrisy in trying his client while effectively sponsoring crimes of imperialism; he also exploited divisions within the Resistance in a successful attempt to embarrass the prosecution and shock the public. The Touvier case further illustrated the absurdities of the new stipulation.

Touvier's crime was to order the arrest and murder of seven French Jewish hostages in June 1944 in 'reprisal' for the murder by the Resistance of Philippe Henriot, a prominent Vichy official. By his own admission, and as recognized by many trial onlookers and participants, this act of reprisal was solely an initiative of the Milice. Yet such were the terms of the 1985 definition that it could not therefore constitute a crime against humanity because it was not perpetrated by a regime practising a politics of 'ideological hegemony' (i.e. Nazi Germany). The only way that the prosecution could ultimately be successfully pursued – and Touvier was convicted and imprisoned for life – was to exaggerate the closeness of the relationship of the Milice to the Gestapo, and thereby to depict the Milice as an extension of the German presence rather than an indigenous force in its own right and with its own agenda.⁵⁹

The third trial, that of Papon, was predictably touted as 'Vichy on trial',⁶⁰ a trope label that has served historians as well as contemporary commentators for an array of legal cases impinging on historical representation. The prime minister, Lionel Jospin, thought the trial necessary to bring the crimes of Vichy to public attention.⁶¹ It was of greater symbolic significance than the Touvier

trial because the Milice had been confronted in the post-war purge, whereas the wartime bureaucracy in France, as elsewhere, had been let off remarkably lightly in the interests of national reconstruction. Yet the prosecution of this former secretary-general of the Gironde prefecture would have been of much less overall significance had two of his erstwhile superiors reached trial as they had been intended to. René Bousquet had been secretary-general of Vichy's police from April 1942 to December 1943; Jean Leguay had been Bousquet's representative in the northern French 'Occupied Zone'; the former was killed in 1993, after seemingly endless delays to his reckoning,⁶² and the latter died in 1989, both shortly before their respective scheduled trials. Papon was a much smaller fish, as he was quick to point out, and with more truth than Eichmann.

Consequent on the issue of Papon's status and overall 'knowledge' of Nazi policy, the trial reached a controversial conclusion about the extent of his culpability for the fate of a number of Jews arrested on his watch in Bordeaux and subsequently deported to death in Poland. He was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment; no longer because it was deemed that he was not complicit in their murder, being ignorant of the precise destination and destiny of the incarcerated Jews. Estimating the 'fairness' or otherwise of this sentence for the individual on the grounds given is impossible, though it is difficult to believe that Papon would not have known that a grim fate awaited the Jews. More importantly, a defendant who had been appointed *de facto* symbolic representative of Vichy was assigned a less onerous burden of guilt than would have met his seniors, with their more intimate links with the 'Final Solution'.

As a didactic exercise, therefore, the trial bequeathed only ambiguity, despite the attempts of the 'Association of Sons and Daughters of Deported Jews' to personalize the tragedy *à la* Jerusalem by projecting photographs of deportees within the courtroom. The function of the Vichy regime, France's reckoning with collaborators and even the Resistance itself were dragged into the mêlée as the prosecution examined Papon's post-war career. The defendant had been welcomed into the ranks of the Gaullists after the war, like so many others benefiting from the blind eye turned by the party of the great Resistance leader. In the service of the Fourth Republic, he had been instrumental in a police massacre of Algerian demonstrators in Paris in 1961, and bore a much more direct responsibility for that outrage than for the murder of the Bordeaux Jews. The defence, for its part, claimed mitigation for Papon's wartime actions by citing contacts he had had with the Resistance. This in turn only served to turn the clock back to the very earliest, most rudimentary debates about Vichy's role as a defender or betrayer of France;⁶³ and with that, the 'Final Solution' was again submerged.

As Tzvetan Todorov put it:

during the trial, two [opposing] caricatures were substituted for the balanced and nuanced vision of the Vichy regime that has emerged in the work of historians over the last twenty-five years; they were much easier for the public at large to retain. The first presented the Pétain regime as a 'shield against the German invader', sparing the French people the worst. The second assimilated it to a Fascist regime, actively participating in the extermination of the Jews.⁶⁴

This encapsulates the difference between historical and judicial assessment, the potential for the courtroom to distort the multifaceted past, and is precisely why the historian Henry Rousso chose not to testify to the court.⁶⁵

Judicial memory, collective memory and the Holocaust

The trials of the Holocaust have rarely led opinion about the murder of the Jews. That is not to say they have not been important in forwarding the historiography or awareness of the genocide. Legal investigations, particularly the Nuremberg cases, have unearthed huge quantities of Nazi documentation. This has been matched in other cases by eyewitness testimony: the Eichmann trial stimulated a mass lodging of such records at Yad Vashem. Eichmann's interrogations also provided a rich vein of evidence in which both 'intentionalist' and 'functionalist' historians have found substantiation for their interpretations of the 'Final Solution'.⁶⁶ This is a different matter, however, from assessing the criminal trial itself as what Rousso has called a 'vector of memory'.⁶⁷

The genuinely significant moments in the development of 'Holocaust consciousness' have tended to be visual, usually filmic, and/or personalized 'human interest' stories, either eyewitness testimonies with simple narratives or dramatizations with simple morals. The diary of Anne Frank has been of enduring international importance, for instance. In France, the seminal moment in confronting Vichy's collaborationism (the issue which subsumes the responsibility of the regime for deporting Jews) was the release of Marcel Ophuls' documentary *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*) in 1971, shortly before the Touvier controversy erupted for the first time and long before the trial of Papon, who ultimately, in the view of many commentators, had been found guilty in the public mind before his appearance in court. In Germany, whatever the significance of the Ulm *Einsatzgruppen* trial or the Auschwitz, Majdanek, Bełżec, Treblinka and Sobibor trials of the 1960s and 1970s, public interest in the crimes of Nazism owed more to the televisual broadcast of the American mini-series *Holocaust* in 1979 – a service that Spielberg's *Schindler's List* repeated for much of the rest of the world in the 1990s. In both France and Germany, moreover,

the social revolution of the late 1960s had a great impact, with the youth of both countries taking a close interest in 'the guilt of the fathers' and attacking prevailing narratives of the past as they sought to reshape the present.

In this sense, the success of the Eichmann trial was due less to its nature as a legal forum than as a forum for recollection only weakly regulated from the bench by individuals whose evidence had little to do with the prosecution of the man in the dock. Further along the same continuum, the phenomenal success of Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996) was less to do with its nature as an academic book, and more to do with its nature as an easily digestible polemic that bore little relation to the rigours of scholarship. As Grabitz has observed, those interested in the question of 'willing executioners' could have drawn their own conclusions by attending the many trials of 'ordinary men' of the German killing machine in the courts of the BRD from the 1950s to the 1970s – the very trials on which Goldhagen's work was based, as was Christopher Browning's much more perceptive study.⁶⁸ The obscurity of the trials, as opposed to the Auschwitz trial, for example, only confirms that there is no necessary correlation between the didactic value of any given trial and its actual impact.

What, though, of the trials that have made a big impact, those that have been studied in this chapter? Most have been unusually heavily coloured by the political milieu in which they have been enacted. In no small part this is due to the extremity and peculiar nature of Nazi genocide: beyond the courts of the BRD with their obviously inadequate ambit, legal accounting for those crimes required legal innovation, which in turn required the political will to innovate and prepared the ground for manipulation of the new law for broadly political ends. Indeed, the very novelty of the legal machinery and political circumstances have been as significant in attracting attention to key Holocaust trials as the subject-matter of those trials themselves. At its extreme that has meant that the content has been rejected, along with the form, by opponents of trials. More often, it has blurred the two separate issues. Yet however ill-informed or ill-intentioned have been debates about 'victor's justice' or retrospective justice or jurisdiction, they do touch on the simple truth of power as a key arbiter of law. At its most elementary, this truth might be encapsulated in the questions: where were the trials of the perpetrators of the *porrajmos*, the Romani name for the annihilation of their people by the Nazis; and why has there not been more protest against the failure to pursue those perpetrators? One important if incomplete answer to both these questions is, of course, that Romanies remain a marginalized, dispersed and, hence, powerless group.

A more nuanced assessment would in any case recognize that we cannot speak of 'the law and the Holocaust'. The issue is one of different legal innovations, legal traditions, political priorities, cultures and chronological periods, and the relation of an indeterminate combination of these to the murder of the European Jews (the understanding of which has also developed along a multitude of

trajectories over time and across place) in disparate courtrooms. Thus in an immediate post-war world unclear about and ambivalent in its attitudes to the destruction of Europe's Jews, it should not be surprising that the forensic machinery brought to bear on that destruction process, and the profile of the perpetrators brought to the dock to account for it, were inadequate.

In the early years of the BRD, in a society keen to establish a clear dividing line between a supposedly small number of 'real Nazis' and a majority of 'ordinary Germans', between those involved in genocide because they wanted to be and/or enjoyed it and those who supposedly had no choice, it is little wonder that there was not more political pressure to revise a restrictive criminal code. And in that same country, keen also not to prioritize Nazi genocide in the memory of a wartime past comprised of other humanitarian catastrophes with different causes and courses, it is no surprise that the statute of limitations for murder was only tortuously, incrementally and controversially revised.

In a France whose elite was keen to control public concern over the war years, who better to be brought to book in the first 'crimes against humanity' trial since the post-war decade than a Gestapo agent who had murdered a Resistance hero? And if the definition of 'crimes against humanity' had to be amended to bring the crimes against the Resistance into court alongside crimes against Jews, so be it. And if a Frenchman – Touvier – had to be tried thereafter, however problematic, much better that he was something of a 'loose canon', an extremist associated with a fascist militia whose reputation was such that it could be stigmatized as the Gestapo and SS had been in Germany, as the embodiment of all that country's wartime evils. So much greater would be the political obstructions to the trial of respectable establishment figures.

And finally, in a Britain that regards itself comfortably as having had no relationship at all to the 'Final Solution', it should come as no surprise that the debate on the trial of Sawoniuk in 1999, and before that on the War Crimes Bill itself, revolved not around what they had done but around whether it was consistent with a supposedly British sense of 'impartial' 'fair play' that they be tried at all for crimes committed more than 50 years earlier and in far off lands.⁶⁹

Different audiences have taken different things from different trials of different perpetrators. The German reaction to the Auschwitz trials was not so much how criminal participation could be understood as how it could be excused. 'Vichy on trial' did not result in public assessment of the nuances of change and continuity in French history up to 1945, nuances long since addressed in French history books, but resulted instead in a politicized rehash of the bald debate of complicity *versus* non-complicity, and of various post-Holocaust controversies. The Israeli public took from the Eichmann trial messages of Jewish victimhood but also of heroism. All three interpretations were problematic: the first two self-evidently so, but the third also. While the Eichmann trial laudably personalized the abstract six million number, this was not ultimately down to

any inherently more ‘appropriate’ use of law for the representational purposes of the Holocaust, but because it was in Israel’s national interests to transmit the message. Besides, the trial still bequeathed a very partial account of the Holocaust, even leaving aside the emotive question of whether Jewish resistance was overplayed in the courtroom.

Martin Broszat and Helmut Krausnick, the historical experts at the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, wrote:

the case of an accused who took part in these crimes can only be judged rightly if the whole moral, political and organizational background leading to his action is surveyed.... Those taking part in public discussion before a court are in duty bound to weigh their words, and this is to the good in that it constitutes an effective counterweight to the widespread habit of painting a highly emotional picture of the past in order to highlight certain major truths, but at the price of historical exactitude regarding facts and circumstances.⁷⁰

This quintessentially *wissenschaftlich*⁷¹ prescription was certainly not faultless. Taking emotion out of the equation is impossible and scarcely desirable, the wish to do so foreshadowing Broszat’s later call to ‘historicize’ Nazism, which was criticized for its potential to banalize the subject.⁷² Broszat and Mommsen were also whistling in the wind in terms of the nuance that one might realistically hope to transmit to a popular audience through the trial medium, and hoping for an unrealistic level of self-reflective honesty as a precondition of the quest for ‘historical exactitude’. Nevertheless, they were asking the questions which were given insufficient attention at the Eichmann trial, and which were the necessary complement to the illumination of the ‘major truth’ of Jewish victimhood. They were also the questions that needed to be addressed in order to make the trial relevant to a wider community than the erstwhile victims and perpetrators.

Understanding perpetrator and perpetration is *the* essential element to understanding genocide. Other ‘lessons’ are ancillary. Further to this, if the ‘Final Solution’ is ‘unique’, as some scholars hold it to be, that uniqueness resides not in the identity and suffering of the victims, but rather in the totality of the perpetrators’ intent and the machinery put into place to realize that total intent.⁷³ Too often the implicit message from the community of victims and potential victims has been that the Holocaust was uniquely significant because it happened to Jews. The Eichmann trial, focusing on ‘crimes against the Jewish people’ rather than improving on the Nuremberg use of the charge of ‘crimes against humanity’ by applying it specifically to the Jewish case, contributed to this tendency.⁷⁴

Understanding Eichmann himself was the only aim which the Jerusalem court had the potential to achieve in a non-selective, non-representational,

non-symbolic sense: he was there in person, representative ultimately and completely (only) of himself. Understanding Eichmann as representative of a system was more problematic but, since he was inevitably to be depicted as such, equally important. Regrettably, Eichmann was portrayed by the prosecution as a blacker-than-black perpetrator.⁷⁵ Equally regrettably, Arendt's study of *The Banality of Evil*, the chief contemporary attempt to address the thorny question of motivation, even if it did not get Eichmann himself 'right'⁷⁶ (though it may well have been appropriate for many other 'desk murderers'⁷⁷), was swiftly and roundly pilloried.

No prosecuting power has acted in the interests of balanced, 'judicious' historical representation, from the quasi-universalist American Nuremberg case onwards. To return to Todorov:

we should remember that memory is never the integral reconstitution of the past, but always no more than a choice, a construct; and that such mental operations are not predetermined by the subject matter recurring to memory, but very much by agents who remember, with a particular goal in view... Everyone has the right to remember as he or she sees fit, of course, but a community will place a high value on some uses of memory even as it condemns others; it cannot practice an undifferentiated cult of remembrance.⁷⁸

Competitive, often exclusivist prioritization of perpetration and/or suffering remains at the heart of the politicization of the 'memory' of the Holocaust. This warns of the inadequacy of using memorialization of the Holocaust today to sensitize us to ongoing state-sponsored atrocities. Nor will the trials of the Holocaust act as precedent for anything but politically convenient legal reckoning with 'administrative massacre'.

Prosecutions under international jurisdiction in the Hague and Rwanda may owe much to the Nuremberg legacy (though the primary concern of 'Nuremberg' was not to examine Nazi genocide), but the collapse of the Nuremberg edifice in the Cold War should underline its fragility. There is little evidence that law can really take the lead when the driving force behind Nuremberg, and current world hegemon, has refused to make its own citizens subject to the newly instituted international criminal court and conducted an aggressive war in direct contravention of the Nuremberg Charter.

Notes

- 1 M. Osiel, *Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory and the Law* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1997).
- 2 For a cross-section of some of the best literature on 'transitional justice', see R.I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson, eds., *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

- 3 Osiel, *Mass Atrocity*; L. Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- 4 A. Rückerl, *NS-Verbrechen vor Gericht* (Heidelberg: CF Müller, 1982), pp. 102–4.
- 5 H. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); M. Fabreguet, ‘Frankreichs Historiker und der Völkermord an den Juden 1945–1993’, in *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust: Europa – USA – Israel*, ed. R. Steininger (Cologne: Böhlau, 1994), pp. 317–28.
- 6 See I. Deák, J.T. Gross and T. Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- 7 The major attempt to come to terms with that problem, at the Nuremberg trial, will be examined shortly.
- 8 P.D. Jones, ‘British Policy towards German Crimes against German Jews, 1939–45’, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 36 (1991), 339–66.
- 9 United Nations War Crimes Commission, *Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals*, vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1947), p. 93.
- 10 Deák, Gross and Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution*.
- 11 Rückerl, *NS-Verbrechen*, pp. 209–11.
- 12 P.D. Jones, ‘Nazi Atrocities against Allied Airmen: Stalag Luft III and the End of British War Crimes Trials’, *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 543–65.
- 13 A. Rückerl, *NS-Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse* (Munich: DTV, 1977), pp. 331–46. Two later trials, in 1948 and 1949, also examined the operations of Chełmno.
- 14 H. Grabitz, *Täter und Gehilfen des Endlösungswahns: Hamburger Verfahren wegen NS-Gewaltverbrechen 1946–1996* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1999), p. 11; also Rückerl, *NS-Verbrechen vor Gericht*, p. 122, on trials of Sobibor personnel.
- 15 For extensive summaries and extracts of these twelve ‘subsequent Nuremberg trials’, see *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, 15 vols (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1949–53). For the Einsatzgruppen trial, see vol. 4. The trials are analysed extensively in P. Macguire, *Law and War: an American Story* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2001) and, as regards their coverage of the ‘Final Solution’, D. Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials in the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapters 1 and 2.
- 16 Grabitz, *Täter und Gehilfen*, p. 11.
- 17 On the development of the reaction to the American trials, see F. Buscher, *The US War Crimes Trial Program in Germany, 1946–1955* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989).
- 18 For edited transcripts of the ‘Belsen trial’, see R. Phillips, ed., *The Trial of Josef Kramer and Forty-Four Others* (London: William Hodge, 1949); for analysis, Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, pp. 97–101.
- 19 Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, chapters 1–3; contrary views about the effectiveness of the Nuremberg trial in informing about the Holocaust are held in M. Marrus, ‘The Holocaust at Nuremberg’, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 26 (1998), 5–41; J. Wilke et al., *Holocaust und NS-Prozesse* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995); J. Wilke, ‘Ein früher Beginn der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”: der Nürnberger Prozess und wie darüber berichtet würde’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (15 November 1995); and, with more nuance, Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, part one. For analysis of the idea of ‘crimes against peace’ as the supreme crime, see J.A. Bush, ‘“The Supreme... Crime” and its Origins: The Lost Legislative History of the Crime of Aggressive War’, *Columbia Law Review*, 12 (2002), 2324–423.

- 20 On 'liberal universalism' during the war, see T. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
- 21 N. Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996); R.G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Grabitz, *Täter und Gehilfen*, p. 9; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, chapter 4.
- 22 Generally, see M. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999); on the use of trials to this end by the Soviets and the DDR, see I. Eschebach, 'NS-Prozesse in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone und der DDR. Einige Überlegungen zu der Strafverfahrensakten ehemaliger SS-Aufseherinnen des Frauenkonzentrationslagers Ravensbrück', in *Die frühen Nachkriegsprozesse: Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung in Norddeutschland*, Heft 3 (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1997), pp. 65–74, here p. 72.
- 23 M. Overesch, *Buchenwald und die DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995); Fulbrook, *German National Identity*, pp. 28–35.
- 24 E. Goldhagen, 'Der Holocaust in der sowjetischen Propaganda und Geschichtsschreibung', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 28 (1980), 502–7; R.J.B. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War, 1945–1990* (London: Routledge, 1991).
- 25 The expression used in Judt's preface to Judt, Deák and Gross, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, p. ix.
- 26 *Stars and Stripes*, 25 February 1948 and more generally Eschebach, 'NS-Prozesse in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone'.
- 27 Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*.
- 28 Moeller, *War Stories*.
- 29 Or perhaps because they did not wish to embrace the evidence of the murderous potential of modern occidental culture as illuminated in Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992).
- 30 D.C. Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, chapter 4; for the Nuremberg evidence on Wehrmacht criminality, J. Perels, 'Verpaßte Chancen: Zur Bedeutung der Nürnberger Nachfolgeprozesse vor dem Hintergrund der ungenügenden Strafverfolgung von NS-Tätern in der BRD', in *Die frühen Nachkriegsprozesse*, pp. 30–7, here p. 32; B. Böll, 'Wehrmacht vor Gericht', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 24 (1998), 570–94.
- 31 H. Langbein, ed., *Der Auschwitz-Prozess: Eine Dokumentation*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Europa Verlag, 1965), vol. 2, pp. 993–1005.
- 32 R. Giordano, *Die zweite Schuld oder von der Last ein Deutscher zu sein* (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhrlig, 1987); J. Friedrich, *Die kalte Amnestie: NS-Täter in der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), for harsh critiques of German investigation and trial policy.
- 33 As, for instance, in the works cited in the previous note.
- 34 H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 17; her claim is reproduced in Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, p. 174. On the background to the trials, Langbein, *Der Auschwitz Prozess*, vol. 1, pp. 21–34. For the most incisive analysis of that background, see R.E. Wittmann, 'The Wheels of Justice Turn Slowly: The Pretrial Investigations of the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial 1963–65', *Central European History*, 35 (2002), 345–78.
- 35 Langbein, *Der Auschwitz Prozess*, vol. 1, pp. 21–34 on some of the procedural/investigative problems, esp. p. 23 on the fortuitous beginning of the investigation. Wittmann,

- 'The Wheels of Justice', 345–63 for more on these problems, especially on the legal side. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 17 on Bauer. D. de Mildt, *In the Name of the People: Perpetrators of Genocide in the Reflection of their Post-War Prosecution in West Germany* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1996), p. 26 on Schüle. For the problems in the system from the point of view of the later head of the *Zentrale Stelle*, see A. Rückerl, 'Staatsanwaltschaftliche Ermittlung der NS-Verbrechen – Schwierigkeiten und Ergebnisse', in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung durch Strafverfahren?*, ed. J. Weber and P. Steinbach (Munich: Olzog, 1984), pp. 71–83.
- 36 Wittmann, 'The Wheels of Justice', 345–63.
- 37 M. Broszat, 'Siegerjustiz oder strafrechtliche Selbsteinigung: Aspekte der Vergangenheitsbewältigung der deutschen Justiz während der Besatzungszeit', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 29 (1981), 477–544, here 480–1; De Mildt, *In the Name of the People*, pp. 30–1.
- 38 H. Hannover, 'Vom Nürnberger Prozeß zum Auschwitz-Prozeß', in *Auschwitz – ein Prozeß*, ed. U. Schneider (Cologne: PapyRossa, 1994), 67–74, here 71.
- 39 R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 640.
- 40 Friedrich, *Die kalte Amnestie*, p. 337.
- 41 R. Vogel, ed., *Ein Weg aus der Vergangenheit: Eine Dokumentation zur Verjährungsfrage und zu den NS-Prozessen* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1969).
- 42 For breakdowns of types of crime and criminal prosecuted in the BRD, see R. Reiter, *30 Jahre Justiz und NS-Verbrechen: Die Aktualität einer Urteilssammlung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998). For analysis, de Mildt, *In the Name of the People*, pp. 20–35.
- 43 R.E. Wittmann, 'Indicting Auschwitz? The Paradox of the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial', forthcoming in *German History*. Also highly critical of the public reaction to the trial, see Hannah Arendt's introduction to B. Naumann, *Auschwitz. Bericht über die Strafsache gegen Mulla u.a. vor dem Schwurgericht Frankfurt* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1968).
- 44 Grabitz, *Täter und Gehilfen*, pp. 10–11.
- 45 A. Wieviorka, 'La construction de la mémoire du génocide en France', *Le Monde Juif*, 149 (1993), 23–37, here p. 30.
- 46 Wittmann, 'The Wheels of Justice', pp. 367–8; G. Werle and T. Wandres, *Auschwitz vor Gericht* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995), pp. 58–9.
- 47 See Langbein, *Der Auschwitz-Prozess*, pp. 937–91 for the chronology of the courtroom proceedings.
- 48 Ibid.; Wittmann, 'The Wheels of Justice', pp. 365–6.
- 49 Including particularly Sephardim, who were held to be ignorant of the Holocaust. See T. Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), p. 397.
- 50 T. Teichholz, *The Trial of Ivan the Terrible: State of Israel v John Demjanjuk* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); and from the point of view of Demjanjuk's one-time defence counsel, Y. Sheftel, *Show Trial: The Conspiracy to Convict John Demjanjuk as 'Ivan the Terrible'* (London: Gollancz, 1994).
- 51 A. Wieviorka, *L'Ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998), pp. 97–105.
- 52 Segev, *The Seventh Million*, pp. 434–6; Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, chapter 6; Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 10.
- 53 R. Paxton, *Vichy France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
- 54 T. Todorov, 'Letter from Paris: the Papon Trial', in *The Papon Affair: Memory and Justice on Trial*, ed. R. Golsan (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 220.
- 55 For an overview, see S. Chalandon, *Crimes contre l'humanité: Barbie, Touvier, Bousquet, Papon* (Paris: Plon, 1998).
- 56 Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, pp. 199–216; Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, pp. 187–96.

- 57 Cited in Richard Golsan, 'Introduction' to *The Papon Affair*, ed. Golsan, p. 18.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 For detailed examination of the Touvier case, see R. Golsan, ed., *Memory, the Holocaust, and French Justice: The Bousquet and Touvier Affairs* (London: University Press of New England, 1996); and L.N. Sadat, 'The Legal Legacy of Maurice Papon', in *The Papon Affair*, ed. Golsan, pp. 131–60, here pp. 132–41.
- 60 *Die Zeit*, 31 October 1997, reproduced in Thomas Vornbaum, ed., *Vichy vor Gericht: der Papon-Prozeß gegen Maurice Papon in der deutschen Presseberichterstattung 1997/98* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000), pp. 76–8.
- 61 Golsan, 'Introduction' to *The Papon Affair*, ed. Golsan, p. 3.
- 62 Golsan, ed., *Memory, the Holocaust, and French Justice*.
- 63 As described in Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, chapters 1 and 2.
- 64 Todorov, 'Letter from Paris: the Papon Trial', p. 221.
- 65 L. Greilsamer and N. Weill, 'Maurice Papon was tried long ago in History's Court', in *The Papon Affair*, ed. Golsan, pp. 205–11, here pp. 207–8. On his refusal to testify, see H. Rousso, *The Haunting Past: History, Memory, and Justice in Contemporary France*, trans. Ralph Schoolcraft (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); see also Richard Evans' discussion of Rousso in 'History, Memory, and the Law: The Historian as Expert Witness', *History and Theory*, 41 (2002), 326–45.
- 66 C. Gerlach, 'The Eichmann Interrogations in Holocaust Historiography', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 15 (2001), 428–52. Gerlach also illustrates how on the flip-side the context of Eichmann's various testimonies in criminal investigations has adversely influenced their reliability.
- 67 Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, chapter 6.
- 68 Grabitz, *Täter und Gehilfen*, pp. 11, 19–20; C.R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper, 1992).
- 69 D. Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War: the Case of Erich von Manstein', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33, 4 (1999), 25–45, here 25–6.
- 70 See the Foreword to the original German edition of *Anatomie des SS-Staates* reproduced in translation in H. Krausnick and M. Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State* (London: Paladin, 1970), pp. 13–15.
- 71 The adjective is deliberately chosen to invoke critically the notion of history writing as *Wissenschaft*, or scientific procedure.
- 72 M. Broszat and S. Friedländer, 'A Controversy about the Historicization of National Socialism', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 19 (1988), 1–47.
- 73 For an expansion of this point, D. Bloxham, 'Reworking the Past in the Interests of the Present: Britain's Holocaust Memorial Days', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 21, 1 & 2 (2002), 41–62. See also the essay by Moses in this volume.
- 74 Arendt makes a similar point though in a slightly different context: *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 254–67.
- 75 Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, p. 178.
- 76 Y. Lozowick, *Hitler's Bürokraten: Eichmann, seine willigen Vollstrecker, und die Banalität des Bösen* (Munich: Pendo, 2000). Cf. S. Felman, 'Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann Trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust', *Critical Inquiry*, 27 (2001), 201–38.
- 77 See, for instance, the subjects of C.R. Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978).
- 78 T. Todorov, 'The Touvier Affair', in *Memory, the Holocaust, and French Justice*, ed. Golsan, pp. 169–78, here p. 177.

19

The Holocaust under Communism

Thomas C. Fox

Although western journalists, and sometimes scholars as well, not infrequently suggest that under communism no discussion of the Holocaust occurred, this is hardly true. An event of such magnitude could not be airbrushed from history books, not even communist ones, but it could be rewritten within the confines of a comforting teleological narrative. That narrative was in turn part of the master narrative of Marxism. Within the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations all discussions of the Holocaust took place inside that master narrative and hence evidence similarities. Within the parameters of that discourse, however, the discussion could emphasize different points, not infrequently according to the exigencies of Soviet domestic and/or foreign policy. Additionally, the individual national histories of the countries involved – their own Holocaust legacies of perpetration and victimization – invariably coloured the post-war discussions.

Within the framework of orthodox Marxist thinking, oppression based on ethnicity, race or gender generally held the status of a 'secondary' phenomenon; Marxists viewed antisemitism, for example, as a distraction created by the ruling classes to divert the attention of the oppressed from their true oppressors. Jews (or blacks or women) functioned within this system as scapegoats. By changing the economic system, citizens could relegate such matters as antisemitism or misogyny to the proverbial dustbin of history. In the Soviet Bloc of socialist, classless societies, the so-called 'Jewish Question' had been officially resolved. Because antisemitism was theoretically impossible in such societies, it no longer existed.

Other, less theoretical, elements also shaped the communist view of the Holocaust. Chief among these was Stalinist antisemitism and its legacy. Although scholars differ about the range and reasons for that antisemitism, there is no argument that it had fateful and sometimes fatal ramifications for Eastern Bloc Jews. Recent archival research in the former Soviet Union has located antisemitic documents dating from the early 1940s;¹ none the less, the crisis of the Second

World War and the Soviet struggle for survival pushed antisemitism to the periphery. During the war, Stalin created a Jewish anti-fascist committee; after the war he imprisoned and/or murdered most of its leaders. He also fostered antisemitic campaigns and show trials in numerous Eastern Bloc states, imprisoned, in a highly publicized move, six Soviet Jewish doctors for allegedly conspiring to murder him and prepared plans for the mass deportation of Soviet Jews. Whereas the Nazis, in their notorious 'documentary' film *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*), had figured Jews simultaneously as communist agents *and* as agents of international capitalism, the communists opted only for the second stereotype. In the Cold War hysteria of the 1950s, Jews were seen as dangerous 'cosmopolitans' with international connections (especially with American capitalism and imperialism) and dubious national loyalties. This demonization of Jews demonstrated that it was not only capitalist societies that needed scapegoats to divert the masses from their true oppressors. Although the worst excesses subsided after the death of Stalin in 1953, the inhibitions and taboos regarding 'Jewish' matters lingered for decades. With regard to the Holocaust, people knew that Jews had died; they also knew that it had been, and could be, dangerous to talk about it.

When Eastern Bloc historians did discuss the Nazi murder of Jews, they usually viewed that catastrophe as part of a larger one occasioned by fascist racism and also (one sometimes finds the word 'primarily') directed at Slavs. As opposed to the West, which had its own Cold War blinkers, the Eastern Bloc never forgot, in its historiography and its more popular forms of memory, the enormous casualties suffered by gentile citizens in Poland and especially in the Soviet Union. These numbers, which were unlike anything experienced in western Europe during the war, dwarfed those of the Jewish dead. As opposed to the West, the East furthermore emphasized the heroism of the Red Army and never forgot the Nazi murder of Soviet prisoners of war in concentration camps or the systematic execution of Soviet commissars by the *Einsatzgruppen*. Eastern Bloc societies also emphasized the sacrifices of their domestic leftist resistance to Hitler, especially that of the communist parties which were invariably described as playing a leading role. In societies that were often only reluctantly socialist, the emphasis on communist anti-fascism could often, especially for the intelligentsia, provide an attractive, moral rallying ground. But it also tended to create a hierarchy of victims, with 'passive' Jewish victims ranked well below those martyrs active in the communist resistance.

According to the declaration of the Communist International in the 1930s, a declaration that, with minor modifications, held sway in the Eastern Bloc until 1989, fascism represented the final, most aggressive stage of capitalism in crisis. This theory holds that German industrialists, fearing a triumph of an increasingly organized German Communist Party, had financed the Nazis, bringing Hitler to power. As a reward, Hitler crushed trade unions and terrorized

the left – German concentration camps were built for German socialists and communists, who were Hitler's first victims. (Similarly, when Hitler turned his war to the East, Soviet commissars would be the 'true' Nazi targets and victims.) German industry profited from Hitler's war preparations and from his war; it also profited from an influx into Germany of foreign involuntary workers. Ultimately, many leading German industries established branches at concentration and death camps – I.G. Farben's synthetic rubber plant at Auschwitz being one of the most infamous – which utilized slave labour. (To be sure, communist historians could never adequately explain why the Nazis, facing severe labour shortages later in the war, fanatically continued to murder Jews when it contravened their economic and strategic interests to do so. The inability to deal with this issue exposed one limit of Marxist theory.) Thus Eastern Bloc countries viewed fascism, and even the Holocaust, as a result of the crisis-ridden end cycle of capitalism. As socialist societies, so the argument went, they had broken the cycles that produced such history; Western societies, by contrast, remained capitalist and by extension proto- or neo-fascist. (This argument was particularly important for the East Germans, who, as opposed to other Eastern Bloc states, had no history or legitimization as a civic society.) Communist theorists viewed fascism and the Holocaust, not as phenomena rooted in a particular time and place, but rather as manifestations of a crisis that could and did recur, for example, in Greece, Chile and Vietnam.

According to this logic, fascism could also occur in Israel. Although the Soviet Union originally supported Israel, and Czech armaments proved decisive in Israel's first war, Soviet strategic interests soon shifted, and those of its Warsaw Pact allies followed accordingly. Communist societies viewed Israel as an extension of US imperialism and the Eastern Bloc press regularly pilloried the Israeli treatment of Palestinians, comparing the Israelis with Nazis. The instrumentalization of the Holocaust to brand the Israelis was a further overarching continuity affecting discussions of the Holocaust in Eastern Bloc societies. Let us now turn to those societies individually, beginning with the Soviet Union.

Perhaps one-third of all Jews who died in the Holocaust were under Soviet rule in 1940.² They include not only Soviet civilians and soldiers, but also those Jews living in territories annexed by the Soviets after the Hitler-Stalin pact. Despite the number of Jews murdered, Soviet accounts in general ignored, played down or universalized the Holocaust. Within that general framework, however, there was room for exceptions and also for variations based on national history. In Ukraine, which has a considerable history of antisemitism, accounts differed substantially from those of Estonia, which does not.

The word 'Holocaust' did not enter Russian usage until the 1990s. There was no book published that attempted to treat the Holocaust as *sui generis*; instead, accounts of Jewish suffering were included as a rather small part in the martyrdom and death of 20 million Soviet citizens. (In the early 1990s the post-Soviet media began to use the figure of 27 million.) *The Black Book of Soviet Jewry*, containing material gathered by Ilya Ehrenburg, Vasily Grossman and others, was printed in Moscow in 1946, but all copies were sent to a warehouse where they were destroyed in 1948. One copy survived and has been translated into several languages, but it never appeared in the Soviet Union.³ According to William Korey, Soviet elementary and secondary school textbooks carried almost no references to Jews or antisemitism.⁴

The debate over the construction of a monument at Babi Yar, the site in Kiev where some 35,000 of the city's Jews were murdered in two days, provides a telling example of the vicissitudes of Holocaust memory in the Soviet Union. The site displayed no historical marker for years, and city authorities entertained various plans to 'develop' the area. In 1959 the writer Viktor Nekrasov protested at plans to construct a football stadium on the site, and public pressure to build a monument began. The issue received international attention when Yevgeny Yevtuschenko published a poem entitled 'Babi Yar', whose first line reads: 'Over Babi Yar there are no monuments'. Dimitri Shostakovich included the poem in his 13th symphony, prompting authorities to ban the music for several years. When the Soviets finally built a memorial, the inscription mentioned 'citizens of Kiev' and 'prisoners of war', but not Jews. Similarly, a widely known photograph of a 17-year-old Jewish partisan, Masha Bruskina, who was hanged by the Nazis in Minsk, remained titled the 'unknown partisan' at the Minsk historical museum and also at various concentration camp exhibitions, including Auschwitz.

As the examples of Nekrasov, Yevtuschenko and Shostakovich demonstrate, it was possible to express viewpoints opposed to the party line, if indeed there was such a thing, on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, but these artists also faced orchestrated criticism and reprisals. Other artists who acknowledged a special fate for Jews in the Second World War included Anatoly Kuznetsov in his novel *Babi Yar* and the Jewish writer Anatoly Rybakov in his novel *Heavy Sand*. But these works remained isolated exceptions.

Works of historiography presented a more complex and differentiated picture, though the overall tendency remains of minimizing the scale of the Jewish catastrophe. The six-volume official Soviet history of the war does not contain references to Jews, antisemitism or the Holocaust.⁵ The popular three-volume edition by S.S. Smirnov, which appeared in an edition of 100,000, refers to Jewish suffering, but consistently refuses to recognize Jews as partisans, fighters and resisters.⁶ A history of Ukraine, published in 1982, does not mention the Jews, though they have played a major role in Ukrainian history and died there by

the hundreds of thousands in the Second World War.⁷ Dov Levin notes that in Lithuania during the late 1940s and 1950s, 'condemnation of fascist atrocities was severed from direct and explicit mention of the Jewish identity of most of the victims, apparently as part of a consistent Soviet "pacification" effort aimed at consolidating the new regime's base among the local, non-Jewish inhabitants'.⁸ In the 1960s, however, Lithuanian works of history, even tendentious ones, often featured an accurate portrayal of the fate of Lithuanian Jews during the war, and in the 1970s and 1980s, an emphasis by Lithuanian Jews and non-Jews on the Jewish catastrophe often served as a protest, coded or not, against Soviet policies of repression and misinformation.⁹ Accounts of the war written in Estonia and Belarus include frank descriptions of the Holocaust. Whether that resulted from individual conviction or different censorship policies in the individual republics is not at this point clear.

Probably in an attempt to stem international charges of antisemitism, the Soviet government also permitted a Yiddish monthly, *Sovietish hainmland*, which published poems, memoirs and factual information about the Holocaust. Yiddish was, of course, not widely read, and the government furthermore reduced the original circulation of 25,000 copies to 7,000. The themes in this publication also showed a certain orchestration, namely: a) gentiles frequently saved Jews in occupied territories; b) Jews who resisted did so for universal, not Zionist, reasons; c) there was much cooperation among the various nationalities in resisting the Nazis; and d) those who collaborated with the Nazis were fascists, who now lived in the West. In this publication, and indeed in all Soviet discussions of the Holocaust, certain themes remained bracketed. There was no discussion of antisemitism in the Red Army and no mention of the fact that there were partisan groups comprised solely of Jews. There was no serious analysis of the explosive issue of collaboration, including the fact that many citizens of the various western Soviet republics, or in areas occupied by the Soviets, welcomed the Nazis as liberators, or that those citizens were themselves so imbued with antisemitism that they willingly participated in the Nazi genocide programme. Connected with the latter was the association, for many Soviet citizens, between revolution, communism and Judaism, and especially between the Soviet secret police and Judaism.¹⁰

The reasons for the halting Soviet discussion of the Holocaust are multiple and include the positions outlined at the outset of this essay. The Soviets suffered staggering casualties during the war, of whom the Jews were only one part. Stalin's post-war antisemitism, as well as Soviet anti-Israeli policy and the equation of Zionism with fascism, also played an important role. A further factor was the Soviet regime's replacement of the 1917 revolution by the 'Great Patriotic War' as its legitimating myth. Whereas few alive could recall the revolution, which was in any case not welcomed by all citizens, many citizens remembered the Second World War, and the great majority was satisfied with its

outcome. To emphasize the 'Jewish' aspect of the war, as Lithuania did, during the 1970s and 1980s, would have undermined the universal and unifying themes the Soviets needed to legitimate their rule.

Finally, the Soviets viewed assimilation as the solution to the 'Jewish Question', and discussion of the Holocaust retarded assimilation by raising Jewish consciousness. Such discussion also raised the *brisant* issues of collaboration and betrayal, issues that retained their explosiveness after 1989, as witnessed by the amnesty granted by the newly independent Lithuanian parliament to about 1,000 Lithuanians convicted by the Soviets for collaboration with the Nazis. In Lvov, in Ukraine, a major boulevard has been renamed for a Ukrainian leader whose party collaborated with the Nazis and supported the 'Final Solution'.

Poland presented a picture at once similar and different.¹¹ The pre-war centre of European Jewry, a country in which Jews had lived for centuries, Poland was the home of approximately half of all the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Most were murdered in Poland itself, where the Nazis built the majority of their killing centres. At the same time, gentile Poles constituted one of the largest victim groups of the Nazis and, not surprisingly, post-war Polish accounts of the war are preoccupied with issues of non-Jewish Polish martyrdom and survival. The parallelism of the destruction of Jewish and, very nearly, Polish culture informs Polish historical memory.

The realignment of Polish borders and the massive population expulsions after the Second World War created a Polish state that for the first time was overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and ethnically Polish. Perhaps more than any other Soviet Bloc state, Poland strongly resisted the imposition of communism. Despite persecution, the Catholic Church proved, with its own schools and press, a strong counterweight. Agriculture remained private. As opposed to such countries as Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia or East Germany, where the existence of a communist underground helped foster identification with and legitimization of the new regime, in Poland the communists had betrayed the Home Army during its doomed uprising in Warsaw in 1944.

In the immediate post-war years, the devastated Polish Jewish community struggled, with some success and with the active assistance of the government, to re-establish itself. The government dedicated memorials at the death camps, encouraged new Jewish settlement in the former German areas of Silesia and established the High Commission to Investigate Nazi War Crimes in Poland. The Commission supplied materials for the Nuremberg trials and for Polish trials, including that of Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz. Perhaps most important for our purposes, a group of Jewish survivors established the Central

Jewish Historical Commission, which worked with government support to gather material relating to the Holocaust. Between 1945 and 1948 the Commission issued more than 20 volumes of documents, histories, memoirs and literary works. In 1947 it moved to Warsaw, where it changed its name to the Jewish Historical Institute. Although most of its founders left Poland, the Institute continued its research and publishing activities in communist Poland, the only Jewish research institute in the Eastern Bloc to do so. When Stalin's antisemitic paranoia occasioned government-led persecutions and show trials in the Eastern Bloc during the later 1940s and early 1950s, Poland remained largely free of such occurrences, at least at that point in time.

At the same time, despite the differences in government and historical period, and despite the intervening mass murder of Jews on Polish soil, many Polish pre-war stereotypes regarding Jews lingered on. The association of communism with Judaism, which, as we have seen, existed in the Soviet Union, was prevalent in Poland as well. It was strengthened by memories of the war in eastern Poland where Jews, aware of Nazi policies in western Poland, greeted the Soviet invaders enthusiastically. Whereas Polish gentiles generally viewed the Soviets as imperialists and occupiers, Polish Jews perceived them as protectors. That sense of gratitude continued after the war. In the post-war period Polish Jews, as opposed to Polish gentiles, generally supported the communist government in which they were represented out of proportion to their numbers in the population at large. While the communists honoured Jewish resistance, especially as exemplified by the Warsaw Uprising, it castigated the Home Army as fascist collaborators. Nathan Rappaport's monument to the ghetto uprising was unveiled five years after it took place, but only 40 years later did the government allow a monument to commemorate the Home Army revolt. Such symbolic gestures allowed many Poles to view their government as Jewish-controlled. These factors certainly played a role in the violence directed against Jews between 1944 and 1947, during which, in the worst episode in the history of Polish-Jewish relations, between 1,500 and 2,000 Jews were murdered. Pogroms occurred in approximately a dozen Polish towns and cities, the worst such attack being in Kielce in July 1946, when 42 Jews were murdered and over 100 wounded. Such occurrences strengthened the claim by the communist government that it represented the only force capable of stemming such atrocities.

Government attitudes changed with the rise of Gomułka to power in October 1956. The Jewish Question began to play a larger role in Polish party politics, with Gomułka's forces seen as the victory of the 'people' over Jews who had sat out the war in Moscow and then returned to exploit the Poles. In the months following, a number of antisemitic incidents occurred which, though not as violent as in the immediate post-war period, served to intimidate Polish Jews. When the ban on immigration to Israel, imposed in 1951, was lifted in 1956,

approximately 40,000 Jews left the country. By the mid-1960s approximately 30,000 Jews remained in Poland, most of them ageing and demoralized. Between 1968 and 1970 a government-sponsored campaign directed at 'Zionist' student rebels and at Jews, both real and imaginary, occasioned another wave of emigration. Some 20,000 Jews or people of Jewish descent left the country within two years, generally under coercion. As a result, the 1970s was a period of silence regarding the 'Jewish Question', and it was not until the rise of Solidarity, which was determined to reappropriate all Polish history, that public discussion re-emerged.

The Stalinization of Polish memory generated some of the same phenomena we have witnessed in the Soviet Union. In 1947, according to the mandate of the Council for the Protection of Memorials to Struggle and Martyrdom, ratified by the Polish Parliament in 1947, Auschwitz was one of the sites at which 'Poles and citizens of other nationalities fought and died a martyr's death'.¹² A pamphlet produced on the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising links it with the Polish uprising and with the anti-fascist struggle of 'all the freedom- and peace-loving peoples'.¹³ In 1964, the government created a memorial at Treblinka, where only Jews were murdered. Although the memorial makes use of Jewish symbolism, the press spoke of Treblinka's victims as '800,000 citizens of European nations'.¹⁴ Michael C. Steinlauf writes: 'In consigning the memory of the Jews to that of the "other nations" victimized by the Nazis or to an official narrative woven around a small number of explicitly "Jewish" sites and symbols, a narrative whose effect was to marginalize, or "ghettoize", its subject, official Polish commemorative activity doubtless reflected a popular need.'¹⁵ Between the late 1960s and the 1980s general accounts of the war show the fate of the Jews to be nearly indistinguishable from those of the 'Polish nation'. The release in 1986 of Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary *Shoah*, which was shown in part on Polish television, brought impassioned and mostly negative responses. But by the late 1980s, in the aftermath of the discussion, the notion that there had been no difference between the fate of the Poles and the fate of the Jews appeared to vanish from public discourse.¹⁶

In the 1980s numerous Polish publications treated the Holocaust and sensitive questions of Polish–Jewish relations. Catholic or underground presses printed some of them, but the majority appeared in state-owned presses. In 1983 the first of several international conferences devoted to Polish–Jewish relations was held in New York. That same year an unofficial delegation of Israeli historians visited Poland. In 1985 *Polin: a Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* began annual publication in Oxford.

The Polish confrontation with the Holocaust, while it shared many aspects in common with other countries of the Soviet Bloc, maintained certain distinctly Polish characteristics as well. Chief among these was the attempt by successive unpopular communist governments to legitimate themselves by

emphasizing Polish martyrdom and the lurking danger of a revanchist West Germany (which did not accept the redrawn Polish–German border until 1972). Despite the imposition of martial law, considerable dialogue about the Holocaust ensued in the 1980s, though such events as the international controversy surrounding the construction of a Carmelite convent at Auschwitz demonstrate the continuing sensitivity of the subject.

One cannot speak of a unified Czechoslovak response to the Holocaust, inasmuch as the Nazis treated the Czech and Slovak peoples differently, leading to the development of different historical memories.¹⁷ Whereas the Munich Accords of 1938 made the Czechs the first victims of Hitler's expansionism, the Slovaks soon achieved 'independence' and their own government, which collaborated with the Nazis and was involved in the deportation of Jews. Hence when the post-war government established 'people's courts' to try traitors and collaborators, the response of the population, and indeed the very definition of those words, differed between Czechs and Slovaks. The former generally supported the proceedings, while in Slovakia there were attempts to obstruct and sabotage the trials. The government after the war looked approvingly on Zionism, provided Israel with crucial support in 1948 and served as an emigration station for displaced Jews from throughout Europe. In Slovakia, however, there were pogroms in 1945–46.

One can discern five stages in the Czechoslovak reception of the Holocaust: a) the immediate post-war years; b) the period of Moscow-oriented Stalinism; c) the liberalization of the 1960s; d) the restoration period following the suppression of the Prague Spring; and e) the period of *glasnost*, beginning in the mid-1980s.

The first period was marked by a substantial number of memoirs and eyewitness accounts, especially regarding experiences in the ghetto of Theresienstadt (Terezín). In 1946 one of the earliest documentaries about Auschwitz was published,¹⁸ followed in 1947 by the first monograph on the fate of the Jews in Moravia and Bohemia.¹⁹ In 1949 the Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Bratislava published *The Tragedy of Slovak Jewry*.²⁰ Following the communist takeover in 1948, many Jews left the country for Israel: approximately 19,000 between 1948 and 1950. Between 1950 and 1952 the government prosecuted the show trials of Rudolf Slánský and other prominent communists, most of whom were of Jewish descent. The defendants faced charges of Zionism and cosmopolitanism, and were given long prison sentences or executed.

The trial of Slánský and others signalled the Stalinization of Czechoslovak society and the dangers of investigating the 'Jewish Question' too closely. Czechoslovak historiography of the 1950s conformed closely to its Soviet guide, and provided little separate discussion of the Holocaust. This began to change in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Israeli capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann, who had coordinated the deportation of Czech and Slovak Jews, focused attention

once again on the Holocaust, and Eichmann's ostensible remark that 'the Slovaks gave away their Jews as one spills sour beer' caused the first debate on Slovak collaboration in more than a decade.²¹ After the 12th Party Congress in 1962 the government established a commission to re-examine the Slánský trials. The commission discovered evidence of massive state crimes, leading to a destalinization and liberalization in many aspects of life. During this period of increasing openness, which culminated in the Prague Spring, several important literary works and anthologies appeared that dealt with the Holocaust, as well as several dissertations. In May 1968 Jewish community leaders published a declaration of support for Israel in which they strongly criticized numerous government actions unfriendly towards Jews.

After the crushing of the Prague Spring a period of cultural stagnation ensued. In 1972 the government followed Moscow's lead and initiated an anti-Zionist campaign designed to demonstrate that Zionists had been accomplices and followers of the Nazis. Such tones harkened back to the Slánský trial or to the smear campaign, organized in 1967–68, against Czechoslovak Jews, especially Eduard Goldstücker, the chairman of the Union of Czech writers. In the wake of the anti-Israeli, anti-Zionist campaigns, it became *de rigueur* to refer, in journalist writing but also in scholarly texts, to the collaboration of the wartime Jewish leadership in Prague and Terezin with the Nazis.

As with other Eastern Bloc countries, the advent of *glasnost* changed the fashion in which discourse about Jews and the Holocaust could be articulated in Czechoslovakia. The press adopted a more balanced tone, and a group of Slovak dissidents issued a proclamation unequivocally condemning the deportation of the Slovak Jews and lamenting the fact that no memorial had been established in Slovakia to commemorate that event. They also criticized the pitiful state of Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and community buildings. On Christmas Eve 1990, one year after the 1989 revolution, the Parliament and government of the Slovak Republic issued a proclamation condemning the deportation of Slovak Jews as a crime committed by the state, and asked for forgiveness from surviving Jewish citizens.

In general, the official construction of memory in Czechoslovakia was marked by an emphasis on the fact that capitalism had created the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust, and that the Soviet Union had liberated the country from such horrors. In memorials, history writing and schoolbooks, the Holocaust was generally underplayed, as this example from an eighth-grade history textbook demonstrates: '360,000 of our citizens perished, amongst these 25,000 Communists, in prisons, concentrations camps and on the battle fields.'²² The fact that 250,000 of those victims were Jews and constituted the majority of the Jewish population in the prewar republic is not mentioned. Terezin could not be ignored, but it could be incorporated into an anti-capitalist narrative or, increasingly, into an anti-Zionist one. As a frontline state, a status it shared

with East Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakia also specialized in excoriating capitalist West Germany as a haven for past, present and future Nazis.

The Terezin Memorial illustrates many of these tendencies *in nuce*. Established during the reform movement in 1968 as a belated tribute to Jewish victims, the research institute in its early years presented important publications on long-neglected or taboo themes. By 1974 it had become a centre for the indoctrination of class-consciousness, and the ghetto history was depicted as a class struggle between Jewish Zionists and assimilationists. The official guidelines for the centre emphasized the following themes: a) communist resistance to the Nazis; b) the suffering of Czechoslovakia; c) the suffering of the inmates of all nationalities in Terezin; d) documentation of various phases of the Little Fortress, where Czech political prisoners were held; and e) the parallels between the oppression of the Jews during the Nazi period and the conduct of the Zionists.

This was the general tone of official ideology. It is important to note, however, that alongside such constructions, other, less ideological pieces of Marxist scholarship made contributions to Holocaust memory, as did numerous literary works and films by Jewish and non-Jewish Czechs and Slovaks. Livia Rothkirchen asserts programmatically:

Czech reactions to the Holocaust fall into two different types: (1) the official reaction, influenced by Moscow and supported by the state, and (2) the more sympathetic reaction of a large part of the population, which viewed with compassion the plight of the Jews. How could one otherwise explain the great success of Jewish writers whose novels and reminiscences attained such popularity?²³

In post-war Hungary, initial efforts to reconstitute Jewish life were stymied by the lack of restitution, which was refused on various grounds: the generally desperate economic situation, the reluctance of non-Jews to part with property confiscated from Jews and, most importantly, the increasing influence of the communists who desired all property, Jewish and non-Jewish, to be nationalized.²⁴ A government campaign against the black market became a coded campaign against Jews. In a time of severe economic dislocation, Jews proved convenient scapegoats, and between February and July 1946 serious antisemitic incidents and even virtual pogroms took place in several Hungarian cities.

Hungarian attitudes toward the Holocaust were shaped by a series of trials between 1945 and 1948, which investigated local and national crimes committed by Hungarians collaborating with the Nazis. One hundred and forty-six people were executed for war crimes or crimes against humanity, perhaps most notably

three former officials of the Ministry of the Interior who were largely responsible for the deportation of Hungarian Jews. As in other eastern European countries, a number of memoirs and autobiographies appeared during this transitional period, as well as the first historical accounts, which were based primarily on the trials and which compiled documentary and statistical evidence. Istvan Bibó's essay on the Hungarian Jewish Question, published in 1948, analysed in trenchant form the involvement of the Hungarian people and government in the Holocaust, and also suggested that one reason for the post-war violence directed at Jews resulted from the latter's support for the communists.

In the autumn of 1948, a government-sponsored antisemitic campaign began, and the government persecuted Hungarian Jews on the basis of politics and religion. The communists placed the Jewish communities under strict controls and severed their foreign contacts. The police arrested 'bourgeois' Jews and deported them to penal colonies. In an attempt to distract attention from Soviet involvement in the disappearance and murder of Raoul Wallenberg, the government arrested the leaders of the Hungarian Jewish community and accused them of having conspired against Wallenberg. The state particularly penalized Zionists, and it arrested the director of the American Joint Distribution committee and expelled him from the country. As Randolph L. Braham notes, 'within a relatively short time, Judaism and Jewish culture [in Hungary] were severely restricted, if not obliterated'.²⁵ The Holocaust became sidelined, distorted or ignored in public discourse and in textbooks, which ignored the Hungarians' role as collaborators as well.

This situation began to change in the later 1950s. History writing remained perilous, but an increasing number of memoirs, fiction and documentaries began to appear again. In 1958 the first comprehensive bibliography on Holocaust materials related to Hungary could appear.²⁶ Although strictly controlled by the government, the Hungarian Jewish community continued a slow but steady growth and eventually became the largest in the Soviet Bloc outside the Soviet Union.

None the less, the anti-Zionist campaign that began after 1967 and reached a crescendo in 1975 with the UN resolution, supported by Hungary, equating Zionism with racism, brought continuing difficulties to Hungarian Jews. Many Jews who, for pragmatic or ideological reasons, had historically supported the communist government lost faith in the system and began to develop a separate and competing interest in Jewish identity and history.

One should not underestimate the negative influence of the anti-Zionist campaign on Hungarian Jews or on Holocaust discourse in Hungary. At the same time, in the 1970s Hungary proved a leader within the Eastern Bloc in establishing reform-oriented or 'goulash' communism, instituting measures that liberalized the political and economic spheres and resulted in a relaxation of censorship. Relative to other Soviet Bloc countries, there was a considerable

amount of publication about the Holocaust, generated primarily by Jewish authors. History books and schoolbooks continued to reflect the orthodox party line, but memoirs, fiction, documentaries and journalistic investigations demonstrated a relative openness. It was at this time, for example, that the role of the Christian Churches during the Holocaust became a topic of public discussion.

Hungary's literary, artistic and scholarly output on the Holocaust, unrivalled in the Eastern Bloc in the 1970s, continued in the 1980s, for example with a series of conferences dealing with the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary. These conferences took place in 1984 in New York, Tel Aviv and in Hungary, and resulted in important publications. In 1987, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences established a Centre for Jewish Studies in Budapest. Also in the late 1980s Hungarians began to make available translations of leading western scholarship on the Holocaust.

The post-communist transition has led to a resurrection and open expression of longtime anti-Jewish sentiments based on the ostensible connection of the 'Jews' with communism, an issue broached by Bibo in his essay in the late 1940s. And it is true that Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians tended to view the Soviets differently, at least in the initial post-war period when many Jews and Hungarian anti-fascists welcomed the Soviets as liberators, while the majority of the population tended to view them as invaders and oppressors. After 1948, and during the subsequent anti-Zionist campaigns, Hungarian Jews suffered perhaps most under communism, but the old stereotypes continue to inform post-1989 political discourse in that country.

In Romania, in March 1945, the communist government created a special court for the prosecution of war criminals.²⁷ Supervising the court was Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, who was a leader of the Communist Party, the minister of justice and one of the people responsible for the overthrow of the fascist wartime regime of Ion Antonescu. The leaders of that regime were brought to justice and Antonescu was executed along with three others. During the war, Romanian troops had joined the invasion of the Soviet Union and had participated in the murder of Jews. Although the Holocaust remained unsystematic in Old Romania (that is, within Romania's pre-First World War borders), it was systematic in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transnistria. Members of the civilian and military administration who organized and implemented the deportation and murder of those Jews were given long prison sentences, as were both low- and high-ranking officers in the military and police. The trials were, however, viewed by Romanian nationalists as an anti-national act imposed on the people by 'foreign' elements in order to disgrace the army that, following a long Romanian tradition,

had fought against the invaders from the East. The nationalists would eventually control public discourse in Romania, but in the mid-1940s their hour had not yet come.

Between 1946 and 1948 Matatias Carp, the secretary of the Union of Jewish Communities in Romania, published *Cartea Neagră* (*The Black Book*), a three-volume history of the Holocaust in Romania.²⁸ The Jewish journalist Marius Mircu published three short books on pogroms committed in northern Romania during the war, and M. Rudich described the murders in Transnistria.²⁹ The communists soon consolidated power, however, and history writing in Romania during the 1950s followed the pattern of other Soviet Bloc countries, by ignoring, understating or otherwise distorting the Holocaust. The first edition of *Cartea Neagră* was also the last. As Radu Ioanid asserts, 'from the early 1960s onward, Romanian historiography was openly nationalistic and xenophobic'.³⁰ In the 1970s Ioanid sees two approaches in the Romanian treatment of fascism. The first was the 'classic' Stalinist approach, which viewed Romanian fascism as a German fifth column with no popular support. The second approach supported Ceaușescu's 'nationalist' agenda, which aimed at rehabilitating Antonescu. 'Both of these approaches ignored antisemitism, and the destruction of Romanian Jewry during World War II was mentioned only in passing, and then in a very distorted way'.³¹ The only other book published on the Holocaust in Romania, a pamphlet issued in 1978 and treating the massacres of Iași, was a transparent attempt to minimize the scope and meaning of the massacre, as well as the responsibility of the Antonescu government.³² Discussions of the fate of the Jews of Transylvania, on the other hand, constituted an exception to the general silence concerning the Holocaust. The Hungarians had deported 150,000 Jews in 1944, only 15,000 of whom survived. The Romanians found those facts useful for propaganda broadsides in their continuing political struggles with Hungary.

In Romanian literature the destruction of the Romanian Jews was not a major theme, though the theme surfaced more often in belles-lettres than in history writing. More important was the 1975 novel *Delirul* (Delirium), by Marin Preda, which received international attention and was widely seen as an attempt to rehabilitate Antonescu.³³

As part of its nationalist programme, Romania maintained as much distance and independence from the Soviet Union as possible. Romania was the first Soviet Bloc country to recognize West Germany, the only one to condemn the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the only one not to break diplomatic relations with Israel after 1967. It maintained relations with American Jewish organizations and allowed West Germany and Israel to 'purchase' the emigration of ethnic Germans and Romanian Jews. Ceaușescu allowed the Jews some freedom of religion and publicly condemned antisemitism, but his government clearly encouraged it, and antisemitism, as well as various Pamyat-type

organizations (whose followers and supporters include working-class members, nostalgic communists, nativist intellectuals and members of the military leadership), played a large and accepted role in public discourse. Between 1972 and 1989 most of the literary magazines, for example, engaged in regular attacks against Hungarians and Jews. The situation has changed little in post-communist Romania, which, due to its antisemitism, briefly lost its 'Most Favoured Nation' trade status with the United States. The rehabilitation of Antonescu proceeds apace and Romanians have erected numerous statues of this man responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Bulgarian Jewish community was never large, but it was larger at the end of the Second World War than at its outset. That, plus the large number of Bulgarian Jews who emigrated to Israel, make its story unique in Europe.³⁴

Zionism was a strong presence in post-war Bulgaria, and in the mid-1940s Bulgarian Jews debated whether to remain in the country or leave for Israel. Although, through a combination of domestic protest, expediency and perhaps inertia, the Jews of Bulgaria were never deported (despite government orders to do so), the wartime government did adopt anti-Jewish regulations based on the Nuremberg Laws, and the memories of those hardships and humiliations vied with the gratitude of the survivors. In 1948–49 approximately 30,000 Bulgarian Jews left for Israel, part of what was at that time the second largest *aliyah* to that land. The remaining 5,000 Jews in Bulgaria were in general assimilated, secular and often communist; by the 1960s there were no rabbis in the country. Although Bulgaria would support the anti-Zionist policies of the Soviet Union, the large Bulgarian community in Israel allowed for many unofficial contacts and a flow of information that remained ever in tension with Soviet and official Bulgarian policy. None the less, the one Jewish organization in Bulgaria was committed to 'the construction of socialism and the struggle against Zionism';³⁵ its official journal, which first appeared in 1966, printed documents and articles intended to reinforce the idea that the communists led the fight to save the Bulgarian Jews and had abolished antisemitism and promulgated Jewish equality in postwar Bulgaria.

Under the influence of Stalinist historiography, the remarkable story of Bulgaria's Jews in the Second World War remained untold during the 1950s, when there were few mentions of the Jews or of the Holocaust. The two-volume history of Bulgaria published by the Academy of Sciences in 1954–55 contains only a few references to Jews, some of which can be construed as antisemitic.³⁶ A short history of Bulgaria published in 1958 does not mention the Jews at all.³⁷ In the later 1950s and the 1960s historians did, however, begin to see the propaganda value inherent in the story of Bulgaria's Jews, and communist

historiography began to emphasize that the communists, in concert with the masses, had rescued the Jews. One finds a variation on this theme in the Bulgarian–East German film of 1959, *Sterne* (Stars), in which a decent German soldier tries to help Greek Jews who are being deported to Auschwitz through Bulgaria. (Although Bulgarian Jews were not deported, the Bulgarians actively assisted the Holocaust in areas they occupied, such as Yugoslavia and Greece.) The soldier fails because he realizes too late that he should be working with the communist resistance. Exiled Bulgarians, by contrast, generally emphasized the role of King Boris in saving the Jews.

Until the 1980s Bulgarian historians tended to characterize their country as having been occupied by the Germans, and hence unique among occupied countries in saving the Jews. In the increasingly liberal period of the 1980s, historians began to emphasize that Bulgaria had in fact been allied with the Germans and not truly occupied. Comparisons of Bulgaria with other countries that had protected their Jews (for example, Finland, Denmark, Italy, Romania or Hungary before the German occupation) became possible, and it was also possible to accord more groups credit for having saved Bulgarian Jews, although the leadership role of the communists was never seriously questioned. A rapprochement with Israel occurred, and preparations were underway to restore diplomatic relations when the communist government fell in 1989. In post-communist Bulgaria the debate about the situation of its Jews during the war continues, with an emphasis on clarifying the role of the king.

In the land of the perpetrators, the East Germans discussed the Holocaust utilizing strategies similar to those employed by other communist countries.³⁸ Germany's history made the East Germans especially sensitive to charges of antisemitism; none the less, the country followed the Soviet line as one of the most faithful Eastern Bloc states. Thus, after an initial period of relative openness, the Stalinization of the country brought a crackdown on the Jewish community, with arrests, interrogations and a massive flight of Jews, especially Jewish community leaders, to West Germany. The communists imprisoned party official Paul Merker and intended to make him the German Slánský. Although not Jewish, Merker had been an outspoken supporter of the Jews and, especially, of restitution for Jewish losses. At Merker's secret trial in 1955 (the government shelved plans for a show trial after Stalin's death), party officials reviled him with antisemitic taunts and jeered him as 'King of the Jews'. Although the East Germans later released him, they never fully 'rehabilitated' him.

The Jewish persecutions of the 1950s left an indelible mark on East German society. It destroyed the Jewish communities as independent entities with

international connections. It also influenced historians. As Jeffrey Herf asserts:

December 1952–January 1953, it was clear that the silence concerning the Jewish Question in East Germany was no longer primarily a result of the inadequacies of Marxist-Leninist theories of fascism and antifascism. By then, East German communists, Jews and non-Jews, understood that sympathy for the Jews as expressed by Merker was not only ‘incorrect’; it was dangerous.³⁹

When East German historians did write about the Holocaust, it was generally for self-serving reasons: to emphasize the leading role of the communists, who warned the German people in vain and then led the resistance of the good Germans against the Nazis; to emphasize the malicious role of German industry, which continued to thrive in West Germany; and to attack West Germany as a haven of fascists past, present and future. East Germany was virulently anti-Zionist (while always carefully pointing out that anti-Zionism did not equate with antisemitism, and that East Germany did not discriminate against East German Jews) and supported the PLO with weapons and training. Helmut Eschwege, a Jewish historian working in East Germany, provided an alternative voice, but his work was hindered in many ways by East German authorities, who either did not publish his work or allowed it to appear only in a heavily censored form.

The East Germans turned the former Nazi concentration camps of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen into important anti-fascist memorials, which emphasized communist resistance and martyrdom, but mentioned Jewish suffering only peripherally. Buchenwald, where a communist-led uprising liberated the camp after most of the SS had fled and the US Army was very close, became one of the centres of East Germany’s symbolic universe. The bell tower memorial constructed near the camp commemorates communist martyrdom, resistance and triumph. The Street of Nations, included in that memorial to commemorate victims of various nations, includes Germany but not Israel. (The East Germans also had an exhibition among the victim nations at Auschwitz.) At Sachsenhausen a towering obelisk features the red triangle, symbol of the political prisoner, and only that. At the base of the obelisk Soviet soldiers hold their capes protectively around former camp inmates, the leaders of East Germany. The ruins of the gas chambers at Sachsenhausen mentioned Soviet POWs murdered there, but only them.

Artists and filmmakers advanced somewhat more nuanced images. Konrad Wolf directed the aforementioned *Sterne* and other anti-fascist films, as did Frank Beyer, who made a film about Buchenwald and another of life in a Polish Jewish ghetto under Nazi occupation. Among writers, Jurek Becker, who as a child had survived life in a Jewish ghetto and a concentration camp, wrote sensitive literature dealing with the Holocaust. Beyer’s film of the Jewish ghetto

in Poland, the only East German film to be nominated for an Oscar, was based on Becker's novel *Jacob the Liar*, and was later remade by Hollywood. In general, however, East German artistic production remained within the prescribed parameters that emphasized communist leadership and resistance.

In the 1980s a perceptible change in East German attitudes towards Jews and the Holocaust occurred. This was at least in part due to the (unsuccessful) attempt by the East German leadership to play its 'Jewish card' in exchange for the inclusion of East Germany in the category of 'Most Favored Nation' trade status. As in Poland, a small renaissance of Jewish culture occurred in East Germany, and in the later 1980s one could discern a more differentiated approach to the Holocaust. But in general, the interpretive guidelines laid down by the Comintern in the 1930s obtained until 1989.

The reception of the Holocaust under communism demonstrates, despite the different countries involved, various patterns and similarities. In the transitional period directly following the Second World War, one perceives in most countries a period of relative openness about the Holocaust, followed, in the later 1940s, by the persecution of Jews and a Stalinization of history writing. In communist historiography and schoolbooks of the 1950s, the Holocaust hardly exists; when historians discussed it, they generally underplayed or otherwise distorted it. In the 1960s it often re-emerges as a topic in public discourse, often instrumentalized under the veneer of a homogenized communist discourse for more specifically national purposes. Romanians structured their discussions of the Holocaust, for example, to allow them to feel morally superior to Hungarians. East Germans, Poles and Czechs employed a similar strategy with regard to the West Germans. In the Soviet Union the Holocaust needed to fit a narrative emphasizing unity; in Bulgaria it served to illustrate the wisdom and benevolence of the communists; in Poland it served as a figure for the tragedy of the Polish nation. In the later 1980s, the impact of *glasnost* allowed most Eastern Bloc nations to reassess their attitudes towards the Holocaust and towards Jews.

More so than history writing, literature and film under communism provided information about the Holocaust, and also about the motives and intentions of the people and nations attempting to give it meaning. Art was a useful export item in the propaganda war. In some countries artistic works were less rigidly censored than scholarly ones, and in general, it is difficult to contain the multivalency of creative works. Hence artistic products generated by communist Holocaust discourse are not necessarily contained by that discourse alone, and will continue to find audiences beyond the political watershed of 1989.

Notes

- 1 See L. Luks, ed., *Der Spätstalinismus und die 'jüdische Frage.' Zur antisemitischen Wendung des Kommunismus* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1998), p. 7.
- 2 For a more detailed discussion of the Soviet Union before, during and after the Holocaust, see Z. Gitelman, 'The Soviet Union', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. D.S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 295–324. My remarks are indebted to that essay.
- 3 The English version is *The Black Book*, trans. J. Glad and J.S. Levine (New York: Schocken, 1981).
- 4 W. Korey, 'Down History's Memory Hole: Soviet Treatment of the Holocaust', *Present Tense*, 10 (1983), 53. See also John Klier's essay in this volume.
- 5 *Istoriia velikoi otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soiuza, 1941–1945 gg.*, 6 vols (Moscow: Military Publishing House of the Ministry of Defense of the USSR, 1962–65).
- 6 S.S. Smirnov, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, 3 vols (Moscow: Mol. gvardiia, 1973).
- 7 Yu. Yu. Kondufor et al., *Istoriia Ukrainskoi SSR* (Kiev: Nauk. dumka, 1982).
- 8 D. Levin, 'Lithuania', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, p. 343.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 340–3.
- 10 For some discussions of the complicated topic of Jews and communism, see for example, L. Shapiro, 'The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 40 (1961/62), 148–67; D.L. Niewyk, *Socialist, Anti-Semite, and the Jew* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971); J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); G. Estraikh and M. Krutikov, eds, *Yiddish and the Left* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); J. Rogalla von Bieberstein, '*Jüdischer Bolschewismus*': *Mythos und Realität* (Dresden: Antaios, 2002).
- 11 For a more detailed analysis of Poland before, during and after the Holocaust, see M.C. Steinlauf, 'Poland', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, pp. 81–155. My remarks are indebted to that essay.
- 12 Cited in Steinlauf, 'Poland', p. 117.
- 13 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 118.
- 14 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 119.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- 17 For a more detailed description of Czechoslovakia before, during and after the Holocaust, see L. Rothkirchen, 'Czechoslovakia', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, pp. 156–99. I am indebted to that essay for my remarks.
- 18 O. Kraus and E. Kulka, *Tovarna na smrt* (Prague: Cin, 1946) published in English as *The Death Factory* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1966).
- 19 R. Feder, *Zidovska tragedie: dejstvi posledni* (Kolin: Lusk, 1947).
- 20 B. Steiner, ed., *Tragedia slovenskych Zidov* (Prague: Documentation Centre of CUJCR, 1949).
- 21 Cited in Rothkirchen, 'Czechoslovakia', p. 178.
- 22 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 190.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- 24 For a more detailed description of Hungary before, during and after the Holocaust, see R.L. Braham, 'Hungary', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, pp. 200–24. I am indebted to his essay for my remarks.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

- 26 A. Geyer, ed., *A magyarországi fasizmus zsidóuldozesenek bibliográfiája, 1945–1958* (Budapest: A Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviseletének Kiadása, 1958).
- 27 For a more detailed description of Romania before, during, and after the Holocaust, see R. Ioanid, 'Romania', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, pp. 225–55. I am indebted to his essay for my remarks.
- 28 M. Carp, *Cartea Neagră*, 3 vols (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice Socec, 1946–48).
- 29 Cited in Ioanid, 'Romania', p. 236.
- 30 Ibid., p. 237.
- 31 Ibid., p. 238.
- 32 A. Karetki and M. Covaci, *Zile insingerate la Iași* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1978).
- 33 Marin Preda, *Delirul* (Bucharest: Cartea românească, 1975).
- 34 For a more detailed description of Bulgaria before, during, and after the Holocaust, see F.B. Chary, 'Bulgaria', in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, pp. 256–91. My remarks are indebted to that essay.
- 35 Cited in ibid., p. 274.
- 36 D. Kosev et al., eds., *Istoriia na Bulgariia*. 2 vols (Sofia: Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1954–55).
- 37 D. Angelov et al., eds., *Kratka istorija na Bulgarija* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1958).
- 38 For more on the East German reception of the Holocaust, see my *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust* (Rochester: Camden House, 1999).
- 39 J. Herf, *East German Communists and the Jewish Question: The Case of Paul Merker* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1994), p. 19.

20

Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial in Post-Communist Eastern Europe

Florin Lobont

The most monstrous thing after the Holocaust is the persistence of even a minimal antisemitism.

Petru Creția

Introduction: ‘cultural despair’, historiography and politics

At a meeting of the Helsinki signatories (CSCE – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) in Copenhagen in June 1990 a formal document was adopted which ‘clearly and unequivocally condemned anti-Semitism’ along with ‘racial and ethnic hatred’. The signatories agreed to ‘intensify their efforts to combat these phenomena’. The action was unprecedented. No international or regional treaty or agreement or declaration had ever specifically condemned anti-Semitism.... Motivation for the changed attitude resulted from the shock of European leaders with the results of the 1989 revolutions in East Central Europe which brought in their wake waves of hatred directed against Jews as well as Gypsies and migrants.¹

As Michael Shafir, one of the leading analysts of antisemitism and the treatment of the Holocaust in east-central Europe clearly points out, Holocaust denial in the region after the collapse of communism is a fact, whether explicit and aggressive or implicit, particularistic and defensive, ranging from the ‘sheer emulation of negationism’ to ‘regional-specific forms of collective defense of national “historic memory” and to merely banal...sometimes cynical, attempts at the utilitarian exploitation of an immediate political context’.²

Twelve years after the revolutions of 1989 another insightful analyst of post-communist exclusionary mythologies, Denise Rosenthal, remarked that east-central Europe and the space of the former Soviet Union are

still fraught with deep economic, social, political, and cultural turmoil. Within the context of what has already become a mark for the antisemitism in post-communist Europe – ‘antisemitism without Jews’ – a particular form of antisemitism, ‘the mythical Jew’... constitutes a post-Holocaust, post-communist representation specific for those east-central European societies where the Jewish communities were either exterminated or their numbers drastically reduced by the fascist regimes.³

This trend, which harbours the various types of Holocaust denial, is identified in both popular and intellectual environments as forms of discursive antisemitism and autochthonism, and of anti-minority public culture.

Although Rosenthal confines her analysis to Romania, the phenomenon seems to be manifest in various yet significant degrees well beyond the Romanian borders within the space of the former Soviet Bloc. The modern ‘mythical Jew’ has his origins deeply rooted in the central and often problematic issue of national identity, which in most parts of the region has been a major cultural, political or juridical concern since the nineteenth century and especially since the First World War. After the fall of communism, his main symbolic function became more clearly one of explaining the causes of national disasters, from communism to the effects of economic liberalism. As one of the authorities in the fields of communist and post-communist east-central European politics, Vladimir Tismaneanu, suggestively puts it, ‘this reification of “the Jew” as the threatening alien goes hand in hand with the parochial fetishisation of national history, which represents the major legitimising principle of [ethnocentric] collective identity’. Following the Slovenian sociologist and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek, Tismaneanu describes antisemitic fantasies as ‘expressions of neurotic reactions to the impossibility of a fully homogeneous national identity of a corporatist type⁴ and ‘the Jew’ as the ‘embodiment of the absolute failure of the totalitarian project’.⁵ Portrayed as the negative character *par excellence* within the national self-laudatory narratives, Rosenthal rightfully places ‘the mythical Jew’ at the epicentre of what she terms a ‘pervasive nostalgia’:

The last decade of re-readings and re-writings of the past make post-communism a pervasively nostalgic landscape, while everyday life becomes a ‘topography of memory’.... [T]he narrative of ‘the mythical Jew’ could be said to transpire on a complex background that includes... nostalgia, conspiracy theories and scapegoatism; self-perception as ‘victimised majority’ and [often] a positively revived inter-war [and wartime] fascist mythology; to which we could also add a tormented post-communist socio-economic transition and its correlative cultures of despair.⁶

Concurrently, Tismaneanu accurately observes how the revival, after 1989, of ethnocentric symbols, myths, 'rationalised miracles', 'liturgical nationalisms' and teleological claims are accompanied by a desperate unleashing of emotions, hostility and anger as manifestations of the 'politics of resentful marginality' and 'cultural despair'. The latter, a post-Leninist feeling of loss of identity landmarks and certitudes, of disorientation and insecurity, is pictured by Tismaneanu as the main trigger of 'outbursts of anti-democratic activism and salvationist expectations', with antisemitism as a basic component of a political culture of fear.⁷ It is as if collectivist-ethnocentric 'ontological dignity' can be retrieved only at the expense of other cohabiting (minority) ethnic groups' ontological dignity. And the more 'perfect' the alien character of the intruder's collective self the more effective the 'sponging up' of (his) being into the 'reborn'. In most cases this 'conceptual perfection' was and still is best incarnated by the (mythical) Jew. As this essay will argue, in such a context admitting the Holocaust or its extent or uniqueness as archetypal genocide would contradict this Manichean perspective and undermine the self-laudatory narratives and mythologies which rely heavily on the absolute, incomparable self-victimization of the majority ethnic groups often portrayed as innocent prey to their minority enemies.

Within this phantasmagoric symbolic economy the resort to (a constantly purified) history became an essential part of the populist political discourse, a means of legitimizing the present (or its transformation) and designing the future. Mainstream historical discourse started to be transferred into mainstream political discourse and became embedded in it. Across the former Soviet Bloc we witness the conversion of historians (with or without inverted commas) into popular-populist politicians, and vice versa. Due to the importance of the 'Jewish Question', influential historians' attitudes towards the Holocaust have been employed in various political discourses and can be analysed there in their significant, ideologically applicable, aspects. This essay aims at taking a few steps in this direction.

The landscape of east-central European Holocaust negationism is extremely complex and endlessly varied; therefore, its complete systematization is far beyond the scope of this study. As the most systematic and nuanced taxonomy of negationism in east-central Europe can be found in the writings of Michael Shafir, I will adopt his main classificatory scheme. At the same time, the vast size of the former Soviet Bloc forces me to leave aside the USSR, although a few remarks will be made in what follows in order to render some coherence to the picture of the Soviet Union's former European satellites. For it appears to me necessary to point out that in the Soviet Union public discourse on the fate of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis and their allies during the Second World War was subordinated to that of the Great Patriotic War, which became an essential legitimating myth of the war against fascists, who had planned to exterminate the Soviet people as a whole without differentiated ethnic targets.

Allegedly the only category preferentially targeted by the invaders were the communists, regardless of their ethnic origin. Extending a pertinent judgement made by the historian Vladimir Solonari with regard to his native Republic of Moldova it can be said that ‘blurring the differences in the treatment of the various ethnic groups became a part of the difficult construction of an official narrative meant to legitimise the Soviets’ rule especially in territories seized from other countries’. At the same time, they believed that discussion of the Holocaust would unduly legitimize Jews as members of the Soviet polity and, conversely, delegitimate antisemitism, which was integral to Soviet internal and external policies. Consequently, almost nowhere was there reference to the fate of Jews *qua* Jews. Research on the Holocaust as a separate issue was largely precluded, and the term was never used in the public realm.⁸

Following the downfall of communism and the virtual abolition of censorship, we still cannot say, with the notable exception of Ukraine (where the leading nationalist movement RUKH strongly denounced antisemitism and the government recognized and commemorated the massacre of Babi Yar and encouraged scholarly debates about the Holocaust),⁹ that a serious discussion of the Holocaust has taken place. In Solonari’s words:

Rather the local mainstream historians shifted away from silencing to understatement and sometimes even justification of the Holocaust as a part of their efforts aiming at national revival through a powerful national myth, which, like any other myth, requires the effort of neglecting several aspects of history, including the sacrificing of the Holocaust to preserve the integrity, plausibility, and emotional appeal of the myth. Otherwise the main player in the narrative – ‘the nation’ – would lose its monopoly on victimhood.¹⁰

As for Russia itself, the decades of anti-Zionist campaigns, brought to a halt by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986, left deep traces in the political culture. Even before the collapse of the USSR in 1991 a strong populist antisemitic movement Pamyat (whose followers and supporters include working-class members, nostalgic communists, nativist intellectuals and members of the military leadership, and their number runs into the millions)¹¹ emerged as a reaction to *perestroika*, and started blaming the Jews for all the woes of Soviet society. Following the disintegration of the USSR, Moscow witnessed mass ultra-nationalist demonstrations marked by virulently antisemitic placards, posters and chanting. Needless to say, Holocaust denial constitutes a logical ingredient of the anti-Jewish representations and ‘arguments’. As William Korey observes, ‘revived Russian chauvinist nationalism such as the one that occurred as a psychological response to the break-up of the USSR and the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe have always had antisemitism as a coefficient. Whether under tsars or commissars, Jew-baiting was a mechanism for creating solidarity among Russians.’¹²

Perhaps nothing can better summarize the antisemitic hatred and the threat posed by a popular mass movement like Pamyat to the precarious incipient democracy the mainstream political forces are struggling to consolidate than the apocalyptic words of Pamyat's leader and founder, Dimitri Vasiliev:

It is not necessary to be born a Jew in order to be a Jew. Anyone who helps the Jews to usurp others' traditions is a Jew. Everyone in power is a Jew or his wife is Jewish [In order to put an end to this situation] you need to kill them; it's the only solution. The job is dirty.¹³

'Historical continuity' between 'returning to Europe' and 'national self-determination'

It is a commonplace that Holocaust denial is by no means confined to the ex-Soviet Bloc, as well as a fact that antisemitism plays a major role in the development of its various manifestations and subspecies. However, unlike in the West, Holocaust negation in the former communist countries of east-central Europe occupies a more central place in their political and intellectual life. According to Shafir, both its peculiarity and weight have a lot to do with the way it is value-ridden, via its collective communist legacy. One of these legacies is the state-organized obliteration, first of all the communist regimes' 'de-Judaization' of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies, which included 'nationalization' (amounting to transforming Jewish victims into victims of the 'national' population) and 'internationalization' (derived from those regimes' ideologically determined definition of fascism) of the Holocaust. Following the Soviet model, the vassal communist regimes seldom singled out Jews as victims of fascism, the history textbooks and official party documents mentioning instead (with rare exceptions and not when addressing wide audiences) 'communists', 'democrats', 'progressive elements', 'anti-fascists' or 'martyrs of the international working class movement'.¹⁴

One of the dimensions of communist 'applied' ideology that charged its legacy with a high xenophobic potential was the 'national' dimension (with a prominent antisemitic component). In Shafir's words, Romania's version of national communism developed under Ceaușescu, for example, 'was probably unmatched elsewhere in the region in its efforts to entrench the legitimacy of both party and ruler on national symbols and on a political discourse that, for all practical purposes, resurrected the inter-war political credo of the extreme right'.¹⁵ The latter's 'world outlook [was] encoded in all but official acknowledgement in party documents, and reflected in party-supervised historiography'.¹⁶ Thus 'rediscovered', nationalism was meant to replace internationalist ideology as a means of legitimizing communist rule.¹⁷

According to Shafir, the radical post-communist east-central European political landscape is to a great extent inhabited by what he terms parties of 'radical continuity' and to a lesser extent by parties of 'radical return'. The two concepts were introduced by Shafir in 1992.¹⁸ The former are 'successor parties', that is, the products of national communism free to manifest themselves in a post-totalitarian society without ideological constraints, but enjoying access to present material resources (as partakers in the attempted 'organizational continuity'). The latter advocate a return to the values and creeds held by the interwar far right.¹⁹ The parties that reject continuity with communism have to look for alternative resources such as 'historic continuity' or 'return to history'. However, in establishing and promoting their ideological and legitimizing framework, most parties belonging to both categories are often involved in Holocaust denial.²⁰ As for the size of this phenomenon, Randolph Braham's observation on Hungary can arguably be expanded to cover most former communist countries:

[Although] the number of populist champions of anti-Semitism is relatively small, the camp of those distorting and denigrating the catastrophe of the Jews is fairly large and... growing. [The] members of this camp represent a potentially greater danger [both] to the integrity of the historical record of the Holocaust [and] ... to the newly established democratic system[s, because these] history cleansers who denigrate and distort the Holocaust are often 'respectable' public figures – intellectuals, [popular politicians and members of] government[s] ... and high-ranking army officers.²¹

The partisans of radical return whose ranks are usually swelled by the fiercest negationists, despite opposing the legacy of the defunct political order, owe it the popularity of their negationism. This process of historical distortion is among the causes of the re-emergence of interwar fascist leaders such as Admiral Miklós Horthy and Arrow Cross head Ferenc Szálasi in Hungary, Iron Guard founder and leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Marshal Ion Antonescu in Romania, President Father Jozef Tiso in Slovakia, and *Ustaša* leader Ante Pavelić in Croatia, as national heroes easily transformed, after the fall of communism, into anti-communist symbols, exemplary patriots and martyrs. Their memory is being increasingly cherished, the claims of their assiduous admirers going as far as demanding their immediate canonization (in the cases of Tiso, Codreanu and Antonescu)!²²

In their attempt to define their place within the political spectrum and constellations of national values, mainstream political formations in this part of Europe struggle to adjust themselves to their countries' enthusiasm for 'returning to Europe' and the equally powerful affirmation of 'national self-determination'. This dilemma often forces them to resort to legitimization through 'historical continuity', a consequence of the fact that their nations'

experience of independent statehood over the past century has been a precarious one, beset by chronic external insecurity and internal weakness.²³ Thus, in countries such as Slovakia²⁴ and Croatia²⁵ demonstrating the legitimacy – despite their fascist records – of their only period of existence as ‘independent’ states is seen as proof of ‘legal continuity’ and thus of present legitimacy. In Romania and Hungary many of the population demand proof of discontinuity with communism, which results in resorting to the anti-communist legitimacy, ‘reconciliation’ with representatives of wartime anti-communism such as Antonescu and Horthy. Even in countries like the Czech Republic and Poland, which were not part of the Axis but were devastated by its aggression, ‘the Holocaust poses the problem of “competitive martyrdom” – that of one’s own nation vs. that of the Jews’.²⁶

These phenomena emerged in a complex and often fractured context; for alongside the belief of mainstream politicians and civic intellectuals that European integration is vital in the volatile context of post-communist transition, old fears about national identity and sovereignty have re-emerged in response to the internal weakness of states that, despite (and to some extent because of) more than four decades of centralized communist rule, are still fearful of breaking the ethnic monopoly of the majority, which defines the nation-state and mirrors (or rather grounds) its unity. Holocaust negationism often emerges against this haunted background and is meant to contribute to the consolidation of the ‘endangered’ national identity.

Outright negationism

The first and crudest form of Holocaust denial is its ‘outright negation’. Although its advocates are not numerous, their vociferous tone appeals to groups whose lives in post-communist society are dominated by disappointment and frustration. Its promoters are usually old, exiled, extreme nationalists attempting to resuscitate the pre-communist far right in its original form. They are generally aware of western negationist literature and often contribute to it.

Practically every country, including Russia, has advocates of versions of outright negationism among its politicians. Their popularity is an indicator of their country’s antisemitic potential. In Romania, the most popular promoter of outright denial is the Greater Romania Party (PRM), especially through the voice of its ‘furious’ absolute leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, an extremist demagogue, infamous antisemite and former court poet of Ceaușescu. After backing (in the Parliament) President Ion Iliescu’s governing ‘mainstream’ party (FDSN) between 1992 and 1995, and acting as a member of the ruling coalition led by the FDSN in 1995, Tudor broke the alliance with Iliescu and became an increasingly popular figure of the opposition between 1996 and 2000. In the presidential elections of November 2000, Tudor, playing the ultra-radical-authoritarian

'anti-corruption' card, won 33.17 per cent of the vote in the run-off with Iliescu, thus becoming the main parliamentary opposition figure with his party the second strongest political force.²⁷ In his party weekly *România Mare*, which he runs (as well as *Politica*), Tudor hosted and wrote negationist articles. For example, in the 25 October 1991 issue of *România Mare* an article signed by the leader of the Romanian communists, I.C. Nicolae, called the 'alleged great suffering' of the Jews at the hands of European fascism 'nonsense'. Similarly, in the 4 March 1994 issue of the same weekly, Tudor himself 'demonstrated' with 'scientific' arguments and by recourse to 'authorities' the 'technical impossibility' of gassing six million Jews.

Romania also has a pleiad of established writers – many of them directly or indirectly affiliated to extremist parties – who publish frequently and in large print-runs 'patriotic' diatribes that are riddled with antisemitic and negationist ideas and are usually thickly larded with violent conspiracy theories. Notorious examples of this 'literary genre' are Radu Theodoru, Ion Coja, Teodor Filip and Adrian Păunescu, to mention only some of the most popular authors. Theodoru, a former PRM leader, is by far the champion of outright negationism as well as a vehement anti-Hungarian. His 'arguments' against the existence of a Jewish Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies range from 'shifting' Holocaust perpetration (which 'in fact' consisted in the destruction of numerous civilians from the Axis countries) to the Allied side of the Second World War, to the 'scientific', drastic downplaying of the gas chambers' destructive capacity. The latter is exaggerated, in his view – just like the 'overall number of Jewish victims' – by 'greedy Zionists' eager to claim compensation from the defeated countries. In his last book, *Mareşalul*²⁸ (devoted to the rehabilitation of Antonescu), he 'reminds' his readers of the main points of his previous negationist books:

In my volumes *România ca o pradă* [Romania as Booty], *Nazismul sionist* and *Inviera lui Iuda* [Judah's Resurrection] I analysed methods, tactics, ideologies and strategies, and logistics pertaining to the totally atypical war waged by Zionism against mankind in order to install a new world order, New Age, led by the Jewish plutocracy. [A part of this strategy is what the] distinguished world authority in the field... of Holocaust [research] Robert Faurisson [calls] the 'purported Hitlerite gas chambers and genocide of the Jews'... [which] form a single historic lie that made possible a gigantic political-financial swindle whose beneficiaries are the state of Israel and international Zionism.²⁹

Ion Coja, a professor of linguistics at Bucharest University, wrote just as unashamedly in his book *Marele manipulator și asasinarea lui Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga*: 'Who took advantage of the fabrication of the Holocaust in Romania? The Hungarian propagandists along with those who, being Jews, have turned antisemitism into a business, and a source of profit.'³⁰

But it was not only the notoriously extremist newspapers such as the defunct *Europa* (radical continuity), *Puncte Cardinale* (radical return), *Mișcarea* (radical return), *Gazeta de Vest* (radical return) or the active *Totuși iubirea* (radical continuity) or *Atac la persoană* (radical continuity) that were involved. 'Mainstream', 'respectable' and extremely popular periodicals have occasionally added, even if only obliquely, new tunes to the sinister and strident choir of negationists through the voices of their editors – who are also prominent national opinion leaders – such as N. Manolescu (*România literară*) and C.T. Popescu (*Adevărul*). They have done so, for example, by welcoming the translation of Garaudy's *Founding Myths of Israeli Politics* or by encouraging competitive comparison between the Holocaust and the Gulag. The Gulag was repeatedly termed by Popescu 'the red – and by far more atrocious – Holocaust', both in his daily *Adevărul* and in highly popular TV chat-shows.

Another country with a significant level of outright negationism is Slovakia, where the post-1989 separatist tendencies and the strong emergence of xenophobia (primarily manifest in increasing anti-Czech and anti-Hungarian agitation and antisemitism) showed that 'nationalism [quickly] became the most powerful political force in Bratislava'.³¹ One of the notorious Slovak negationists, Stanislav Pánis, the former leader of the Slovak National Unity Party and its deputy in the post-communist Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, holds views undoubtedly borrowed from Robert Faurisson. His views, instead of hindering his political ascent, allowed him to become a minister in independent Slovakia at the end of the 1990s. His successful career proves the accuracy of Shafir's judgement that only the less politically significant Holocaust outright negationists are punished in any way.³²

Slovakia's nationalist revival and controversial legacy represented a favourable terrain for Holocaust negationism. According to Frank Cibulka, the foundation of the post-communist independent Slovakia in January 1993 had among its major characteristics 'the partial embracing of the legacy of the World War II fascist Slovak state; the treatment of national minorities (especially of the Gypsies and the Hungarians); and the highly nationalist and harsh nature of Prime Minister Mečiar's populist regime'. Vladimir Mečiar, who was the premier of the Slovak Republic within the Czechoslovak federation (1990–91), then prime minister (1992–94, and again from December 1994 until 1998), 'has been highly popular with Slovakia's voters and appears to reflect their political preferences. His style of leadership has been populist and nationalistic.... [He is] a highly confrontational politician who has repeatedly caused a polarisation of the Slovak political scene... and [contributed to] the gradual erosion of democratic freedoms.'³³

Even the Czech Republic faced its own negationists, despite its more sophisticated civic culture. The leader of the extremist-right National Alliance, Vladimír Skoupý, who had publicly expressed his negationism in 1999, was imprisoned

for several months for incitement to racial – anti-Jewish – hatred.³⁴ The Czech Republic has also ‘benefited’ from the supply of negationist literature printed by a Slovak publishing house AGRES, which was also (until forced to cease activity in 1992) the printer of the leading Czech antisemitic and negationist newspaper *Týdeník politika*.³⁵

As for outright negationism in Hungary, two of its advocates, Albet Szabó and Istvan Györkös, noisily propagated neo-Nazi views (and proclaimed ‘the liberation of the Hungarian-hearted majority from the oppression of foreign Mafias’)³⁶ as leaders of the radical return party Hungarianist Movement, which claims to be the inheritor of Szálasi’s Hungarian National Socialist Party – Hungarianist Movement (Arrow Cross). They were eventually brought to justice for incitement to racial hatred and the use of prohibited Nazi symbols, but were acquitted in the name of freedom of speech or given (in Szabó’s case) suspended sentences. The claim that the Holocaust is just a hoax occupies a central place among their views.³⁷

In full convergence with such politicians’ standpoints a relatively large number of negationist articles have been constantly published by extremist periodicals, such as *Szent Korona* (edited by László Romhányi) which ceased publication in 1992, and *Hunnia Füzetek*. The latter’s editor-in-chief and a regular contributor, János Fodor, were investigated by the judicial authorities for ‘incitement against the community’, but the same ‘freedom of speech’ principle led to the dismissal of their case in 1993. The decision was taken despite the fact that they published texts by an infamous Arrow Cross admirer living abroad, Viktor Padányi, claiming that the Jewish victims of the Germans were killed in self-defence for their co-operation with Germany’s enemies.³⁸ Furthermore, the article reduced the number of Jewish victims of the Nazis to only 300,000, the remaining 1,200,000 (*sic*) having allegedly perished at the hands of the Soviets.

In Poland, ‘despite the country’s media-inspired image as inveterately anti-Semitic and a breeding ground of right-wing ideas, the far right has never had great success in state politics’.³⁹ A notorious outright Holocaust denier is Bolesław Tejkowski, leader of the radical return neo-fascist Polish National Commonwealth – Polish National Party, who claimed that the Holocaust is nothing but a Jewish conspiracy whose aim is the takeover of the Church. Overt negationist views have been enthusiastically voiced in extremist publications such as *Szczepiec*, the organ of the fascist radical return party National Revival of Poland headed by Adam Gmurczyk, which claims direct descent from the interwar antisemitic National-Radical Camp. Significantly, this party has even founded a ‘revisionist’ research institution, the National-Radical Institute, which apart from publishing translations of western Holocaust denials, has conducted ‘field research’ that arrived at the ‘scientific’ conclusion that the mass murder in gas chambers is a groundless invention.⁴⁰

'Scientific' arguments in support of outright negationism also come from non-political and academic publications, such as those of the historians Dariusz Ratajczak – a supporter of the 'Auschwitz lie' theory – and Ryszard Bender, former senator and chairman of the Polish State Council on Radio and Television. Although the former was investigated for his standpoint and lost his job, he was never short of offers of good posts within Polish academia.⁴¹

Deflective negationism

Another type of Holocaust denial – it is important to note that these categories overlap – is termed by Shafir 'deflective negationism'. One of its main features, making it less marginal and thus more penetrating and dangerous than radical, outright negationism, is its insidious, non-straightforward character. A predominantly defensive and particularistic attitude, deflective negationism refrains from denying the Holocaust, preferring to transfer the responsibility for its atrocities to members of other nations (usually historic national enemies, either external or internal) and/or reduces own-nation participation in the crimes to insignificant 'aberrations'. It is 'a specific form of the more general "externalisation of guilt" syndrome', a 'phenomenon with deep social and psychological roots, which crosses national boundaries'. Among the most powerful drives towards guilt externalization, antisemitism has most often taken the lion's share. And although its twisted 'logic' should render it suspect, it is in fact very widespread across east-central Europe, from political discourse (practically penetrating almost all colours of the political spectrum) to the media and historiography, and involves a good deal of 'Holocaust minimization'.⁴²

The most 'natural' deflective negationism is that which casts the entire blame onto the Germans. Another version of it deflects the guilt to the allegedly insignificant, aberrant elements within one's own nation. But the most astonishing type of deflectionism makes the Jews themselves responsible for the Holocaust.

Due to the deeply selective character of collective memory, and the distressing character of a negative past affecting the shaky self-image and self-identity of majority national communities, a proposed vision of the past that obliterates negative aspects is often eagerly welcomed. Besides, a strong victimization complex dominates the collective imaginary in most countries of the region, making it an even easier prey to conspiracy theories and distortions of historical reality.

Poland is at the forefront of this process, all distortions leading to a widespread self-depiction of the Polish ethnic community as the main victim of the Holocaust, a portrayal supported by the myth of historical tolerance of the Jews in Poland. This myth attempts to render silent those disturbing memories or voices (such as the academic Jan Błonski's, who asked the Poles to 'stop pleading innocent about the Holocaust'⁴³) that talk of indifference or sheer complicity

in genocide against the Jews, allowing instead the image of Poland as ‘Christ of nations’ to prevail. However, after 1990 the controversies over Polish complicity with the Nazis that had previously seen Polish and Jewish historians opposed, began to divide critical and conservative Poles, for example, over the massacre of the Jews of Jedwabne by local Poles. Some prominent Polish historians joined the deflectionist camp, but in the disguised form of a sophisticated, relativist questioning of historical sources launched well before the collapse of communism.⁴⁴

Other voices express Polish ‘innocence’ in the grossest way and subsume it to their dreams of ethnic cleansing. Perhaps the most eloquent example is the Polish National Front, the ‘fashionable’ fascist group of the mid-1990s, whose infamous antisemitic and xenophobic pronouncements have reached the extreme. One of them called for the ‘clean[ing] out [of] all the shit that’s dirtying...the country, like the fags, the russkies, the Romanians [Gypsies] and the Jews’. Among these groups, Jews were branded the worst, as they ‘appear’ to be the only governing national minority and main cause of Polish suffering.⁴⁵

Despite the fact that the truth is being gradually brought to light by an increasing number of publications, Holocaust monuments and exhibitions, reluctance and resistance still remain. Eloquent examples are the fierce criticism of former President Wałęsa’s apology before the Israeli Knesset in January 1991 for the participation of Poles in the Holocaust; or the polls showing (in the same year) that the majority of Poles believed that Auschwitz was solely a place of Polish martyrdom.⁴⁶ Regarding the persistence of a significant anti-Jewish taint in Poland, Abraham Brumberg rightfully notes that

The distinctiveness of the Jewish community in Poland – its magnitude, its cultural and political vitality, and the fact that Poland was the scene of the greatest massacre of Jews in the history of mankind – renders anti-Semitism in that country particularly shocking. It is precisely because of the extraordinary accomplishments of Jewish life in pre-war Poland (and earlier), that makes the attitude to it on the part of the population and particularly of the elite so unforgivable. And it is precisely because there are virtually no Jews left in Poland today that anti-Semitism in that country is so grotesque.⁴⁷

As for Hungary, a country with a record of profound collaboration in the Holocaust, deflectionist attitudes are not at all uncommon across the political spectrum. Even at the very top of the state’s political hierarchy, the former premier Viktor Orbán (representing the Alliance of Young Democrats – FIDESZ), following in the footsteps of his predecessor József Antall (leader of Hungarian Democratic Forum), officially declared at the end of the 1990s that instead of dwelling on Jewish suffering, democratic Hungary should focus on the country’s rescue of

Jews. Just like Antall, Orbán was keen to idealize Hungary's pre-communist past in order to win electoral support among voters who 'tended to regard Jews as perpetrators of Hungary's own martyrdom at the hand of Communists, rather than victims of Hungarian antisemitism and collaboration with the Nazis'. Following the same trend, members of the Antall cabinet attended the solemn re-interment of the remains of Admiral Horthy, under whose pro-Nazi rule as official head of state half a million Jews were sent to their deaths with the zealous help of his gendarmerie. Antall himself visited the grave afterwards.

Orbán, in turn, decided to reconstruct the Hungarian pavilion at the Auschwitz Museum, intending to 'sanitise the Nazi era... and the Hungarian involvement in the Final Solution... downplaying the many anti-Jewish manifestations... (and blaming the Nazis for almost all crimes) as mere aberrations to the otherwise chivalrous history of Hungary'.⁴⁸

The positions of these two successive Hungarian governments included explicitly 'exiling' the Holocaust to the fringes of the Second World War, and replacing the Jews with the Hungarians as the main victims of the Nazis. Although the two mainstream governing formations have not manifested or professed antisemitism, their strategies of defining and strengthening Hungary's national identity have entailed a strong deflective negationism. In this context, the fact that a similar type of denial is propagated by the radical revivalist Justice and Life Party (MIEP), a 'technical' ally of FIDESZ in the government (after 1998), should come as no surprise. Its leader, István Csurka, vehemently denies any Hungarian participation in the Holocaust and occasionally expresses anti-semitic views, primarily focused on the 'exposure of the worldwide Judeo-liberal-cosmopolitan conspiracy... [aiming at] Jewish domination of the world'.⁴⁹ As Tismaneanu observed, although Csurka's party did not obtain significant electoral support in the 1994 elections, he has not disappeared from the political scene; moreover, similar ethnocentric, ultra-nationalist and exclusionary opinions appeared among more prestigious politicians, most notably in the rhetoric of the leader of the Small Landlords Party, József Torgyan.⁵⁰

The exceptional level of Hungarian Jewry's integration into the socio-political and cultural life of Hungary makes it an important gauge of the general evolution and prospects of antisemitism in east-central Europe. As the respected scholar István Deák remarks, 'perhaps nowhere in Europe were Jews more enthusiastically encouraged, at least in certain periods', particularly during the so-called 'silent pact' between the gentile governing elites and the 'educated Jews that lasted from the early nineteenth century until late in World War I... to become members of the dominant national group, and probably nowhere else were Jews more willing to become patriotic citizens'.⁵¹

After the Holocaust and the long communist interlude in which Jews contributed both to the consolidation of the regime and to its liberalization and transition to democracy, a debate on the subject of Jewish-gentile symbiosis

occurred which represents a pivotal landmark in the history of post-communist Hungary. This was launched by an article – which had a major impact in intellectual circles – written in 1990 by Sándor Csoori, a rural revivalist and poet and ‘Hungary’s foremost contemporary populist writer’. This incendiary text expressed concern at the ‘moral devastation of society after forty years of communist rule, uncertainty about what it means to be a Hungarian, and the country’s headlong rush into Western materialism’.

With respect to the central issue of national identity, Csoori wrote that ‘only those people capable of experiencing the pain of being Hungarian could be called true members of the nation’. Referring expressly to the Jews, the highly popular poet opined that ‘before World War I they had been able to empathise with Hungary’s tragic fate. But no longer! The combined experiences of the Hungarian Republic of Soviets in 1919, the interwar Horthy regime and especially... the Holocaust, had put an end to the Hungarian-Jewish symbiosis’. Moreover, the actual trend is one of reverse assimilation of the Hungarian nation by liberal Jewry through the parliamentary system. The Jews, he asserted, ‘could never understand Hungarian pain, for while they...think in practical, pragmatic terms and would be perfectly happy to bring today’s truncated Hungary into the European community, the Hungarians are idealists, whose activity is determined by the plight of the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries’.⁵²

In convergence with Csoori the vociferous ultra-nationalist Csurka tried to convince the attendees at a demonstration organised by his party in June 1995 of the grave danger of replacing the pure-blooded, true-born Hungarians with Ukrainians, Russians and Jews from the former Soviet Union, such a replacement being ‘revealed’ as the aim of the governing liberal-socialist coalition then in power.⁵³

Despite their clamour, these strident tones remain marginal and Deák’s study ends on an optimistic note. However, his conclusion is not shared by András Kovács, who cites Ezra Mendelsohn’s bitter remark that Hungary represents a singular example of ‘how a country previously “good for Jews” is transformed almost overnight – in the Horthy era – into a country wrecked with pogroms and permeated with anti-Semitic hysteria’. Holocaust denial and racism with its essential antisemitic component, writes Kovács, have the function of an ‘aggressive compensation for social frustrations’. One of his preliminary conclusions – which can easily be extended beyond the Hungarian borders across former communist east-central Europe – is that ‘the manifestation of such forms of anti-Semitism...after the fall of communism bears witness to the unquestionable existence of an anti-Semitic potential. However, what happened after World War I in Hungary could...happen again if this anti-Semitic potential were combined with a political ideology elevating anti-Semitism to a political program.’⁵⁴

Slovakia offers numerous samples of deflective Holocaust denial more or less openly present in its mainstream politics. The former prime minister (1991–2) of Czechoslovakia and head of the Christian Democratic Movement (KHD), Ian Čarnogurski, who in 2000 was still a member of the Slovak government, claimed his party's direct descent from Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which governed as a wartime satellite of Nazi Germany. Although distancing himself from the notorious negative aspects of the Tiso regime, Čarnogurski, whose father held high office in the government during the period in question, clearly asserted the need to play down criticism of the Tiso regime for the sake of winning legitimacy for Slovakia today and in order to secure the votes of the numerous Tiso supporters. In this process the 'Jewish Question' became a central issue when leading intellectuals rejected attempts to mythologize the 'Slovak national state' and the Tiso cult. The response of nationalist politicians, historians and media figures was prompt and forceful. They all tried to prove the legality of the Tiso state in order to provide a legal basis for the emerging, post-communist Slovakia.⁵⁵

This process involves adopting the legacy of wartime Slovak nationalism and attributing the responsibility for the deportation and death of some 80,000 of Czechoslovakia's 140,000 Jews. Continuing the Slovak National Council's pleadings from exile, the Slovak politicians placed increasing stress on the rescue of Slovak Jews by the Tiso regime (allegedly numbering between 30,000 and 40,000 through the application of the Presidential exceptions), at the same time blaming the Germans exclusively for the Holocaust.⁵⁶ Like Romania, Slovakia insists on demonstrating (and perpetuating) its homogeneous nation-state character despite the fact that at least 17 per cent of its people are minorities, primarily Hungarians and Romanies. Another parallel with Romania is its 'antisemitism without Jews[:] ... the need for scapegoats, the search for "aliens" who oppose the national will, the myths of Judeo-communism on the one side and the Jewish plutocracy on the other, are a part of [the country's] contemporary nationalist revival'.⁵⁷

Romania's deflective negationist camp is very large and includes nationalist historians, politicians and opinion leaders, as well as high-ranking military officers. Thus historians like Maria Covaci, General I.A. Munteanu and P. Turlea, Gheorghe Dumitrescu (from Iliescu's party but very close to C.V. Tudor and regularly published by him) and writers like A.M. Stoenescu deflect in their writings the guilt for the Iași pogrom (June–July 1941) or the decimation of Jews in Bessarabia and Transnistria to the Nazis.

Other deflectionists admit their own nationals' participation in atrocities but maintain that the perpetrators of the crimes were marginal or 'aberrations'. Historiography under Ceaușescu and its continuation (Maria Covaci, Aurică Simion, Mircea Mușat – a founding member of Greater Romania Party) was generally aligned with this view, accusing a small number of Iron Guardists

for the crimes, echoing the way in which their Hungarian counterparts accuse marginal Arrow Cross men for anti-Jewish violence. Even the present Romanian president, Iliescu, in 2001, attributed the anti-Jewish atrocities to a minority of Iron Guardists whose fanatically violent behaviour was a ‘unique aberration’. Shafir attentively observed Iliescu’s ‘repeated contortions of the Holocaust’ and political accommodation of notorious antisemites and ascribed them to what he accurately termed Iliescu’s ‘utilitarian antisemitism’.

Shafir noted similar attitudes in Poland ‘on the occasion of the 2001 Jedbawne pogrom anniversary’; in Lithuania, where Premier Slevicius asserted that fewer than 100 Lithuanians participated in the mass murder of Lithuanian Jews (whereas President Brazauskas had to face a popular outcry in 1994 after apologizing to the Knesset for his fellow countrymen’s atrocities); in Hungary, where negative reactions stormed at a similar apology expressed in Israel by the former prime minister, Gyula Horn; and in Slovakia, where the populist demagogue Stefan Polakovič and the historian Gabriel Hoffmann absolved Tiso and his regime and accused on an individual basis Prime Minister Tuka and the Hlinka Guard’s commander for the deportations of Jews to extermination camps.⁵⁸

Deflectionism to the Jews

The most perverse form of Holocaust deflective negationism, according to Shafir, is that which pins the blame for the Holocaust on the Jews themselves. Their guilt, for which the Holocaust was the penalty, ranges from being Christ-killers to their conspiratorial machinations, to their forcing the Germans to act in self-defence; and to their aggressive disloyalty to their ‘adoptive countries’ and/or the Axis Powers. The repressive measures taken by the Antonescu regime in Romania and the ‘newly recovered’ territories are considered by the numerous advocates of his rehabilitation (including Theodoru and Stoenescu, the PRM historian Gheorghe Buzatu and the nationalist historian Ion Scurtu) as a justified reactive response. At the same time, special attention is paid to ‘Jews who served Soviet power and would later become prominent leaders in post-World War II Romania’ fuelling ‘double genocide’ – Holocaust versus Gulag – arguments (widespread in east-central Europe), ‘which make up a core argument in the Holocaust’s comparative trivialization’. Within this explanatory ‘model’ ‘an association is...established between Jews and communism’ and through it a Holocaust of one’s own people perpetrated by the Jews is ‘discovered’.⁵⁹

In Hungary, Áron Mónus, pseudo-historian and publisher (who published the first Hungarian translation of *Mein Kampf*) argued that the Holocaust was encouraged by Jewish freemasonry, in whose service Hitler himself is claimed to have been. Arguments leading to similar conclusions (that is, blaming the

Jews or Zionism for the Holocaust) were advanced by the Slovak academics A. Grébert and R. Letz. The Arrow Cross supporter V. Padányi joined the camp of those forced into radical self-defence by the Jews to include all allies of Hitler's Germany.⁶⁰

In Romania the literature blaming the Jews for the reactive (and 'justified') response of the authorities is abundant. The main argument rests on the large-scale support allegedly rendered by Jews to the Soviet occupation forces in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in 1940, and the alleged Jewish participation in the humiliation or liquidation of retreating Romanian forces. The argument is also fully embraced by Romanian-speaking nationalist historians in the Republic of Moldova, representing mainstream Moldovan historical discourse and a component of the post-independence political-ideological discourse of the ruling political majority in the country. Its promoters managed to 'preserve their positions despite the changes in the political mood of the country ... [and today] dominate history writing, including the writing of school textbooks'.⁶¹

In Romania versions of the argument can be found in historians and pseudo-historians (e.g. G. Buzatu, I.C. Dragan, I. Scurtu, C. Hlihor, M. Mușat, I. Ardeleanu, G. Dumitrașcu, G. Romanescu and many others);⁶² writers and academics (P. Everac, Coja, Stoinescu, Theodoru) and journalists (C.V. Tudor, I. Buduca, I. Neacșu, A. Păunescu). Many of these apologists play an active political role and have integrated the Antonescu cult into their parties' political platforms and agendas. As Michael Shafir remarks, in most cases Antonescu is used as a screen behind which the political forces hostile to democracy try to promote an authoritarian-nationalist regime. Shafir backs up his argument with reference to a warning published in the daily *România liberă* at the end of 1993 saying that Tudor's PRM was less interested in advancing Antonescu's memory out of patriotism than in utilizing him as a 'political model', promoting Antonescu's way of seizing and holding on to power.⁶³

Among the vociferous chorus of negationists and Antonescu apologists Buzatu stands out as a (heavily biased) expert in and prolific writer on Antonescu's life and career, a leader of organizations aiming at the Marshal's rehabilitation, and as a high-ranking politician (vice-president of the Senate and of the ultra-nationalist PRM). His 'authoritative' presence within his 'field' – and, by political-sophistical extension, within the historiography in general – and his extensive use of it in politics illustrates the symbiosis between post-communist politics and instrumentalized historical arguments aimed at providing the former with a mythical-'conceptual' grounding.

Victor Eskenasy, the researcher who provides the most complete analysis of Romanian historiography dealing with the Antonescu era and the Holocaust, distinguishes two nuclei of pro-Antonescu historians 'with convergent approaches and interests', who, in the final analysis, support each other. 'The former nucleus is affiliated to the old Communist historiography and has in

Gh. Buzatu its emblematic figure.... The latter have developed within the Romanian Army and includes younger historians whose thinking and mentality were impregnated with the ultranationalism of the last two decades of the Ceaușescu era.' Both currents propagate the cult of the dictator Antonescu whom they characterize as a 'patriot' and, in accordance with a 'determinism pushed to its utmost limit, aim at justifying Romania's siding with Germany in the Second World War'. They not only 'totally deny the Holocaust as Antonescu's regime's state policy and minimize the magnitude of antisemitic persecutions, but go as far as striving to justify them in a spirit impregnated by antisemitism'.⁶⁴ These two currents are practically the core of mainstream Romanian historiography and are embraced by the majority of historians. Their opponents, liberal-democrat thinkers like Ș. Papacostea, D.C. Giurescu, A. Pippidi, N. Djuvara, S. Alexandrescu, S. Antohi, V. Neumann, L. Boia, M.R. Ungureanu, and others, are still in a minority.

The Jews' 'hostile' actions during the retreat of the Romanian army and administration from Bessarabia and North Bukovina following the Soviet ultimatum of 26 June 1940 have a perfect *analogon* in accounts provided by Slovak deflectionists (such as G. Hoffmann and J. Vrba) of the anti-Tiso, communist-led uprising (in which Jewish participation is heavily exaggerated), which began on 29 August 1944 and triggered the Nazi 'defensive reaction' against the Jews in October of that year. This view overlooks the fact that the deportations of Jews commenced on 26 March 1942.⁶⁵

With respect to the atrocities committed against the Slovak Jewish population during what was, in effect, a German occupation, Cibulka notes that 'there is no doubt that the complicity in [their]...genocide occurred under severe German pressure, but it is also beyond any doubt that the more radical fascist faction of the regime, headed by Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka, fully supported the deportations and took the initiative in implementing them'.⁶⁶ As for Tiso's personal responsibility for any persecution of Slovak Jews, there is a very large and mainstream consensus among historians and politicians regarding his innocence, thanks to their subscription to the argument of legal continuity between wartime Slovakia and the post-communist independent Slovak state.⁶⁷

Many of the associated researchers as well as other authors mentioned above often profess a 'selective negationism', which is more insidious and 'diplomatic' than its outright or deflectionist forms. It does not deny the Holocaust as a whole, but 'places' it far enough away to exclude any of the Holocaust-denying countries' involvement in its crimes. For example, the list of Romanian selective negationists contains many names – again headed by Buzatu. This attitude not only absolves the fascist regime of any anti-Jewish atrocities, but also the fascist parties and movements not associated with the regime. The state's attitude towards its Jewish subjects becomes deeply humanized. Even the widely acknowledged pogroms are denied and the decision to deport the Jews

is ascribed to highly protective care for the Jews themselves. Thus Coja refers to the 'good living conditions' enjoyed by the Jewish deportees in the Transnistrian camps, whereas Păunescu writes (in his *Totuși iubirea*) that the deportations aimed at saving Jews from famine. Similarly, in Slovakia, Vnuk described the conditions in concentration camps as 'excellent', whereas in Hungary, Sándor Püski went as far as to 'demonstrate' that Horthy involved his country in the war in order to save its Jews. As Shafir suggests, this line of argument leads insidiously to what he terms 'comparative trivialization': the transformation of Jewish victims into regrettable but banal casualties produced – like all the other casualties – by the war itself, the only real perpetrator. Thus, the singularity of the Holocaust is 'logically' negated and can be overshadowed by other traumatic events, primarily by the Gulag.⁶⁸

But even many mainstream intellectuals contributed, intentionally or not, to the trivializing comparison between the Holocaust and the Gulag (at the expense of the former), copiously exploited by ultranationalists and antisemites in their rush for popularity and political power. 'Cutting across any ethnic differences,' Shafir writes, the intellectual disputes often

concentrate... on whether a genocide prompted by racism should be placed in the same ontological category as crimes against humanity committed on different ideological grounds. Was 'racial struggle'... identical with 'class struggle'? The difference had important operational consequences, for, under communism, collaborationism, indeed simple acquiescence – despicable as they might have been – had in most cases assured physical survival, which was hardly the case with the Holocaust victims.⁶⁹

Deflectio ad absurdum: Jews as Holocaust perpetrators

The last and most appalling form of deflective negationism is that which accuses the Jews themselves of perpetrating the Holocaust. A notorious and infamous case belonging to this genre is that of the late Croatian president 'historian', Franjo Tuđman. In his 1988 book *Wasteland of Historical Truth*, he alleged that the Croats were not responsible for the atrocities committed in Jasenovač concentration camp, where many thousands of Serbs, Jews and Romanies died under the Ustaša regime. In his endeavour to whitewash the memory of the pro-Nazi dictator Ante Pavelić, Tuđman argued that the accusations levelled against the Croats were mystifications aimed at casting historical guilt onto the entire Croat people. His claim was that these groundless incriminations constituted a post-war settling of accounts and that the main perpetrators at Jasenovač were in fact Jews, who managed to seize the leading positions among the inmates' hierarchy and took full advantage of the Ustaša's distrust of Serbs.

Tudjman, who placed the word Holocaust between inverted commas, claims that the number of people who lost their lives in the camp did not exceed 40,000 (even Croat historians advance the figure of 60,000 whereas Serbian historiography and propaganda speak of about 700,000, mainly Serbian, victims). In his view most of them perished at the hands of Jews whose universal ‘selfishness’, ‘craftiness’, ‘unreliability’, ‘deceit’ and ‘stinginess’ guided their criminal actions. Although six years later Tudjman apologized to the Croat Jewish community for his assertions regarding the Jews, the second edition of the book, although renouncing the crudest anti-Jewish allegations, did not significantly alter its basic argument. Similar claims were made by Padányi with respect to Hungarian camps and by G. Hoffmann regarding the Slovak forced labour camp Sereí.⁷⁰

In Poland, ideas that can lead to similar conclusions were propagated by a prominent Gdańsk priest, Henryk Jankowski, in 1995. Apart from blaming the Jews – in line with popular fashion – for imposing communism on Poland, Jankowski ‘indicted them for Nazism as well’.⁷¹

Tismaneanu’s insightful analysis of the discourse of the extreme right identifies a similar perverse logic in its populist, scapegoatist and conspiratorial standpoints. One of the paradoxes of post-communist Russia, Tismaneanu writes, is ‘the ascension of a Nazi movement. The revival of the antisemitic myth functions almost miraculously; it explains the inexplicable.... According to this view the Second World War was imposed on Hitler by Jews and their agents from the western world, including freemasons and the Vatican.’⁷²

Oblivious denial*

Bulgaria

A special case of distorted and unbalanced treatment of the wartime situation of its Jewry, whose ambiguity still awaits detailed scholarly enquiry, is Bulgaria. More specifically, the problem revolves around the providentialist modes of proclaiming the wartime Bulgarian king, Boris III, as the leading rescuer of the country’s Jewish population, which, in the post-communist period, has taken on the hyperbolic proportions of a national myth.

The background to these representations is that the Bulgarians have always been well disposed to their Jewish fellow-countrymen. It has been unanimously established that antisemitism, as well as right-wing extremism, has never been a powerful influence in Bulgaria.⁷³ Not even during the Second World War were the Bulgarian fascists able to come to power in a country dominated by a spirit of egalitarianism where the most popular political groups were the agrarian and socialist movements. Even ‘the royal/military regime of

*This term, which is intended to cover diffuse attitudes, is not adopted from Shafir.

Boris III while it adopted some of the trappings of fascism . . . was [only] a reluctant ally of Germany'.⁷⁴ During the war the announcement that the government intended to deport the country's Jews caused a public outcry (in which prominent members of the government, society and Church took part), forcing the officials to abandon the project. Yet, the tsarist regime did cooperate in the deportation to Treblinka of thousands of Jews from the occupied territories in Thrace and Macedonia.⁷⁵ As in other eastern European countries, the responsibility for participating in the decimation of these Jews is much less debated than stressing the others' survival.

Regarding the bright side of this story, which nevertheless raises the problem of explaining the Bulgarian Jews' rescue, the specialist in Bulgarian Jewry, Frederick B. Chary, writes:

In post-World War II Bulgaria, the story of the Holocaust became a major political issue. Royalists in exile...began to claim...that the resolute action of the King had brought about the survival of the [Jewish] community.... By the end of the communist period Sofia's interpretation maintained that all layers of Bulgarian society, including anti-communist officials...as well as members of the church, the judiciary, and the bourgeoisie had played significant roles in the survival of Bulgarian Jewry.... The King's role was reduced from one of active agitator for deportation and execution of the Jews to one of passive inaction. One of the reasons for this more realistic portrayal of events, undoubtedly, was that the more official histories claimed major or complete credit for the communist party, the more the Bulgarian people – who trusted nothing that was communicated officially – believed erroneously that the King must indeed have saved the Jews. The debate continues to rage even now.⁷⁶

Slovenia

Another interesting case is Slovenia, where, after the fall of the communist regime, the quickly emerging far right 'enjoyed the image of the "forbidden fruit" which fascinated many, even when it entered into the everyday politics of postcommunist society'.⁷⁷ With the secession from Yugoslavia, the new country's political life started coalescing around nationalist agendas with strong anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist overtones. The first far right party to enjoy notable popularity was the Slovene National Party whose strict nationalist xenophobic platform attracted 10 per cent of the vote in 1994. But the rightist political spectrum was much broader than the space occupied by the SNP; parties with a similar 'tough' agenda, such as the Slovenian People's Party, Slovenian Christian Democrats, Slovenian National Right and the Social Democratic Party (SDPS), 'diversified' the far right's political offerings.

These parties are '*Führerparteien*', authoritarian and organicist-ethnocentric in character, with the aim of purifying the national body of strangers, even by

paramilitary violence in some cases. Polls taken in 1993 revealed a high degree of popular intolerance. For instance, 93 per cent would ban immigration into Slovenia and just a little less disapproved of the display of minority groups' national symbols. In this radical(ized) context, antisemitic sentiments (that is, hostility at the prospect of having a Jewish neighbour) were shared by 20 per cent of Slovenians in spite of the 1992 census which showed that there were only 36 Jews living in the country, suggesting that animosity towards the 'mythical Jew' in Slovenia is a significant political-cultural attitude.⁷⁸

The potential for xenophobic violence implicit in this trend is well illustrated, for example, by the most influential and popular politician of the radical right, the charismatic leader of the SDPS, Janez Jansa, a former fervent communist, then anti-communist dissident and pacifist, turned extreme chauvinist militarist once appointed defence minister. His politics displayed highly emotional overtones through strident demagogic populism and exploited Slovenians' patriotic feelings and phobias, for territorial demands vis-à-vis Croatia, and instrumentalized the military complex in service of his ambitions.

Among the supporters of Jansa are the Slovenian Catholic Church, a 'major antidemocratic factor in Slovenia' and an influential element of the country's intellectual elite, 'which stands behind Jansa and provides both the ideological and theoretical rationale for archconservative and, in particular, radical right stands'. Besides being 'instrumental' to Jansa's political needs, its main aim is to shape the cultural subsystem according to the 'needs of Slovenia's national identity and national independence'.

Thanks to these tendencies, the political space in Slovenia is still far from normal. Thus, 'the radical right tries by all means to create a state of emergency and furthermore wages almost a "religious war" about "What does it mean to be Slovenian?"'⁷⁹ which implies targeting and vilifying the other, including the 'mythical Jew' – whose victimhood and suffering are minimized in order to exclude any sympathy for him – as undermining the national identity and as a carrier of dissolving liberalism.

Despite such warning signs, in Slovenia and in the wider region, there are good reasons to believe in the eventual success of democracy; but it also matters how much its maturing will be slowed down and how big a price will be paid by the disoriented and manipulated societies.

Yugoslavia

The multinational complexion of interwar Yugoslavia, which hampered the progress of integration, facilitated to a significant extent the development of a Jewish national identity.⁸⁰ The Hitlerite invasion and the creation of the pro-Nazi fascist 'Independent State of Croatia' led to the internment and extermination by the Ustaša of the Jewish population living on the new state's territory, together with hundreds of thousands of Serbs and thousands of Romanies.

Tito's authoritarian regime had banned any discussions of the various massacres perpetrated by members of ethnic groups living in the reunified Yugoslavia. As Robert Hayden points out:

The fascist [Croat]... state had both a policy and a well-developed practice of genocide against Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, complete with concentration camps and village massacres. Official Yugoslav historians after the war declared that over 700,000 Serbs had been killed by the Ustaša.... the actual number of victims of the Ustaša may have been inflated.... Even so, the view that the 'Independent State of Croatia' practiced genocide did not receive serious public challenge within Yugoslavia until 1990.⁸¹

With the fall of communism, the newly acknowledged massacres of the Ustaša state's troops and personnel by the communists in 1945 were used by the Croat nationalists as a means of neutralizing the allegations about the Croat mass murders. Basically, this aimed at contesting communists' moral superiority and credibility and at claiming victimhood, to which they appear to attribute a redemptive function in this context. The goal of legitimizing the independent post-communist Croatia was linked to justifying the Ustaša regime's legal statehood.

In societies accustomed to rituals of liturgical nationalism like those of former Yugoslavia, one of the most powerful mechanisms of symbolic politics is the 'transfiguration of the dead into martyrs'.⁸² The whole Serbian-Croat polemic has revolved around this drive to assert the martyrdom of one's own ethnic kin. In this bitter duel, the Jewish ordeal was used as a mere means of vilifying the adversary. For example, 'the Ustaša particularly were reviled... [and portrayed as a] "genocidal people" [by the Serbians involved in the debate]... because of their genocide against Jews, Serbs and Gypsies, and were seen as having been worse than the Nazis in their cruelty'. But in the end, the point these arguments want to make is one and the same: "Ustaša crimes do not fade with time"... "No people, except Serbs, has experienced such a Golgotha."⁸³

In their turn, newly minted Croat nationalists endeavour to minimize the Ustaša genocidal actions in order to parry the implications of communist post-war historiography and portray the Ustaša state as simply another of history's brutal actors, with nothing particularly noteworthy or blameworthy about the Croatian genocide. Moreover, claims like Tudjman's went as far as grotesquely attributing responsibility for the Holocaust to Jews themselves.

Serbia itself was not devoid of antisemitism under Milošević. Self-victimizing conspiratorial diatribes attributed the pariah status of the state not to the aggression and ethnic cleansing ordered by the Serbian leadership against Muslims and Albanians, but to a conspiracy set up by Germany, the Vatican and, of course, the western media, dominated by Jews.⁸⁴

East Germany

Naturally, the integration of the former communist East Germany into the Federal Republic allowed it a faster advancement towards democracy and market economy than in the cases of the other former Soviet satellites. Yet, in so far as the negative legacies of the Third Reich are concerned, the persistence of difficulties in overcoming this episode in the former West Germany itself will arguably prevent, in the short run, the former GDR from exorcising its own ghosts from this period of recent German history.

The widespread opinion among the public outside Germany as well as in many academic circles that the GDR came to terms with the Nazi past better than West Germany is contested by scholars such as Ruth Bettina Birn who has identified nationalistic manifestations in the former GDR. Thus, she notes, the early post-unification period ‘witnessed a number of factors and tendencies indicating that the East Germans had not actually overcome Nazism as well as they claimed’. In part due to the communist propaganda which proclaimed the GDR the ‘better’ Germany (a new-born motherland of working-class Germans from which the former Nazis had fled to West Germany), public opinion seems, first of all, not to realize the ‘seriousness of the matter’. The few known war crimes trials ‘conducted swiftly and ending in exemplary sentences’ in the country seem to have helped the society as a whole to ‘wash its hands’ of its Nazi past. And the preference of the local population for a supermarket rather than a Holocaust memorial on the site of a former concentration camp, as well as other scandals involving concentration camp memorials, represent ‘indication[s] of how state-sponsored anti-fascism had failed to create genuine anti-Nazi feelings’.⁸⁵

One further aspect, which complicates the matter and makes a working through of the genocidal past even more problematic, is the extreme version of ‘comparative trivialization’ which was played out in the bitter East German public debates around the discovery of mass graves of Stalinist terror. The discussion ‘ensued on the extent to which the . . . “special camps” (set up by the Soviets on the grounds of former Nazi concentration camps) should be given notoriety; one argument was that the Nazi past should now fade into oblivion and only the Stalinist crimes should be considered’.⁸⁶

Conclusion

By stressing a number of worrying aspects linked with antisemitism and Holocaust denial in post-communist Europe, this survey does not imply that the prospects of a healthy liberal democracy are weaker than the tendencies towards antisemitic, ethnocentric authoritarianism. As Tismaneanu accurately pointed out, we cannot speak of state antisemitism in any of these countries. For,

unlike in the interwar period . . . when the region was the hotbed of fanatical antisemitism and criminal movements . . . nowadays the deeply rooted racist feelings are not shared by the most important opinion leaders and political elites, but are left with the marginal demagogues. The political elites did not revert to the interwar politics of exclusion [with a few exceptions in former Yugoslavia] when governments considered the persecution of Jews and other minorities a respectable means of legitimization.⁸⁷

Yet, the region, described by many as an ethnic shatter zone, has seen national (and other) myths used to justify the creation of nation-states, based on the alleged superiority of a particular group, entailing deep and enduring tensions between individual national ideologies. And as the building or reasserting of the nation-state justifies efforts to render the national territory ethnically homogeneous, so nations' self-determination has ethnic cleansing as a logical corollary in situations in which 'the existence of a minority may be presented as potentially threatening to the national state of the majority The logic of the nation-state precludes the existence of national minorities within it.'⁸⁸

In the context of widespread identity crises and/or the need of proving the legitimacy of the new states, ethnonationalism tends to prevail over civic nationalism. As a consequence, 'the totalising socialist state is in danger of being replaced by a totalising nationalist one', in the name of sovereignty, seen as a value in itself, as the highest value in whose name no cost is too high.⁸⁹

The weight and popularity of antisemitism and Holocaust denial are signs of the precarious democratization of society. Throughout the former Eastern Bloc, there are notable differences in the pace and depth of liberal democratic achievements. Regarding this complex landscape Tismaneanu noted in 1998 that democracy seemed to have consolidated in the Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, whereas the situation was 'still unstable in Russia, the Ukraine and in most Balkan countries . . . [where] liberal democracy remains questionable and one can notice an advancement towards a national-populist consensus'. Yet the resurgence of far right nationalism and its growing electoral success in the West – which can only encourage its counterparts in east-central Europe – suggest that the evolution of democracy is not necessarily an irreversible process. As Dan Stone insightfully remarks, although

Europe does not today face the threat of 'imminent annihilation' . . . fascism appears ready to burst out in certain quarters despite the fact that it is by no means on the verge of disintegration.... The rise of the far right is intimately connected to the end of the Cold War and the demise of the post-war consensus. The exhuming of the European nations' suppressed wartime pasts also permits the voicing of resentments kept in check by the post-war official narrative of anti-fascism.⁹⁰

Tismaneanu and Stone reach similar pertinent conclusions, advising that we should ‘abstain from exaggerated panic’ or ‘irresponsible rhetoric’ and from the ‘optimistic denial of danger’ or ‘accommodating the far right’.⁹¹

Notes

- 1 W. Korey, ‘Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in the USSR/CIS’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. R.L. Braham (New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1994), p. 218.
- 2 M. Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe* (Jerusalem: The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2002), p. 2.
- 3 D. Rosenthal, “‘The Mythical Jew’: Antisemitism, Intellectuals, and Democracy in Post-Communist Romania”, *Nationalities Papers*, 29 (2001), 420.
- 4 V. Tismaneanu, *Fantasmele salvării: democrație, naționalism și mit în Europa post-comunistă*, trans. M. Theodorescu (Iași: Polirom, 1999), p. 118. English translation: *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- 5 S. Žižek, quoted in Tismaneanu, *Fantasmele salvării*, p. 118.
- 6 Rosenthal, “‘The Mythical Jew’”, 421.
- 7 Tismaneanu, *Fantasmele salvării*, pp. 59, 65, 137.
- 8 V. Solonari, ‘From Silence to Justification?: Moldovan Historians on the Holocaust of Bessarabian and Transnistrian Jews’, *Nationalities Papers*, 30, (2002), 439, 448.
- 9 Cf. Korey, ‘Antisemitism’, p. 220.
- 10 Solonari, ‘From Silence to Justification?’, 441.
- 11 Korey, ‘Antisemitism’, pp. 214, 215, 216.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 215, 221.
- 13 Quoted in Tismaneanu, *Fantasmele salvării*, p. 84.
- 14 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, pp. 4, 5, 6; I. Deák, ‘Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary’, in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, p. 118.
- 15 M. Shafir, ‘The Inheritors: The Romanian Radical Right Since 1989’, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 24, 1 (1994), 71.
- 16 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, p. 10.
- 17 V. Tismaneanu, ‘The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism’, *East European Politics and Societies*, 3 (1989), 329–76 passim.
- 18 Cf. M. Shafir, ‘The Movement for Romania: A Party of Radical Return’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 29 (14 July 1992).
- 19 Cf. M. Shafir, ‘Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues: Radical Politics in Post-Communist East-Central Europe’, *Studia Politica*, 1, 2 (2001), 397–446.
- 20 In a jointly authored article on Romanian antisemitism Dan Stone and I made the observation that although it is possible in theory to draw a distinction like the one put forward by Shafir between ‘groups that express a form of “radical revivalism” and those that advocate a kind of “radical continuity” (nationalism with ties to the communist past), it is often hard to see the difference in practice.’ Although this distinction is ‘helpful for scholars who wish to understand the intellectual provenance of antisemitism in today’s Romania’ and arguably in other former communist countries, it should not be taken as an inflexible explanatory pattern, as mouthpieces and statements of Greater Romania Party and other extremist formations often ‘combin[e]…

- “radical revival” with “radical continuity”. See F. Lobont and D. Stone, ‘Antisemitism in Post-Communist Romania’, *Jewish Quarterly*, 184 (2001–2), 68. Shafir’s taxonomy is similarly ‘taxed’ by Roger Griffin with application to post-communist Russia, the ‘radical mind’ containing both elements of ‘radical continuity’ (with the nostalgia for the Soviet Empire) and ‘radical return’ to the ‘eternal’ Russian values. See R. Griffin, ‘Afterword: Last Rights?’ in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, ed. S.P. Ramet (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 305.
- 21 R.L. Braham, ‘Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust’, cited in Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, p. 11.
- 22 Cf. F. Cibulka, ‘The Radical Right in Slovakia’, in *The Radical Right*, ed. Ramet, p. 112; Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, pp. 11, 12, 13; H.F. Carey, ‘Genocide Denial and Antonescu as Democratic Role-Model: 1984 in the Twenty-First Century’, *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, 1, 1 (2001), 33–69.
- 23 J. Batt, “‘Fuzzy Statehood’ versus Hard Borders: The Impact of EU Enlargement on Romania and Yugoslavia”, unpublished manuscript, p. 1.
- 24 For a detailed discussion of the debates over statehood’s legitimacy in post-communist Slovakia, see, for example, Cibulka, ‘The Radical Right in Slovakia’, pp. 120–5, and R. Vago, ‘Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Slovakia’, in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, esp. pp. 197–8.
- 25 Cf., for example, I. Grdešić, ‘The Radical Right in Croatia and Its Constituency’, in *The Radical Right*, ed. Ramet, pp. 173, 177, 179.
- 26 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, p. 15.
- 27 Lobont and Stone, ‘Antisemitism in Post-Communist Romania’, 65.
- 28 R. Theodoru, *Mareşalul* (Bucharest: Miracol, 2001).
- 29 Ibid., pp. 71, 72, 73.
- 30 I. Coja, *Marele manipulator și asasinarea lui Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga* (Bucharest: Miracol, 1999), p. 149.
- 31 Cibulka, ‘The Radical Right in Slovakia’, p. 112.
- 32 Cf. Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, pp. 13, 14.
- 33 Cibulka, ‘The Radical Right in Slovakia’, pp. 113, 123. Such views are promoted even by large circulation periodicals like *Zmen*, which published a series of negationist articles in 1992 by one P. Mehrentürk, who borrowed his main standpoints from the same infamous Holocaust denier Faurisson and some of his ‘scientific’ friends, with a stress on the thesis that Auschwitz was not a death camp.
- 34 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, p. 17.
- 35 See Vago, ‘Antisemitism’, pp. 190–1.
- 36 Karsai, ‘The Radical Right in Hungary’, p. 141.
- 37 RFE/RL Newsline (5 February 1998).
- 38 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, p. 18.
- 39 D. Ost, ‘The Radical Right in Poland: Rationality of the Irrational’, in *The Radical Right*, ed. Ramet, p. 85; on the other hand, Ost acknowledges that ‘Even today, surveys uncover deep-seated anti-Semitic beliefs among wide portions of society’ (p. 89), but argues – exaggerating the economic determinism of Polish antisemitism – that the actual extremist politics have the subversion of democracy for its main goal and that ‘persecuting ethnic others is a means to this end’. Hatreds, continues Ost, ‘are useful organising tools, and... in Poland the radical right’s hatred of [democratic] choice has been the hatred of Jews’ (pp. 88, 89).
- 40 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’*, p. 15.
- 41 Ibid., p. 16.
- 42 Cf. ibid., pp. 23, 24.

- 43 Ibid., p. 25.
- 44 Cf., for example, J. Topolski, *Teoria istoriei* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1986), passim, as a review of elaborated epistemological, relativist, attitudes towards history.
- 45 Ost, 'The Radical Right in Poland', pp. 96, 95.
- 46 Shafir, *Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization'*, p. 29.
- 47 A. Brumberg, 'Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Poland', in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, p. 156.
- 48 Shafir, *Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization'*, p. 30.
- 49 Karsai, 'The Radical Right in Hungary', 143.
- 50 Tismaneanu, *Fantasmele salvării*, p. 108.
- 51 Deák, 'Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary', pp. 99, 100.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 114, 115.
- 53 Karsai, 'The Radical Right in Hungary', p. 137.
- 54 A. Kovács, 'Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity in Postcommunist Hungary', in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, pp. 125, 126.
- 55 Vago, 'Antisemitism', pp. 197, 198.
- 56 Cibulka, 'The Radical Right in Slovakia', p. 122.
- 57 Vago, 'Antisemitism', pp. 199, 203.
- 58 Shafir, *Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization'*, pp. 39, 40, 41.
- 59 Ibid., pp. 46, 47.
- 60 Ibid., pp. 44–5.
- 61 Solonari, 'From Silence to Justification?', 440, 441, 442.
- 62 The list includes even wider acknowledged authorities, such as the Romanian Academy member Dan Berindei, who, in an interview on the national channel TVR2 on 5 June 2002, insisted that the accent should be laid on surviving Jews' debt to Antonescu.
- 63 M. Shafir, 'Reabilitarea postcomunistă a mareșalului Antonescu: *Cui bono?*' in *Exterminarea evreilor români și ucraineni în perioada antonesciană*, ed. R.L. Braham, trans. L. Witcowsky (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2002), p. 448. English translation: 'Marshal Antonescu's Postcommunist Rehabilitation: *Cui Bono?*' in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. R.L. Braham (New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1997), pp. 349–410.
- 64 V. Eskenasi, 'Istoriografi și istoricii pro și contra mitului Antonescu', in *Exterminarea*, ed. Braham, pp. 324, 325. English translation: 'Historiographers against the Antonescu Myth', in *The Destruction*, ed. Braham, pp. 271–302.
- 65 Cf. S.J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 199; Cibulka, 'The Radical Right in Slovakia', p. 121 (the author brings to attention the publication of a negationist school textbook by Milan Durica in 1997, which caused such an international outrage that Prime Minister Mečiar ordered its withdrawal from schools; *ibid.*, p. 123); Shafir, *Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization'*, p. 48; Shafir also signals the publication, in 1998, of J. Vrba's book dedicated to Tiso, *The Man Who Stood up to Hitler*, in which he claims that Tiso and the Slovak people had no knowledge of the deportations initiated in 1942 and that had the National Uprising not taken place all Jews would have been saved (*ibid.*, 49).
- 66 Cibulka, 'The Radical Right in Slovakia', p. 122.
- 67 Vago, 'Antisemitism', pp. 197–8.
- 68 Ibid., pp. 52, 60, 61–5.
- 69 M. Shafir, 'The Man They Love to Hate: Norman Manea's "Snail's House" between Holocaust and Gulag', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 30, 1 (2000), 72.
- 70 Cf. Shafir, *Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization'*, pp. 51, 52.
- 71 Ost, 'The Radical Right in Poland', p. 93.

- 72 Tismaneanu, *Fantasmale salvării*, p. 96.
- 73 Cf., for example, J.D. Bell, 'The Radical Right in Bulgaria', in *The Radical Right*, ed. Ramet, pp. 251–2.
- 74 Ibid., p. 234.
- 75 Ibid., p. 350n.
- 76 F.B. Chary, 'Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Bulgaria', in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, pp. 45, 46.
- 77 R.M. Rizman, 'The Radical Right in Slovenia', in *The Radical Right*, ed. Ramet, p. 148.
- 78 Ibid., pp. 155, 159.
- 79 Ibid., p. 167.
- 80 R. Milentievic, 'Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Yugoslavia', in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, p. 227.
- 81 R.M. Hayden, 'Recounting the Dead: The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia', in *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, ed. R.S. Watson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), p. 176.
- 82 Ibid., p. 172.
- 83 Ibid., pp. 173, 179; Hayden quotes from Serbian material accompanying films (presented at an exhibition organized in 1991) about the Ustaša genocide.
- 84 Tismaneanu, *Fantasmale salvării*, p. 123.
- 85 Ruth Bettina Birn, 'Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Germany', in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Braham, pp. 82, 85, 86.
- 86 Ibid., p. 86.
- 87 Tismaneanu, *Fantasmale salvării*, pp. 124, 125.
- 88 R.M. Hayden, 'Schindler's Fate: Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and Population Transfers', *Slavic Review*, 55 (1996), 735–6.
- 89 Hayden, 'Recounting the Dead', 168.
- 90 D. Stone, 'Explaining the Far Right', *Jewish Quarterly*, 186 (2002), 54, 58.
- 91 Ibid., 58; Tismaneanu, *Fantasmale salvării*, p. 137.

21

Post-Holocaust Philosophy

Josh Cohen

The internal division in modern philosophy between ‘Anglo-American’ (or analytic) and ‘Continental’ traditions is perhaps nowhere made more visible than in the vastly different significance each confers on the Nazi genocide. On the one hand, there has been little sustained engagement with the Holocaust within the Anglophone stream, from a metaphysical, ethico-political or other perspective. On the other, the death camps have insinuated themselves into the very heart of post-war European philosophy, calling its most cherished terms and concepts – the Idea, Reason, Spirit, the dialectic, History, Being – radically into question.

The difference can be attributed in part to the place of Nazism in the broader historical memories of Anglophone and European culture. Largely untouched by Nazi occupation, British and American intellectual tradition escaped implication in its crimes. Mainland Europe, in contrast, was confronted with the inescapable fact that the soil of its most significant philosophical tradition was also the breeding ground of Nazism. As a result, that tradition’s key moments – Enlightenment rationalism, idealism, phenomenology – could hardly escape the painful process of self-examination.

The difference may also be attributed, however, to profound differences of orientation and styles of thinking. As Jay Bernstein has suggested, these can be understood in terms of the two streams’ divergent relationships to Kant’s critical philosophy.¹ The Kant of analytical philosophy is one who institutes a border between that which is known through empirical experience and that which is known through transcendent Ideas (namely, morality) or reflection (namely, taste). For Bernstein, analytical philosophy’s defence of enlightened modernity is of a piece with its confinement to the empirical side of this border, and its consequent suspicion of speculation beyond the limits of the empirical.

Post-Kantian Continental philosophy, in contrast, begins from a questioning of the rigid borders placed by Kant’s first *Critique* (not to mention the different

strains of neo-Kantianism) between knowledge, morality and aesthetics. Its object is less the conditioned knowledge of empirical experience than with the unconditioned Absolute, which exceeds the empirical.

This difference of orientation has very significant implications for post-Holocaust philosophy. As an event that seems to burst asunder the limits of reason, to exhaust the explanatory resources of thought in all its guises, the Nazi genocide appears to be an uneasy, even impossible object of inquiry for Anglo-American philosophy. The gap it appears to insinuate between facts and understanding, the verifiable and the comprehensible, would seem to put it beyond the scope of a tradition concerned to minimize this gap. In contrast, the post-Kantian Continental (and especially, with significant irony, German) tradition is replete with resources for thinking the rupture of rational cognition. From the early Romantics to Heidegger, German philosophy had evinced a fascination for the ‘impossible’ or ‘unspeakable’, which exceeds consciousness long before the Holocaust.

The purpose of this preamble should be coming into focus, namely, to suggest the range of possibilities available to philosophy after the Holocaust. One is simply to dismiss it as a problem for philosophy, that is, as an aberration in the face of which philosophy’s logical, metaphysical, ethical and political categories remain intact. Another is to attempt to reinstate these traditional categories, even in modified form, while acknowledging the challenge posed to them by the Holocaust. A third approach, however, would see the responsibility of thought after Auschwitz as the radical rethinking of categories whose force and validity are irrevocably discredited. From this perspective, post-Holocaust philosophy is a matter not of accommodating the horrors of the genocide to the rule of reason, but, on the contrary, of exposing reason to what alienates, scandalizes and ruptures it.

If the analytic tradition is absent from the discussion that follows, it is because its tendency to silence on the Holocaust implicitly confirms the first of the positions outlined above. The two tendencies in post-Holocaust philosophy I shall examine are representatives of, respectively, the second and third positions. The first is the tradition of North American Jewish philosophical theology, whose most prominent and influential figures have been the ‘triumvirate’ of Richard Rubinstein, Eliezer Berkowitz and Emil Fackenheim.² The second is the rather more diffuse tradition of Continental philosophy since 1945, which I shall focus on through the work of T.W. Adorno and Emmanuel Levinas. I intend to argue that the latter tradition’s contribution to philosophy after Auschwitz is more significant precisely because it vigilantly refuses the temptation to resolve or redeem the crisis of thinking it addresses. In contrast, as I hope presently to show, the North American thinkers have shown themselves repeatedly to be prone to this temptation, even when they claim to be resisting it.

The North American Jewish tradition

In spite of their real and substantial religious differences, ranging from Rubinstein's 'neo-pagan' renunciation of the Hebrew Biblical God to Berkowitz's 'neo-Orthodox' apology for the same, the positions of the three Anglophone thinkers are governed by the same broad premise: that God can be understood only as the Author of history and guarantor of its meaning. Consequently, none of them is able to avoid the trap of theodicy – of justifying and so redeeming suffering in the name of a divine intention or fate – into which this premise leads.

Richard Rubinstein

The ascription of a theodicy to Richard Rubinstein will surprise readers of his major theological work, *After Auschwitz*.³ Rubinstein's book is, after all, a concerted refutation of traditional covenantal theology, asserting the absolute irreconcilability of the Jewish doctrine of election with the historical fact of the Nazi genocide: 'To see any purpose in the death camps, the traditional believer is forced to regard the most demonic, antihuman explosion of all history as a meaningful expression of God's purposes' (AA, p. 171).⁴ The necessary condition for the renewal of Jewish theology, if it is to avoid such a morally and metaphysically objectionable conclusion, is the eschewal of the God of the Bible – 'the ultimate, omnipotent actor in the historical drama' (AA, p. 171).

This portrayal of the God of the Hebrew Bible rests on two unquestioned presuppositions. The first is that Jewish tradition cannot think of God other than as the transcendent Author of a sacred History; as Zachary Braiterman points out, to make such a claim is to bypass the many rabbinical texts which trouble the relationship between divine authority and human experience.⁵ The second, and related, presupposition is that the text of Jewish tradition can be reduced to a determinate communicative content whose meaning is transparent. But this premise depends on a blindness to one of that tradition's essential principles, namely, that holy texts can be read only via a continuing and incessant process of interpretation and counter-interpretation. Indeed, Rubinstein implicitly acknowledges the anomalousness to Jewish tradition of his interpretative literalism when he ascribes it to the deep and persistent influence of 'conservative American Protestantism' (AA, p. 178).

Rubinstein's monolithic conception of Jewish tradition, however, as irreducibly theodical impels him to renounce it in favour of a post-Auschwitz alternative, which 'gives priority to the indwelling immanence of the Divine' (AA, p. 295). In this scheme, religion is to express a displacement of the Divine presence from heaven to earth.

What authorizes such a displacement? In Rubinstein, as in Berkowitz and Fackenheim, the sign and site of theological renewal is the state of Israel. In

After Auschwitz, the creation of the state portends a recovery of pre-Biblical paganism: '*Increasingly, Israel's return to the earth elicits a return to the archaic earth religion of ancient Palestine.*' This return, moreover, far from being counter-historical, is 'fully in keeping with the twentieth century's return to primal origins and primal circularities' (AA, p. 205; Rubinstein's emphasis). The restoration of the Land to the People of Israel is a restoration of immanence to the Divine, and 'of humanity... to its only true hearth – the bosom of Mother Earth' (AA, p. 209).⁶ As such, it is symptomatic of a more general world-cultural movement against the estrangement wrought by technological modernity.

If this neo-pagan god dwells in phenomenal nature rather than a noumenal super-nature, Rubinstein is none the less careful, particularly in his more recent essays, not to represent Him as a determinate and incarnate form. Indeed, it is in his attempt to reimagine the Divine that he identifies some valuable motifs in Jewish tradition, notably the Kabbalistic '*En-Sof*, that which is without limit or end' (AA, p. 298). As infinite Source or Ground of Being that conditions all, but cannot be identified with any finite being, God is '*no-thing... the dark unnameable Abyss*' (AA, p. 298).

The explicit echo of Heidegger here is unmistakable. As that which is simultaneously radically distinct *and* indissociable from finite being, Heideggerian Being perhaps lends itself to this rewriting as immanent God of nature. Yet an ambiguity attaches itself to Rubinstein's use of Heidegger; if Being is the infinite Ground that refuses identification with any entity, it is also the primordial origin or *omphalos* from which humanity finds itself estranged. As the primary agent through which the people of Israel overcome this estrangement, the state of Israel is the condition for the recovery of this lost origin. Rubinstein himself makes the link between Zionism and Heidegger unambiguously:

One of the most important but least noticed aspects of Zionism is the extent to which it represents a Jewish expression of the twentieth century's urge to return to primal origins. This is evident in many of the cultural endeavours of our times. In philosophy, Martin Heidegger has characterized his thought as an attempt to get behind more than two thousand years of European philosophy's estrangement from 'Being'. (AA, p. 201)

The diagnosis of estrangement from Being authorizes Zionism not in ethical or political but in *sacral* terms; the Land of Israel is the authentic repository of Being to which the state grants the people access. Rubinstein's radical shift in theological orientation is intended to escape the theodicy into which, as he sees it, we are inexorably led by the traditional Biblical concept of God as Redeemer of History.

Yet Rubinstein's transformed 'immanent' God of the earth fails to escape the temptations of theodicy. As holy Abyss, God remains the source, if not

providential Author, of all good and evil. Rubinstein does not shy away from the logical entailments of this conception of divinity; if his account of the divine foregrounds its destructive elements it is, he remarks, 'because *this aspect of divinity has hardly received the attention in recent Jewish thought which recent Jewish experience suggests it deserves*' (AA, p. 245; Rubinstein's emphasis). It is to the destructive force of the divine, in other words, that Auschwitz can be ascribed: 'No people has known as deeply as have we how truly God in His holiness slays those to whom he gives life' (AA, p. 246). It is difficult to interpret this statement as anything other than a very rigid theodicy, or to state what makes the anonymity and fatality of divine destruction either morally or metaphysically preferable to destruction in the name of providential history. Such a shift involves little more than an arbitrary transfer of force from transcendence to immanence.

Eliezer Berkowits

In contrast to Rubinstein, Eliezer Berkowits's neo-Orthodox⁷ theology appears to resist the temptation to close the gap insinuated by Auschwitz into religious comprehension. Certainly, he shows persuasively that the very premises of the test to which Rubinstein subjects the God of Hebrew tradition are based on a profound misreading of that tradition. In response to the portrayal of this God as the absolute Subject of a providential History, Berkowits excavates from tradition a God whose concealment is not a refutation of His presence but a mode of its *manifestation*. This is the God of whom, for example, Isaiah says, 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, /O God of Israel, the Saviour' (Isaiah 45: 15, cited in *FAH*, p. 101). Glossing this passage, Berkowits finds that in it, 'God's self-hiding is not a reaction to human behavior, when the Hiding of the Face represents God's turning away from man as a punishment. For Isaiah, God's self-hiding is an attribute of divine nature' (*FAH*, p. 101).

In other words, rather than being opposed to His visible revelation, God's concealment is paradoxically an aspect of His revelation. Indeed, the experience of his absence, of being radically abandoned by Him, becomes the only means of attesting to Him: 'The God of History must be absent and present concurrently. He hides his presence. He is present without being indubitably manifest; he is absent without being hopelessly inaccessible' (*FAH*, p. 107).

By distinguishing God's presence from His active intervention in history, Berkowits appears to have taken Auschwitz definitively beyond the reach of theodicy. Yet precisely the tradition that enables this refusal of theodicy is employed to reinforce it in his subsequent reflections on Auschwitz's relation to the broader sweep of Jewish history. Berkowits portrays this history as the site of conflict between two radically incompatible modes of historical existence: the 'power history' of the nations and the 'faith history' of Israel. Where the nations represent 'naturalistic history, explainable in terms of power and

economics', Israel 'testifies to a supra-natural dimension jutting into history' (*FAH*, p. 111). Had these histories developed separately, each might have been left to unfold itself according to its own internal logic; but the presence of Israel within the nations meant their inevitable interpenetration.

This interpenetration has led, on the one hand, to the occasional glimpse within 'the naturalistic realm' of the divine Voice. On the other, it has led far more frequently to the violent incursion into the 'supra-natural' realm of the nations' rage and resentment. What Berkowitz calls the political history of the Is finds its very foundations put in question when confronted by the ethical history of the Ought. Auschwitz is the logic of this confrontation taken to its demonic limit. The genocide was based not, as suggested by Nazism's hysterical rhetoric, in fear of the economic and political forces the Jews had secretly ranged against the Aryan, but in 'a metaphysical fear of the true mystery of God's "powerless" presence in history as "revealed" in the continued survival of Israel' (*FAH*, p. 117). The death camps are, from this perspective, the concrete expression of the will to silence the witness to this presence.

Notwithstanding the power of his analysis of the metaphysics of Nazi violence, Berkowitz's account of Jewish history rests on a fundamentally ahistorical mystification. Like Rubinstein, his religious and ethical perspective is caught within a hierarchy of transcendence and immanence, which governs his every historical judgement. Once Israel and the nations are assigned to such radically opposed metaphysical destinies in world history, the meaning of any and every event in that history must be determined in advance.

The consequences of this metaphysically determined reading of history are made evident in Berkowitz's interpretation of the state of Israel and its theological meaning. Collapsing the people into the state of Israel, he renders the latter the world's sole carrier of 'faith history', a nation witnessing to the transcendent in the midst of nations tethered to the earthly. This manifestation of transcendence on the stage of world history is, moreover, the hither side of God's absent presence in Auschwitz:

Jewish survival through the ages and the ingathering of the exiles into the land of their fathers after the holocaust proclaim God's holy presence at the very heart of his inscrutable hiddenness. We recognized in it the hand of divine providence because it was exactly what, after the holocaust, the Jewish people needed in order to survive. (*FAH*, p. 134)

What is disclosed above all by this passage is a thoroughgoing dialectical symmetry between God's manifest absence at Auschwitz and his manifest presence in the state. The Nazi attempt to annihilate all vestiges of faith history is overturned by that history's triumphal resurrection in the Land of Israel. This insertion of Auschwitz into the broader narrative of Jewish history casts

Berkowits's earlier reading of Isaiah into a new light. Where previously the '*hester panim*' ('hiding face') of God appeared to place Him beyond the economy of presence and absence, visible and invisible, the interpretation of the state as evidence of 'the divine hand of providence' pulls Him forcibly back into it. God's silence at Auschwitz is redeemed by His voice in Israel; the opacity of the first is merely the necessary corollary of the transparency of the second.

The state, then, has once again proved the means by which an apparently discredited theodicy insinuates itself back into religious thought. The state phenomenalizes the transcendence which appeared to confound phenomenality. Furthermore, the a priori character of the opposition between Israel and the nations, and the unquestioned conflation of the state with the former, means that Berkowits at the outset rules out of court any possibility of their contamination. In insisting on Israel's absolute distance from power, he effectively sacralizes the history of the state (as well as providing a metaphysical endorsement for its every act) and in turn redeems the apparently irredeemable fact of Auschwitz. As the culmination of faith history, the state confers a new sense on what, seen in isolation, appeared senseless: 'Seen in this light, Jewish history does make sense: it is part of the cosmic drama of redemption. In it the massive martyrdom of Israel finds its significance: nothing of the sorrow and the suffering was in vain, for all the time the path was being paved for the Messiah' (*FAH*, p. 152).

As extermination, Auschwitz refused redemption; as martyrdom, it becomes an indispensable part of its narrative. Nor can such a narrative be dismissed as supplementary to Berkowits's theological treatment of Auschwitz; on the contrary, it emerges seamlessly from the metaphysical division of history into the forces of transcendent faith and immanent power. Such a division cannot but end in the reassertion of the very theodicy it sought to refuse.

Emil Fackenheim

A similar metaphysics of history ultimately prevents Fackenheim's 'foundations of post-Holocaust Jewish thought'⁸ from breaking out of theodicy. Fackenheim's major work, *To Mend the World*, self-consciously positions itself between the extremes of fideism and materialism, the twin temptations of religious thinking after Auschwitz. It is this precarious space which thought is forced to inhabit when history ruptures the narratives of divine providence and rational progress alike: 'this catastrophe, though *in* history – the history of the humanly possible – is not quite *of* it' (*MW*, p. xiv).⁹ Faced with the exhaustion of its own (and indeed all other) explanatory resources, Judaism is thrown into a crisis of self-understanding which it can overcome only by confronting head-on.

Fackenheim seems initially to be insisting on the Holocaust as an irreparable rupture in history, beyond recuperation even by a Hegelian speculative metaphysics: '*where the Holocaust is there is no overcoming; and where there is an*

overcoming the Holocaust is not.' (MW, p. 135; Fackenheim's emphasis). Yet from the outset, this failure of *Aufhebung* is construed in explicitly Hegelian terms, suggesting that the very 'failure of Hegel's enterprise can be understood as a "process" with dialectical "results"' (MW, p. 106). Fackenheim appears oblivious here to the irony of any 'result' issuing from such a failure, namely that once failure is understood in such terms it can only pass, in strict Hegelian fashion, into its opposite. The impossibility of overcoming is tethered dialectically to the overcoming of impossibility.

This dialectical relation is disclosed by an ambiguity in the significance Fackenheim gives to 'impossibility'. If impossibility is at one level of the text insuperable, at another it becomes the necessary condition for what he calls 'the Jewish return into history'.¹⁰ This return – what Jewish tradition names *Teshuva* – signifies a bridging of the chasm opened by Auschwitz between God and his people. Such a return is present in the inexplicable and different forms of resistance attested to during the course of the Nazi genocide: survivor Pelagia Lewinska's attestation to the experience of an imperative, in the midst of the horrors of Auschwitz, to live through them; the exchange by a group of Hasidim in Buchenwald of four rations of bread for a set of *tefillin*; and of course the scattered instances of armed Jewish resistance.

Fackenheim insists that these instances of resistance exceed the reach of historical or psychological explanation. They attest rather to a positive epistemological and ontological limit: 'our ecstatic thought must point to their resistance – the resistance in thought and the resistance in life – as *ontologically ultimate. Resistance in that extremity was a way of being. For our thought now, it is an ontological category*' (MW, p. 248; Fackenheim's emphasis).

Fackenheim's agenda for post-Auschwitz Jewish thought turns on just this ontologization of resistance; indeed, it is the carrying of this ontology into the future that constitutes its authentic task. But what form might such a task take? Quite simply, all forms of Jewish self-affirmation (or at least all those adjudged to be such by Fackenheim himself) in and after Auschwitz are conferred with ontological status and so placed outside questioning or contestation. As with Berkowitz and Rubinstein, it is Zionism that serves as the privileged expression of this ontology. As such, it is an imperative rather than a choice for the Jew after Auschwitz: 'Anti- or non-Zionism remains a possibility for Jews today. But it is a possibility without self-respect' (MW, p. 97).

As the sole available means of forging such self-respect, Zionism is heir to the resistance of the Jewish victims and has the same metaphysical status. It represents less a 'Jewish return into history' (from what, one might ask, are Jews returning?) than history's return to the Jews and to their sacred destiny. If the task of Jewish thought today is *Tikkun* – a term borrowed from Lurianic *kabbalah*, signifying the mending of the shattered vessels of divinity – then this task is identical with the state of Israel itself:

What then is the *Tikkun*? It is Israel itself. It is a state founded, maintained, defended by a people who – so it was once thought – had lost the arts of statecraft and self-defense forever. It is the replanting and reforestation of a land that – so it once seemed – was unredeemable swamps and desert.... It is a City rebuilt that – so once the consensus of mankind once had it – was destined to remain holy ruins. (*MW*, pp. 312–13)

As *Tikkun* itself – rather than as a potential means for *Tikkun* (which would maintain it as an object of ethical and political judgement) – the state has ultimate ontological status; as in Berkowitz, it is made impervious to any critical questioning by being removed from the sphere of finite human history. Far from being a mere oversight, this absence is a necessary consequence of conflating the presence of God with His *appearance in history*.

Fackenheim contrasts what he terms the ‘fragmentary *Tikkun*’ of the state to a Hegelian teleology; yet the barely suppressed teleology which underpins this *Tikkun* is made unwittingly evident in Fackenheim’s expression of ‘open-ended wonder before the Six-Day-War’ (*MW*, p. 146). This wonder swiftly loses its open-endedness when read through his narrative of Jewish resistance. As the culmination of an ontologically ultimate History inaugurated by the resisters, the meaning of the state of Israel is precisely *not* open-ended or contestable, a point tacitly acknowledged at the book’s conclusion, when Fackenheim once again remarks on his astonishment ‘that in this of all ages the Jewish people have returned – *have been* returned? – to Jerusalem’ (*MW*, p. 313). The question mark appended to ‘have been returned’ is scarcely necessary, for in the context of Fackenheim’s sacralized narrative of Jewish history, only an affirmative answer to the question is possible.

One temptation of philosophy after Auschwitz is thus cast into relief by these three leading post-Holocaust theologians, namely to reinstate continuity where Auschwitz has broken it, and to impose resolution on what appears to refuse it.

The Continental tradition

The impulse behind the second tendency in post-Holocaust philosophy I wish to examine can be understood as the insistent resistance to such a temptation, to refuse rather than effect redemption. Such an impulse is expressed, implicitly if not explicitly, by almost every major figure in contemporary Continental philosophy. Perhaps its exemplary articulation is to be found in the following formulation of Adorno’s, from his major late work *Negative Dialectics*: ‘A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler on unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen.’¹¹ Apparently both logically straightforward

and morally unassailable, close examination reveals in Adorno's imperative an interesting and telling ambiguity, namely, the impossibility of its fulfilment. History can judge (and many times since the Holocaust has judged) the imperative violated, but the judgement of its fulfilment belongs of necessity to a future both unachieved and unachievable. Put simply, there is no way of guaranteeing that Auschwitz will not recur, and this lack of guarantee is precisely what gives Adorno's formulation its ethical and political force. What the new categorical imperative teaches us above all is the need for an unrelenting vigilance in thought and action, a restless attentiveness not only to manifest violence against others but to the conditions of thought which at worst enable such violence and at best fail to prevent it. It suggests, in short, the need to develop a mode of thinking which would permanently resist the recurrence of Auschwitz.

The project of post-Holocaust European philosophy – and one would wish to name here alongside Adorno's work that of Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Sarah Kofman, Edmond Jabès and Giorgio Agamben – can be understood as the ongoing attempt to forge such a mode of thinking.¹² For each of these thinkers, Auschwitz puts permanently in question philosophy's ancient ambition to bring itself to a final completion.¹³ The thinkers named above see in Auschwitz a wound that cannot be healed, a horror that remains insuperably resistant to knowledge and so refuses resolution or redemption.

What is Nazism?

The ways in which contemporary European thinkers have conceived the task of thinking after Auschwitz cannot be dissociated from its understanding of Nazism. If Hitler were merely a temporary aberration from the otherwise seamless rational progress of modernity, the key motifs of modern philosophy would remain intact, rendering unnecessary their radical rethinking. Post-Holocaust thinkers from Adorno to Agamben, however, have sought instead to show the continuity between the political and philosophical paradigms of modernity and the premises of Nazism. To be sure, this is not a question of crudely asserting that Auschwitz is the logical and necessary consequence of modern rationality, but of disclosing those features of modern political life and thought which lend themselves to appropriation by Nazism's genocidal racism.

Common to many thinkers in the Continental tradition is a conception of Nazism as the attempt to realize the Absolute by means of a racialized biology. As Levinas argued in an extraordinarily prescient article of 1934, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism',¹⁴ Nazism can be understood as the demonic inversion of the western hierarchy of soul over body. In this scheme, the body becomes the bearer of absolute spiritual value, a value conferred by birth and inalterable by any act of speech or thought, and which places every human

being irrevocably inside or outside of an ‘authentic’ community of blood. From this perspective, Nazism is a kind of symmetrical inversion of western tradition, whereby the spiritually determined Absolute of the soul passes into the biologically determined Absolute of the body.

Levinas is the first of a series of thinkers who would come to theorize Nazism as the attempt to realize the Absolute in the form of a community purified of contaminating elements. In her 1985 book *Spirit in Ashes*, Edith Wyschogrod develops this argument more fully, interpreting what she calls the ‘death-world’ of Auschwitz as the result of a demonic struggle to recover the mythic integrity of society from its fracture and alienation by an artificial and deracinated modernity (represented above all, of course, by the Jew). ‘The death-world’, she writes, ‘makes its appearance . . . upon demythologized ground as an effort to sacralize a world of impoverished symbolic meanings by creating a totalizing structure to express what is irreducible even in technological society: the binary opposition of life and death’.¹⁵

Wyschogrod’s suggestion, then, is that Nazism’s genocidal racism is based in a drive to recover and restore to its pristine original condition a mythic unity and integrity supposedly destroyed by social fracture and racial mixing. Such an analysis discloses a yearning for unity and resolution at the heart of Nazi philosophy. Wyschogrod’s analysis is amplified by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy’s readings in Nazi rhetoric, in which they unveil an Aryan ‘type’ in whom this same ideal of unity is incarnated. ‘The Aryan world,’ they argue, ‘will have to be much more than a world ruled and exploited by the Aryans: it will have to be a world that has become Aryan (thus it will be necessary to eliminate from it the nonbeing or nontype *par excellence*, the Jew, as well as the nonbeing or lesser being of several other inferior or degenerate types, gypsies, for example).’¹⁶ Again, then, Nazism is seen as the will to govern the world according to an absolute and irrefutable logic of inclusion and exclusion.

The most ambitious attempt to theorize this logic is to be found in the recent work of Giorgio Agamben, and in particular his *Homo Sacer*, and its sequel, *Rennants of Auschwitz*.¹⁷ In the former text, Agamben develops an Aristotelian distinction between *zoe*, the bare life common to all being, and *bios*, the mode of life proper to individuals or groups. Agamben’s claim is that the history of political sovereignty is the history of the management and, increasingly, elimination of bare life. From this perspective, the political life of the Nazi community is constituted by the drive to purge from itself the bare life embodied by the Jew and other ‘degenerates’. If the concentration camp is thus, according to Agamben, ‘the biopolitical paradigm of the modern’, it is because it is history’s most radical experiment in the exclusion and management of bare life. The camp inmate’s ‘inclusion’ in Nazi society takes the paradoxical form of an absolute exclusion. The camp is the space in which the bare life typically concealed within political life (the full citizen of a modern democracy, for example, could

not identify the point at which her bare life ‘ended’ and her political life ‘began’) is isolated and made visible (most terribly, as Agamben shows in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, in the figure of the *Musselmann*).

What the analyses of Levinas, Wyschogrod, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, and Agamben reveal in different ways is the logic of exclusion and purification which governs Nazism’s genocidal metaphysics of race. And indeed, as their very different philosophical projects show, the task announced by Adorno’s ‘new categorical imperative’ must begin from the refusal of this logic of exclusion, and of the blood-based community it implies. What Sarah Kofman calls the ‘psychotic’ fiction of a completed community ‘which erases all trace of discord, of difference, of death’, must be countered by a vision of self and community as constitutively *incomplete*, structured by infinite and ineliminable difference.¹⁸ It is this conception of the incomplete which, I suggest, is at the heart of post-Holocaust Continental philosophy, and which I intend now to develop by way of the examples of Adorno and Levinas.

If art as conceived by Adorno and religion as conceived by Levinas are exemplary carriers of the task of thought after Auschwitz, it is because their writings painstakingly dissociate the Absolute from completion or finality. For Adorno and Levinas, thought paradoxically fulfils itself only when it refuses fulfilment.

T.W. Adorno

Adorno’s late essays on poetry, as well as his great, posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, repeatedly unfold this aesthetic of ‘incompletion’. Across these writings, he seeks resources in both past traditions and present practices of art, which would keep faith with his ‘new categorical imperative’. After Auschwitz, art is impelled not by the final realization, but the unending *dissolution* of the Absolute: ‘art must turn against itself, in opposition to its own concept, and thus become uncertain of itself right into its innermost fiber’.¹⁹ It is worth drawing out the intensely paradoxical logic at work here; Adorno suggests that in order to keep faith with itself today – that is, *to be art* – art must negate all those elements that normally constitute it – that is, *not be art*. Art after Auschwitz signifies a resistance to its own ideals of beauty and harmony. It is in this sense that we can understand the apparent internal contradiction in Adorno’s late work, whereby the very thinker who proclaims that ‘to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric’ puts poetry at the heart of philosophy after Auschwitz.²⁰

Adorno’s judgement on poetry after Auschwitz demands not that art be abandoned, but that it recognize its own necessary and insuperable disproportion to the horrors that haunt it. The attempt to bring the genocide into art cannot be premised on an ideal of representational adequation, what Adorno scathingly calls ‘a photograph of the disaster’ (*AT*, p. 19). Given that the truth of the Holocaust lies in its strangeness to any possible knowledge, representational art

is always bound to betray this truth. Art must thus absorb into itself its own collapse as a form of knowledge; hence its description throughout *Aesthetic Theory* as 'uncertain', 'a question' or 'a failure'.

In Adorno's late writings, this self-inversion of the artwork is associated with one writer above all: Samuel Beckett. Beckett's authorship presupposes that thought and experience after Auschwitz go on under the shadow of 'the destruction of meaning'. Yet his plays' significance lies in their pushing 'beyond meaning's abstract negation', beyond, that is, a mere 'absence of any meaning' which would render them 'simply irrelevant'. Rather than signalling the end of all conceptual and aesthetic categories, 'they force traditional categories to undergo this experience [of the destruction of meaning]... they put meaning on trial' (*AT*, p. 153). Rather than abandoning traditional categories (which would only leave them intact), Beckett subjects them to their own crisis, and makes this crisis the very substance of his writing. Thus, the emancipation of the plays becomes 'aesthetically meaningful... precisely because aesthetic meaning is not immediately one with theological meaning' (*AT*, p. 153).

That the aesthetic and the theological fail to coincide implies that in Beckett art negates rather than transmits positive meaning. Art, that is, no longer experiences its end as the fulfilment of meaning, but as the unrelenting fracture and interruption of fulfilment. Meaning in Beckett converges with its own negation.

This convergence is elaborated in Adorno's famous extended reading of Beckett's *Endgame*. The title of the essay – 'Trying to Understand Endgame'²¹ – conveys the play's ambiguous relation to the understanding, which Adorno characterizes thus: 'Understanding it can mean only understanding its unintelligibility, concretely reconstructing the meaning of the fact that it has no meaning' (*NL* 1, p. 243). The play's unnamed and indeterminate post-apocalyptic landscape is the figure for this 'positive nothingness' (*AT*, p. 153). In post-war Europe, 'everything, including a resurrected culture, has been destroyed without realizing it; humankind continues to vegetate, creeping along after events that even the survivors cannot really survive, on a rubbish heap that has made even reflection on one's own damaged state useless' (*NL* 1, p. 244). The survivor – the one who 'lives on' – cannot really live on. Experience can no longer be reconciled with the concepts that would render it meaningful. 'Everything' is 'destroyed without realising it'; that is, our faculty for imposing meaning – for 'realising' – is a part of the 'everything' that has been destroyed. From this perspective, the understanding of Adorno's title can be read as the Kantian Understanding that brings intuitions under concepts. This faculty 'tries' to operate in the face of *Endgame*, only to find itself put on trial by a language and imagery which refuses conceptual subsumption, exposing the understanding to its own extinction.

Endgame is Adorno's exemplary post-Auschwitz text because in it this crisis of the understanding is given substantial form. It dramatizes this crisis not

abstractly, in the form of an external perspective on the condition of its characters, but through the internal life of its language, both verbal and gestural. Language in the play gives voice not to the life but to the death of the individual subject: the tortuously repetitious exchanges, wearisome tales, lame jokes, along with the ritually purposeless sequences of movement all attest to the prising apart of language from subjective intention. Clov, Hamm, Nell and Nagg's words give the lie to 'the individual's claim to autonomy and being' (*NL* 1, p. 249); the insubstantiality of their talk is that of the modern self. The unnamed and unnamable apocalypse that precedes the play is the figure for an experience which has shattered the very substantiality of consciousness. Meaning, 'the discursive element in language', is transformed 'into an instrument of its own absurdity, following the ritual of the clown, whose babbling becomes nonsense by being presented as sense' (*NL* 1, p. 262).

Adorno's reflections on Beckett's play, and on post-Holocaust art more generally, may seem unrelentingly bleak. And yet, beyond their preoccupation with the voiding of meaning, they offer a way of understanding the positive demand of his 'new categorical imperative'. The experimental art of Beckett and his contemporaries, far from being simply nihilistic, convey through their strategies of aesthetic negation the impossibility of bringing meaning – thought, knowledge, action – to a state of completion. Like the Adornian imperative itself, they derive their force from this impossibility. Art remembers redemption by forgetting it, by abandoning any claim to its achievement. The artwork worthy of the name works by way of the perpetual postponement of its own resolution, its repeated restatement of itself as a question: 'Artworks that unfold to contemplation and thought without remainder are not artworks' (*AT*, 121). The artwork, in other words, works under an imperative to maintain itself as a question; the task of art after Auschwitz is to submit itself to this imperative.

Emmanuel Levinas

A similarly paradoxical mode of thought, in which the fulfilment of thought is tied to its interruption, is to be found in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. In Levinas, however, it is religion rather than art that serves as the vehicle of this paradox. Religion for Levinas signifies not the struggle for the reconciliation of the human and the Divine, finite and Infinite, but their untiringly preserved *non-reconciliation*: 'Religion, where relationship subsists between the same and the other despite the impossibility of the Whole – the idea of Infinity – is the ultimate structure.'²²

For Levinas, fidelity to this structure must take the form of a wresting of God from the grasp of positive religion or theology and their conceptualizing languages. The language of 'certainty or uncertainty', faith or doubt, draws God into an order of meaning which would render human history and experience

determinate. A thought of God which destabilizes this order, which puts in question rather than resolves the meaning of experience, would alone be worthy of the name religion.

The religious ‘witness’ attests to a revelation that signifies in the form of its own concealment its refusal of positive presence. This is why God’s name is absent from the exemplary prophetic attestation, ‘*Hineini*’, ‘Here I am’ (*‘Me voici’*). Bearing witness to God, far from being a positive experience of the Divine ‘voice’, is simply my exposure to the Other, to the other person to whom I am primordially and infinitely responsible prior to any assumption of such responsibility on my own part. The Other is for Levinas that which perpetually exceeds my grasp or comprehension, which eludes presence and so is irreducibly strange to and distant from me. The ethical relation is in this sense a religious one, a relation conditioned not by my subjective action but by the Other’s command, a command which defines the very meaning of my being: to be is in Levinasian terms ‘to-be-for-the-Other’.

Thus, to be in the ‘presence’ of God is not to stand before some entity, either empirical or transcendent, but to find myself exposed to the ‘outside, or on the “other side” of presence’,²³ in a space where language is reduced to saying nothing, or ‘no thing’, other than the bare fact of address. The more positive religion seeks to overcome this no-thing, to fill the void God introduces into language, the more it will traduce its own truth. As Levinas puts it, ‘theological language destroys the religious situation of transcendence. The infinite “presents” itself anarchically, but thematization loses the anarchy which alone can accredit it. Language about God rings false or becomes a myth’ (*OB*, p. 197). There is no ‘literal’ language of God because His immediacy tolerates no linguistic mediation. Language can avoid ‘destroying the religious situation of transcendence’ only by abandoning the attempt to make God present, an object of experience.

This approach in the form of withdrawal is signified in the single term which concentrates the entirety of Levinas’s religious philosophy: ‘*adieu*’. The unhyphenated word, of course, signifies a leave-taking (but also, in certain circumstances, a greeting); by interposing a hyphen, Levinas doubles the word, restoring its literal meaning without annulling its more conventional sense. The effect of this paradoxical gesture is to render the approach to God (*à-Dieu*) indissociable from a retreat (*adieu*).

Alongside Adorno, Levinas’s ‘*adieu*’ reads like an attempt to forge a religious language resistant to the kind of positivity for which the former abjures religion in its modern form. It is a language which, like Adornian art, turns religion against itself, invoking and revoking simultaneously the divine Name. If Adorno finds in positive religion an intoxication by a sham transcendence,²⁴ Levinas’s dual movement of divine approach and withdrawal signifies the vigilant refusal of such intoxication. In the face of its constant temptation to intoxication,

religion must perpetually ‘sober itself up’, with a sobriety ‘always yet to be further sobered’.²⁵

Levinas’s expansive body of writings on Judaism subjects all of its key terms to this sobering up, divesting them of every association with eschatological finality or resolution. Nowhere is this dissociation more striking than in his scattered writings on the question of the messianic. Levinas offers a clear summation of his thought on this question in an interview with Richard Kearney: ‘I could not accept a messianism that would terminate the need for discussion, that would end our watchfulness.’²⁶ The messianic, far from signifying a substantive empirical being or event, would be the principle which prevents moral responsibility from coming to an end. ‘Messianism,’ he writes, ‘is...not the certainty of the coming of a man who stops History. It is my power to bear the suffering of all.’²⁷ This power is the condition for what Levinas will later call a religion that ‘does not begin in promise’, a religion ‘impossible to preach’, in which we may recognize ‘the difficult piety – all the certainties and personal risks – of the twentieth century, after the horrors of its genocides and its Holocaust.’²⁸

The Holocaust, in other words, is what prevents the construal of the Messiah as the ultimate redeemer of History, a figure who would impose a final resolution on the question of morality. It demands instead a vision of the messianic as that which *perpetuates* and keeps open this question.

Such a messianism is found above all in the interpretative practices of rabbinism. The Talmudic hermeneutic, at least as Levinas reads it, is an awakening of language to what perpetually exceeds its reach, drawing reading and writing into a mode of ‘infinity’, of constitutive incompletion.

Adornian art and Levinasian religion have thus revealed a possibility for the future of philosophy after Auschwitz which escapes the temptation to redeem the horror of the camps without lapsing into nihilistic despair. Where, as we have seen, the major North American Jewish philosophers have tended to draw the Holocaust into one or other narrative of redemption, European philosophers have rather unsparingly fractured all such narratives. Philosophy after Auschwitz continues to be faced with the dilemma we have sought to explore in this chapter: how to continue thinking without yielding to the temptations of false consolation.

Notes

- 1 J. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 6–8.
- 2 Other significant thinkers in this tradition include Ignaz Maybaum and Arthur A. Cohen. The former, a German-born British Reform rabbi, articulates perhaps the most extreme version of the second position, seeing the Holocaust as a sacrifice through which God brings His people to spiritual and historical maturity. The latter,

an American theologian and novelist, is undoubtedly the thinker in this tradition closest to the third position, finding in the Holocaust a radical and insuperable crisis of Jewish theological categories. See I. Maybaum, *The Face of God after Auschwitz* (Amsterdam: Polak and Van Gennep, 1965), and A.A. Cohen, *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (New York: Continuum, 1981).

- 3 R.L. Rubinstein, *After Auschwitz* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), hereafter AA. Rubinstein's book was first published in 1966 with the subtitle 'Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism', and reissued in substantially revised form in 1992 ('nine of the fifteen chapters have been eliminated from the second edition, which has sixteen chapters, ten of them new to *After Auschwitz*') with the subtitle 'History, Theology and Contemporary Judaism'. For a statement of the differences between the two versions of the book, see the Preface to the 1992 edition. Because my concern in this study is not with the history of theological responses to Auschwitz but rather with the task of thought it imposes on the present, I have confined my reading of Rubinstein to commentary on the 1992 edition.
- 4 This sentence is Rubinstein's own citation from the 1966 edition. While his gloss on this self-citation initially suggests a softening of this either/or position on the viability of covenantal theology, the alternative theological interpretations of Auschwitz he goes on to acknowledge – Jewish Messianism and Christian eschatology – are hardly credible from his perspective. The essential argument with regard to the collapse of the providential view of history thus remains unchanged.
- 5 Z. Braiterman, *(God) After Auschwitz* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 92–3.
- 6 This confident prediction of a neo-paganist revival in Israel is offered in the 1963 essay 'The Rebirth of Israel in Contemporary Jewish Theology', one of the essays from the first edition retained in the second. It should be noted that Rubinstein acknowledges the hastiness of this prediction in more recent essays and suggests that such a revival has ironically been confined to the Gush Emunim ('Block of the Faithful'), the militant West Bank settlers whose Messianic zeal for the Land is for Rubinstein an unconscious response to the awesome potency of the earth.
- 7 E. Berkowitz, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973), hereafter FAH. The prefix 'neo-' is intended to indicate Berkowitz's distance from the theodicy prevalent amongst ultra-Orthodox interpreters for whom Auschwitz is an expression of God's punishment '*mipnei chateinu*' – 'for our sins'. While remaining very much within normative Judaic boundaries, Berkowitz creatively mobilizes the text of tradition against such an interpretation.
- 8 This is, of course, the subtitle to Fackenheim's major work of 1982, *To Mend the World*, 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), hereafter MW.
- 9 I cite here from the preface to the second edition of 1994.
- 10 This is the title of Fackenheim's collection of essays (New York: Schocken, 1978).
- 11 T.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 465. For a more sustained attempt to develop the implications of Adorno's 'new categorical imperative', see my *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2003).
- 12 M. Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. A. Smock (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1986); amongst the relevant texts of the other authors are J. Derrida, *Cinders*, trans. N. Lukacher (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1991); P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Fiction of the Political: Heidegger, Art and Politics*, trans. C. Turner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); idem, *Poetry as Experience*, trans. A. Tarnowski (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J.-L. Nancy, *Le Mythe Nazi* (La Tour D'Aigues:

- Editions L'Aube, 1991); J.-L. Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. B. McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); J.-F. Lyotard, *The Différend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); idem, *Heidegger and 'the jews'*, trans. A. Michel and M. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); S. Kofman, *Smothered Words*, trans. M. Dobie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998); E. Jabès, *The Book of Questions*, vol. One, trans. R. Waldrop (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1991); G. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).
- 13 Undoubtedly the most explicit and so most notorious attempt to realize this ambition is to be found in Hegel's concept of 'Absolute Knowledge', the telos of philosophy in which all that was extraneous to knowledge is absorbed into it. See *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 479–93.
 - 14 E. Levinas, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism', *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (1990), 63–71.
 - 15 E. Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger and Man-Made Mass Death* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 28.
 - 16 P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J.-L. Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', *Critical Inquiry*, 16 (1990), 311.
 - 17 G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
 - 18 Kofman, *Smothered Words*, p. 30.
 - 19 T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 2; hereafter *AT*.
 - 20 T.W. Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society', in *Prisms*, trans S. Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), p. 34.
 - 21 T.W. Adorno, 'Trying to Understand Endgame', in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. S.W. Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 1; hereafter *NL*.
 - 22 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1971), p. 80; hereafter *TI*.
 - 23 E. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 149; hereafter *OB*.
 - 24 Religion today, Adorno writes, is driven not by 'the truth and authenticity of revelation...but rather the need for guidance, the confirmation of what is already established, and also the hope that by means of a resolute decision alone one could breathe back that meaning into the disenchanted world under whose absence we have been suffering so long, as though we were spectators staring at something meaningless'. See 'Reason and Revelation', in *Critical Models*, trans. H.W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 137.
 - 25 E. Levinas, 'From Consciousness to Wakefulness: Starting from Husserl', in *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. B. Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 30.
 - 26 In *Face to Face with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. R.A. Cohen (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986), p. 31.
 - 27 E. Levinas, 'Messianic Texts', in *Difficult Freedom*, trans. S. Hand (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 90.
 - 28 E. Levinas, 'Diachrony and Representation', in *Entre-Nous: On Thinking of the Other*, trans. M.B. Smith (London: Athlone, 1998), p. 177.

22

Testimony and Representation

Zoë Waxman

Holocaust representation, rather than being a recent phenomenon, has a history, one that goes back to the events of the Holocaust. This history shows Holocaust representation to have been both contested and to contain contradictions. Furthermore, it can be seen that Holocaust representation is mediated by this history – the bearing of witness is inextricably linked with its social and historical conditions. Importantly, the post-war conception and comprehension of the Holocaust as a historical event and the notion of collective memory play significant roles in the construction and reconstruction of representation.

Against the prevalent idea that survivors have only recently come forward to tell their stories out of a new, flourishing culture of witnessing (a view espoused by Norman Finkelstein in his polemical attack on the so-called ‘Holocaust industry’),¹ witnesses were aware of the historical importance of their experiences as they unfolded. As early as 1939, an interpretive trajectory of events and large-scale documentary projects were being developed in the ghettos of eastern Europe. Within a month of the German invasion of Poland, Emanuel Ringelblum, a trained social historian and teacher, began to form the secret, Warsaw-based *Oneg Shabbat*² archives. These archives, which represent the most systematic attempt to record Jewish suffering during the Holocaust, were dedicated to finding the best way to record the uprooting of communities, and the suffering and destruction of Polish Jewry.³ Ringelblum explains:

The war produced rapid changes in Jewish life in the towns of Poland. Each day was different from the next. The scene changed as quickly as in a movie.... Every month brought profound changes which fundamentally altered Jewish life. It was therefore important to capture every event in Jewish life in the heat of the moment, while it was still fresh and pulsating.⁴

Ringelblum and the staff of *Oneg Shabbat* decided to collect diaries and eyewitness accounts.⁵ While the surviving documentation is treated almost reverentially – as

providing snapshots of history – witnesses knew that what they were experiencing would one day be studied as an important historical event, and this awareness shaped their writing. In addition to wanting to leave a record of their own, and in particular, their families' existence, their primary aim was to provide a basis for future historical research. For example, Chaim Kaplan, a committed diarist of the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote on 31 July 1942: 'My utmost concern is for hiding my diary so that it will be preserved for future generations.'⁶ Before he was deported to the Treblinka death camp in late 1942, Kaplan gave his diary, recorded in a child's copybook, to a friend to smuggle out of the ghetto. The diary was discovered after the war, almost intact, in a kerosene can. Kaplan saw it as his duty to describe the suffering experienced daily in the Warsaw Ghetto, in particular the hunger and frustration of the Jews.

Witnesses were able to recognize that certain activities were important not just for their immediate consequences, but for the part they might play in shaping historical understanding. While the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising may have been inevitably limited in scope, Mordechai Anielewicz, commander-in-chief of the ŻOB (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa* – Jewish Combat Organization), wrote shortly before his death: 'The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defence in the ghetto will have been a reality.'⁷

The ghetto diarists also had the fear that many post-war witnesses developed about the aestheticization of the suffering of the Jewish people through the use of poetic or luxurious language. Ringelblum declared:

We intentionally avoided professional journalists because we did not want the writing to become hackneyed. We made a conscious effort that the course of events in every town, the experience of every Jew – and every Jew during the present War is a world in himself – would come across simply and faithfully. Every superfluous word, every literary turn of language or embellishment grates on the ear and evokes resentment. Wartime Jewish life is so rich in tragedy that it is unnecessary to enrich it with one superfluous line.⁸

The aim was to provide a simple and unambiguous account of the suffering of the Jews: 'Comprehensiveness was the main principle of our work. Objectivity was the second. We endeavoured to convey the whole truth, no matter how bitter, and we presented faithful unadorned pictures.'⁹ Ringelblum's description of the work of *Oneg Shabbat* shows how witnesses in the ghetto were deeply concerned with the problems of representation:

We tried to give an all-embracing picture of Jewish life during the war. Our aim was a presentation of a photographically true and detailed picture of what the Jewish population had to experience, to think and to suffer.¹⁰

After the war, survivor-writers struggled to meet the ultimately impossible requirements of comprehensiveness and objectivity; as they learnt more about the many and varied events of the Holocaust they were to realize the boundaries of their own, very subjective experiences. Ringelblum and his staff were keenly aware of the limitations of their project; in particular, the dangers of maintaining such an illegal activity amid a large Gestapo presence meant that large-scale recruiting was impossible. The very name *Oneg Shabbat* was intended to ensure secrecy; it was not just an issue for Ringelblum and the staff of *Oneg Shabbat*, but a necessity negotiated by many of the ghetto diarists. Ringelblum wrote:

During the first months the public was fearfully terrorized and afraid of house-searches. At that time Jews burnt everything, even innocent books, which were not forbidden even under Hitler.... In time people calmed down.... And then Jews began to write. Everybody wrote: journalists, writers, teachers, social activists, youth and even children.¹¹

However, the need for secrecy inevitably led to the omission of certain details and these omissions led to tensions, which are expressed in the ghetto diaries. For example, witnesses had to be cautious about discussing plans for resistance: they had carefully to balance the need to inform future historians with their own need to survive. Ringelblum, although very much involved in plans for the Ghetto Uprising, made no mention of such activity in his journal.

Although witnesses such as Mordecai Anielewicz wanted to promote Jewish resistance, Lawrence Langer – a well-known critic of the increasing tendency to use the Holocaust to promote simplistic moral messages about the importance of heroism, or the triumph of good over evil – dismisses any notion that the act of writing under such difficult conditions might be regarded as resistance. He explains:

Although this assumption has nurtured an extensive commentary on the Holocaust, it is at odds, linguistically and ultimately factually, with the reality of the survivors' memory. In framing the Holocaust through the lens of heroic rhetoric, Holocaust chroniclers exhibit their own discomfort with the facts left to us by Holocaust victims, dead and alive, and reveal the inadequacy of our language in the face of what there is to tell.¹²

While 'framing the Holocaust through the lens of heroic rhetoric' might be 'factually' at odds with the grim reality of ghetto life, it does voice the concerns of many ghetto diarists, who needed to find something positive in their response to the catastrophe they were experiencing. Even so, it can be argued that Ringelblum and his staff – propelled by a strong sense of Jewish identity – shared

a commitment to represent Jewish responses to German persecution in the best possible light:

The historian of the future will have to devote a fitting chapter to the role of the Jewish woman during the war. It is thanks to the courage and endurance of our women that thousands of families have been able to endure these bitter times.¹³

Witnesses wanted to be remembered not just as passive victims, but also for their attempts to document their experiences. After the mass deportations between 22 July 1942 and 21 September 1942, when around 265,000 Jews were deported to Treblinka, the leaders of *Oneg Shabbat* decided to seal the archives in milk churns and metal containers and bury them. The first part of the archives, together with Ringelblum's diary, was discovered in September 1946, in ten metal containers under the ruins of a house in the former Jewish Quarter of Warsaw; the second part of the collection (including two of the milk churns)¹⁴ was found there in December 1950. Unfortunately, the third part has never been found.

With the Jews' increasing awareness of their fate came an increasing awareness of the limits of representation. On 27 August 1940, Chaim Kaplan wrote:

There is no end to our scroll of agony. I am afraid that the impressions of this terrible era will be lost because they have not been adequately recorded. I risk my life with my writing, but my abilities are limited; I don't know all the facts; those that I do know may not be sufficiently clear; and many of them I write on the basis of rumours whose accuracy I cannot guarantee. But for the sake of truth, I do not require individual facts, but rather the manifestations of the fruits of a great many facts that leave their impression on the people's opinions, on their mood and morale. And I can guarantee the factualness of these manifestations because I dwell among my people and behold their misery and their soul's torments.¹⁵

While Kaplan risked his life to document his experiences, he was aware that he could not give all the facts; instead of being objective he had to rely on the supposed immediacy of manifested souls and the misery of lived experience. As his words suggest, by the end of the Warsaw Ghetto, diarists were beginning to rethink their conceptions of how best to represent their experiences. Regardless of their overt intention to write objectively (or not), the testimonies can be seen to document more than mere events. From the beginning, the ghetto diarists were able to foresee some of the concerns that would come to dominate later representations of this period, such as the issue of Jewish resistance.

In contrast to the Nazi-enforced ghettos, which harboured many Jewish diaries and other documents, very few testimonies were written in the concentration camps, or survived them. This is due to the general lack of resources, such as paper and writing equipment; the fear of punishment; lack of privacy in the barracks and the German commitment to destroy evidence of their crimes. Aside from these practical considerations, few prisoners had the mental or physical energy to consider recording their experiences as they happened: each prisoner's capacities were stretched to the limit in an effort to survive. The writings of the mostly Jewish (some were Russian prisoners-of-war) *Sonderkommando* (special detachment) prisoners, forced to work in the crematoria of Auschwitz-Birkenau, feature prominently among the rare exceptions. These men, not holding on to even the barest hope of survival, knew that anything they wanted to document had to be done immediately.¹⁶ Three men – Zelman Gradowski, Salmen Lewental and Dayan Langfus – united to record their experiences of the ghetto, deportation, arrival at Auschwitz and their work in the *Sonderkommando*. Between 1945 and 1962, fragments of notes and the six diaries they wrote were found buried near the crematoria at Birkenau.¹⁷ The writings, which have become known as the 'Auschwitz scrolls',¹⁸ were not only an attempt to let the world know of their experiences, but they also serve as a reminder of the men's existence. However, the men wanted to leave more than just eyewitness documents of the destruction they were forced to witness; they too wanted to emphasize resistance, albeit a martyred one. For example, the second manuscript of Zelman Gradowski, found among the ruins of the ovens in the summer of 1945, recounts the murder of 5,000 Czech Jews in the gas chambers of Birkenau in terms of a martyred resistance. Rather than focusing on his own helplessness in the face of such destruction, he chose to focus on the defiance of the Czech Jews – in a sense, to bear witness for them. He states:

All glanced scornfully at the line of officers, not wishing to grace them with direct gazes. No one pleaded, no one sought mercy.... They didn't want to give them the pleasure of watching them beg for their lives in despair.¹⁹

Wanting 'to immortalize the dear, beloved names of those, for whom, at this moment, I cannot even expend a tear',²⁰ Gradowski and other members of the *Sonderkommando* buried with their writings a large number of teeth – as a means to trace the dead.²¹

Salmen Lewental's testimony was discovered in 1962, in a jar buried in the ground near Crematorium III.²² It was written on a few sheets of paper and contains plans to blow up Crematorium IV, which took place on 7 October 1944; Lewental's documentation remains the primary source of information regarding the *Sonderkommando* uprising at Birkenau.²³ However, the notes do more than plan the uprising; like Gradowski, Lewental wanted to leave behind

a record of Jewish resistance. By leaving behind their testimony, Lewental and Gradowksi, like the ghetto diarists, tried to find some meaning to their fate. Gradowski writes: 'Dear discoverer of these writings! I have a request of you: this is the real reason I write, that my doomed life may attain some meaning, that my hellish days and hopeless tomorrows may find a purpose in the future.'²⁴ Knowing that he could not wait until liberation to bear witness, Gradowski buried his work before taking part in his final act of resistance: the *Sonderkommando* revolt.

Like the workers of *Oneg Shabbat*, the *Sonderkommando* prisoners took pains to bury their writings to ensure that they would not be lost. The testimonies show both an awareness of the difficulty of recording lived experience and simultaneously a concern to find the right way of doing so. While the rare surviving testimony produced during the Holocaust is free from the additional demands and organizing principles that are subsequently placed on and mediate the testimony of survivors, it does not mean that those writing in the ghettos and concentration camps were better able to write unmediated, objective accounts.

It is likely that there were other prisoners who wrote testimonies that have either been lost or destroyed. Those that did would not have been able to offer as comprehensive accounts as Emanuel Ringelblum and members of *Oneg Shabbat* were able to produce. In terms of concrete historical information, what the testimony of a concentration camp witness can provide is extremely limited. With the exception of those connected with the network of underground resistance movements, they had far less access to information than was the case for Ringelblum and his colleagues. Even if subjected to more than one concentration camp, witnesses would still have experienced only small parts of each one, and conditions within each camp were divergent and subject to constant change. Furthermore, the specific nature of a particular work *kommando* (labour detachment), or a prisoner's position within the social hierarchy of the camp, not only crucially affected a prisoner's experiences, but also the possibility to bear witness. Hence, the men of the *Sonderkommando* were aware that they were in a unique position to witness the extent and nature of the crimes of the SS.

The SS's frequently repeated dictum, that no witnesses would survive to tell the world about the suffering inflicted on the Jews, haunted many prisoners. Szymon Laks recalls the words spoken by an SS officer in Auschwitz:

You see... according to the instructions of the Führer himself, not even one *Häftling* [prisoner] should come out alive from any concentration camp. In other words, there will be no one who can tell the world what has happened here in the last few years. But even if such witnesses should be found – and this is the essence of the brilliant plan of our Führer – NOBODY WILL

BELIEVE THEM.... Even if we lose the war...no one will present us with the reckoning.²⁵

For concentration camp inmates, aware of their own disbelief at encountering such a hellish world, there was an expectation of how difficult it would be to recount their experiences to the outside world. Prisoners such as Primo Levi were terrified that if they did have the opportunity to tell their stories, no one would believe them. Levi, a trained chemist, used to making observations with a scientist's precision, made notes of things he planned to tell the world at liberation. Levi describes a recurring dream he had at Auschwitz. In the dream he leaves the camp and returns home to tell of the horrors he has witnessed. While he is speaking, he realizes that no one is listening:

This is my sister here, with some unidentifiable friend and many other people. They are all listening to me and it is this very story that I am telling: the whistle of three notes, the hard bed, my neighbour whom I would like to move, but whom I am afraid to wake as he is stronger than me. I also speak diffusely of our hunger and of the lice control, and of the Kapo who hit me on the nose and then sent me to wash myself as I was bleeding. It is an intense pleasure, physical, inexpressible, to be at home, among friendly people, and to have so many things to recount: but I cannot help noticing that my listeners do not follow me. In fact, they are completely indifferent: they speak confusedly of other things among themselves, as if I was not there. My sister looks at me, gets up and goes away without a word.²⁶

In the immediate post-war period, many survivors found that their experiences went unheard. Despite the immediate post-war newsreels of the liberation of the camps, the destruction of European Jewry was a relatively ignored topic for the first twenty years after the war. This was partly due to the inability both to understand the scale of the destruction and to place what had happened to the Jews within the context of the Second World War.²⁷ The Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy had not yet become part of historical consciousness. While the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in 1945 introduced the concept of 'crimes against humanity' – and by bringing to trial 22 Nazi leaders made sure the crimes of Nazism did not go unpunished – it was not specifically concerned with the Jewish tragedy. Although survivors did testify at the trials, and a huge amount of testimony was collected, there was only interest in them from a judicial perspective, in how far they could contribute to the prosecuting of Nazi war criminals.²⁸

Nevertheless, many people began writing their memoirs immediately after the liberation of the camps. Between 1945 and 1949, 75 memoirs were published: 15 in Yiddish, 13 in Hebrew and 12 in Polish – the main languages of

the survivors. In addition, seven were published in French, six in Hungarian and five in English.²⁹ The fact that these books were published at all demonstrates that there was a market for this type of literature in a variety of languages, although it was very different from the huge market that exists today. Survivors were also involved in the compilation of the *Yizkor Bikher* (memorial books). Written in Hebrew, Yiddish or a mixture of the two languages, they are dedicated to the memory of Jewish life that was destroyed. The books (some 900 have been written) contain diaries and other literary items dating from the Holocaust period and include articles by historians and survivors on the histories of the vanished communities; details of pre-war Jewish life; life in the ghettos, the uprisings and resistance; concentration camps, labour camps and death camps; the attitudes of the local populations; the plight of the survivors; and details regarding immigration to Israel.³⁰ However, the majority of testimonies – including diaries written during the Holocaust – did not find publishers until the mid-1960s. Although Primo Levi's first book, *Survival in Auschwitz*, written just a few months after his return to Italy (following a number of repatriation camps in the Soviet Union) found a publisher in 1947, it did not attract interest until much later. He reflects:

The manuscript was turned down by a number of important publishers; it was accepted in 1947 by a small publisher who printed only 2,500 copies and then folded. So this first book of mine fell into oblivion for many years: perhaps also because in all of Europe those were difficult times of mourning and reconstruction and the public did not want to return in memory to the painful years of the war that had just ended.³¹

It was not only the lack of interest that made publishers reluctant to accept survivors' testimonies. Survivors had not realized that their very survival had made them objects of suspicion and unease. Primo Levi was soon to discover that people would 'judge with facile hindsight, or...perhaps feel cruelly repelled'³² by survivors' accounts. With the exception of *Survival in Auschwitz*, which did find a major publisher,³³ few memoirs were published during the 1950s. However, survivors did not abandon the commitment to bear witness. Elie Wiesel, who was deported to Auschwitz as a teenager, points to the enormity of the Nazi genocide as meaning that survivors have no choice but to tell their stories: 'I have written them in order to testify. My role is the role of the witness.... Not to tell, or to tell another story, is...to commit perjury.'³⁴

It was not until sometime between 1957 and 1959 that the English word 'holocaust' was used to describe the murder of European Jewry during the Second World War³⁵ when English-speaking writers and historians began to acknowledge that what had happened to the Jews needed to be understood as a separate historical event.³⁶ However, as Peter Novick points out, it was not

until the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, in 1961 (and his execution in 1962), that the destruction of European Jewry really became understood as a singular event – as *the Holocaust*.³⁷ The experiences of survivors slowly ceased being seen as isolated, personal experiences of suffering, and instead became viewed as essential components of an important historical event. While at the beginning of the trial Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General in charge of prosecuting Eichmann, was met by the refusal of survivors to testify, soon into the trial, survivors were queuing to bring their experiences into the public domain (more than 100 survivors testified at the trial). However, while journalists and scholars started to become interested in what had happened to the Jews, they wanted to know selective things only: they were interested in what happened and how it had happened, but not really what it meant to have lived through the experiences.

It was not until the late 1960s or early 1970s that the number of memoirs published started to increase significantly. Then, in 1978, the appearance of the television docu-drama ‘Holocaust’ brought the unspeakable into people’s homes and finally made the experiences of survivors a matter of public rather than purely scholarly interest. The 9½-hour mini-series, which portrayed in soap opera format the fate of German and Jewish neighbours, was presented by NBC-TV to an audience of 120 million, or half the American population. Since then representations of the Holocaust have been slowly making their way into the mainstream media. While initially Hollywood filmmakers were reluctant to tackle the Holocaust in commercial cinema, since Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*, in 1994, it has become an increasingly popular subject. In January 1995, the fiftieth commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz brought survivors further into the public eye. Survivors such as Anita Lasker-Wallfisch were inundated with calls from the media. Although many survivors, including Lasker-Wallfisch, speak of badly conducted interviews with insensitive questions, the event marked an important development for the exposure of Holocaust testimonies. Finally, survivors were being asked to speak about their experiences. Lasker-Wallfisch herself recognizes the irony: ‘When we first came to England, Renate [her sister] and I badly wanted to talk, but *no one* asked us any questions.’³⁸ Today, the Holocaust has been transformed from being a relatively ignored event to being recognized as an important benchmark in twentieth-century European history. Testimonies of the Holocaust are now used ethically as a lesson in morality and politically as a warning from history, and the insights of those who survived the Holocaust are increasingly being applied to a diffuse range of moral and political issues.

While increased awareness of the Holocaust at least recognizes the suffering of the survivors, in merging individual experiences into a singular concept, the wide diversity of Holocaust experiences easily becomes hidden. For example, it is unclear when the Holocaust begins. With the rise of the Nazi Party in 1933?

With the *Kristallnacht* pogrom conducted in Germany and Austria on 9 and 10 November 1938? With the *Einsatzgruppen* shootings in the summer of 1941? Or with the mass murder of the Jews in the gas vans of Chełmno in December 1941? Or, if the Holocaust is to include both the mass murders of Jews and non-Jews, does it begin with the euthanasia programme in 1939?³⁹ The Holocaust is not a unified event, but many different events. It is impossible to conflate different survivor stories into a universal Holocaust experience because no such experience exists. Many survivors never experienced concentration or labour camps but survived by hiding (some with false Aryan papers, some without), some alone, some with family members. Also, the time spent in the ghettos and concentration camps varies widely. Not taking into account religious, cultural, economic and gender differences, those who survived the concentration camps had quite different experiences, depending on the camps they were sent to, the conditions within the camps while they were there (conditions were subject to frequent change), the work they were assigned and the support systems to which they had access. The dilemma is that while the survivor can ultimately offer only a singular account, the post-war role of the survivor as witness and concept of the Holocaust demands that they also represent the six million⁴⁰ who did not survive. However, as Primo Levi wrote: 'we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses.'⁴¹ The survivor Henry Wermuth adds:

How could I even attempt to describe all the wretched misery, the death-cries of millions of innocent people, the open and secret tortures, the agony of parents seeing their babies dragged away and thrown like discarded rubbish on to lorries, sometimes alive, sometimes killed, their limbs torn apart or their heads smashed in? How could I, or anyone put into words the last moments of even one family inside a gas chamber, stripped, degraded, humiliated, embracing and looking into each other's terrified eyes, the strongest of them forced to see their loved ones dying slowly and in agony.... Being in these camps does not, contrary to the assumptions of many, imply that I knew all and everything there was to know about them.... My overriding concern was to stay alive.⁴²

Although Wermuth, like Primo Levi, is aware that he is unable to bear witness to the suffering of the six million, he nevertheless believes that the main aim of a Holocaust witness is 'to counter those people, who, incredible as it sounds, are hard at work in diminishing the dimension of the unspeakable crimes, to whittle down the figures of those killed – or to deny the *Shoah*, or *Hurban*, altogether'.⁴³ His very literal translation of the role of the witness – to counteract false belief and prove something to be true – makes very particular demands of the survivor-writer: it demands comprehensiveness and objectivity.

While the difficulties of writing during the Holocaust are readily accepted, what is somewhat less evident is that bearing witness after the events has its own set of problems. As well as the subjective nature of individual experience, survivors have to contend with the contingencies and inevitable limitations of memory. Even when describing their own experiences, survivors often have to read testimonies and histories to fill the gaps in their memories. As Primo Levi writes: 'The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even increase by incorporating extraneous features.'⁴⁴

However, like the Jews writing in the Warsaw Ghetto, survivors believe that while they are ultimately unable to present comprehensive and factually perfect accounts of the Holocaust, they can be true to the essence of the suffering. Charlotte Delbo has written: 'Today, I am not sure that what I wrote is true. I am certain it is truthful.'⁴⁵ Sim Kessel echoes this: 'On the ground of truth or sincerity I could not I think be reproached. But on many points I wanted to be more precise.'⁴⁶

The very act of writing changes a witness's relationship to their experiences. It translates the extreme into the familiar. Anita Lasker-Wallfisch writes both of the difficulty of conveying the extremity of her suffering in a way that will make sense to her readers, and also her unease in doing so:

I don't know how to describe *hunger*, not the type everybody is familiar with when a meal has been skipped but hunger that causes actual *pain*; or what it is to be *cold* without any prospect of ever becoming warm again; or the sensation of *real fear* and total misery.⁴⁷

In making her testimony transmittable, Lasker-Wallfisch has to use words that evoke shared human experience, such as 'pain' or 'cold', but feels the need to counteract their familiar usage through the use of italics. Lasker-Wallfisch believes it is impossible to represent the events of the Holocaust, because their horror is beyond comprehension. This is what Primo Levi meant when he spoke of 'the ineffable universe of the camps'.⁴⁸ Similarly, Elie Wiesel believes that the only way to preserve the inexplicability of the original event is through silence: 'by its uniqueness the holocaust defies literature'⁴⁹ and: 'Auschwitz cannot be explained... the Holocaust transcends history'.⁵⁰ Wiesel asks: 'how is one to say, how is one to communicate that which by its very nature defies language?'⁵¹ He has stated:

Even if you studied all the documentation, even if you listened to all the testimonies, visited all the camps and museums and read all the diaries, you would not be able to even approach the portal of that eternal night. That is the tragedy of the survivor's mission. He must tell a story that cannot be

told. He must deliver a message that cannot be delivered.... In this sense the enemy, ironically, realized his goal. Since he extended the crime beyond all bounds, and since there is no way to cross those bounds except through language, it is impossible to tell the full story of his crime.⁵²

Survivors have shown that their original understanding of the events was not wholly inadequate to comprehend or judge the events for themselves. Rather than developing new conceptual categories, or tropes of expression, witnesses inevitably narrate their experiences in terms of their own inherited categories of comprehension. For example, many testimonies, when describing arrival at Auschwitz, draw on the imagery of popular science fiction novels, such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, to describe the horror of seeing the blank-eyed, bald-headed, genderless inmates. On seeing two identical-looking male prisoners dressed in striped uniforms, with numbers on their chests, Judith Magyar Isaacson remembers exclaiming: 'Bokanovsky twins.... Sprung from a test tube in the *Brave New World*'.⁵³

However, Wiesel believes that any attempt to use language to convey the horrors of the Holocaust, or comprehend it, is sacrilegious. He affords himself the ability to judge the severity of the Holocaust's crimes and at the same time judge that that severity cannot be uttered or comprehended. Yet, for Wiesel, testimony is the only way to reach this unreachable event because it is given by survivors, who, as the living dead, possess an ontological authority. Following Emmanuel Lévinas's theological account of testimony in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*,⁵⁴ Wiesel exempts testimony from the contingencies of representation; rather than a witness writing testimony, he feels himself to be testimony. He further argues: 'what happened at Auschwitz should be conveyed in the same manner that the Talmud was taught, transmitted from mouth to ear, from eye to eye'.⁵⁵ He states:

Now, one generation after the event, one can still say – or one can already say – that what is called the literature of the Holocaust does not exist, cannot exist. It is a contradiction in terms, as is the philosophy, the theology, the psychology of the Holocaust. Auschwitz negates all systems, opposes all doctrines.... The past belongs to the dead, and the survivor does not recognize himself in the words linking him to them. A novel about Treblinka is either not a novel or not about Treblinka; for Treblinka means death – absolute death – death of language and of imagination.⁵⁶

This position is adopted by the literary critic George Steiner:

These books and the documents that have survived are not for 'review'. Not unless 'review' signifies, as perhaps it should in these instances, a 'seeing-again',

over and over. As in some Borges fable, the only completely decent 'review' of the Warsaw Diary or of Elie Wiesel's *Night* would be to re-copy the book, line by line, pausing at the names of the dead and the names of the children as the orthodox scribe pauses, when recopying the Bible, at the hallowed name of God. Until we know many of the words by *heart* (knowledge deeper than mind) and could repeat a few at the break of morning to remind ourselves that we live *after*, that the end of the day may bring 'inhuman trial or remembrances stronger than death'.⁵⁷

Steiner is not advocating that we do not respond to the Holocaust, but rather that we are careful in our response, avoid superfluous comment or empty words, and recognize the difficulty of representation. For Wiesel, this is translated as meaning that only those who were there can write about the Holocaust: 'any survivor', he insists, 'has more to say than all the historians combined about what happened'.⁵⁸ He explains: 'facts, on which historians base their research are only facts, whereas survivors reveal the truth'.⁵⁹

This sentiment is repeated by many other survivors, including Livia Bitton-Jackson: 'Only one who was there can truly tell the tale. And I was there'.⁶⁰ Such claims to ownership of the truth are problematic, for survivors can ultimately know the truth of their own experience only. For example, knowledge of the concentration camps was dependent on a prisoner's position within the camp's structure and was therefore limited to an individual's subjective experience. Wiesel himself must realize this, for he has stated that in his quest to learn more about the Holocaust, 'he has read every single book that appeared on the Holocaust'.⁶¹ However, it is clear that survivors such as Wiesel and Bitton-Jackson feel a proximity to the events of the Holocaust that clearly demarcates them from the historians who were not. Like Wiesel and Bitton-Jackson, Lasker-Wallfisch feels it is very important to retain the distinction between 'those who know and those who don't know':

[If] you have been a witness to this twentieth-century outrage of sophisticated cruelty of man to man, you will inevitably live in some kind of double limbo, cut off from the rest of the world. I have accepted the reality that there are those who 'know' and those who 'don't know'; and there the story seems to end.⁶²

The status of 'those who know' also seems to bestow a certain moral authority. Halina Birenbaum states:

The number tattooed on my left arm – personal evidence from Auschwitz...for me it is a kind of certificate of maturity, from a period in which I experienced life and the world in their naked forms and a desperate

struggle for a piece of bread, a breath of air and a little space, from a period in which I learned to distinguish between truth and falsehood, between goodness, nobility and evil baseness...⁶³

The conflict that is apparent in many Holocaust memoirs is the attempt to bear witness to the Holocaust – while insisting on the uniqueness of the severity of its horror – at the same time ensuring that posterity *never forgets* and therefore *never lets it happen again* by universalizing its importance. However, as Peter Novick observes: ‘the extremity of the Holocaust makes the applicability of lessons difficult’.⁶⁴ He asks: ‘Above all, what is the relevance of these lessons on surviving in the Hell of Hitler’s Europe for living our lives, safely and peacefully in the here and now?’⁶⁵

One answer is to present the Holocaust as a warning from history. David Rousset, a non-Jew and professor of philosophy in Paris before the Nazi occupation, who was incarcerated in Buchenwald for disseminating information to Allied sources, wrote as early as 1945: ‘The existence of the camps is a warning.... Under a new guise similar effects may appear tomorrow.’⁶⁶ However, while the word ‘similar’ might be taken to imply that the Holocaust is unique it is unlikely that Rousset writing in 1945 was able to predict the concern with uniqueness that many survivors have today. An example is illustrated by Elie Wiesel in his Foreword to Rezak Hukanović’s *The Tenth Circle of Hell: A Memoir of Life in the Death Camps of Bosnia*⁶⁷ – the first such account to be published. Wiesel introduces the book, stating that ‘Dante was wrong. Hell consists not of nine circles, but of ten. Rezak Hukanović takes you to the latest one, the most dreadful and the most heartbreaking’;⁶⁸ but then Wiesel feels compelled to point out that the murder of European Jewry was more cataclysmic than any other genocidal mass slaughter: ‘Omarska was not Auschwitz. Nothing, anywhere, can be compared to Auschwitz.’⁶⁹ Wiesel manages to connect and separate the two genocides. He is pointing out that the legacy of Auschwitz is not yet over and at the same time clearly stating that ‘Omarska was not Auschwitz’, which is automatically decoded as meaning ‘Omarska was not as awful as Auschwitz’. This allows him to maintain his monotheistic view of the Holocaust, while also using his position as a survivor of the Holocaust to provide indispensable moral insights.

The identity of Holocaust witnesses as moral spokespersons is fuelled by the body of secondary literature, which has arisen to analyse the experiences of survivors. It raises the issue of what Lawrence Langer has termed ‘pre-empting the Holocaust’. He explains:

When I speak of preempting the Holocaust, I mean using – and perhaps abusing – its grim details to fortify a prior commitment to an ideal of moral reality, community responsibility, or religious belief that leaves us with space to retain faith in their pristine value in a post-Holocaust world.⁷⁰

Langer is concerned with what he sees as the obsessive need for meaning in those who read and write about Holocaust testimony, believing that it leads to a distorted understanding of the experiences described.⁷¹ In other words, historians and other commentators on testimony impose their own concerns and carefully structured beliefs on understanding the Holocaust. Langer sees this as stemming from the mistaken belief that mass murder and genocide can be used to promote lessons about good triumphing over evil. He cites Tzvetan Todorov's *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*⁷² as an example of the attempt to use the Holocaust to promote images of 'human dignity'.⁷³ Todorov does this through the use of survivor testimony, which he clearly views as carrying important lessons for the advancement of humanity.

It is important to point out that Todorov's reading of Holocaust testimonies did not lead him to an unanticipated discovery of 'moral life in the concentration camps', rather, he clearly states in his prologue:

There are various perspectives from which the accounts of life in the camps can be read. One can ponder the precise chain of events that led to the creation of the camps and then to their extinction; one can debate the political significance of the camps; one can extract sociological or psychological lessons from them. Yet even though I cannot ignore those perspectives altogether, I would like to take a different approach. I want to look at the camps from the perspective of moral life...⁷⁴

Todorov does not see the need to suppress his personal views when reading testimonies of concentration camps, and has allowed his readings to reinforce his deeply held convictions about the state of humanity. Terrence Des Pres, who in 1976 produced the first major study to deal with the psychology of Holocaust survivors, also writes that testimonies teach us something positive about the human spirit: 'for survivors the struggle to live – merely surviving – is rooted in, and a manifestation of, the form-conferring potency of life itself'.⁷⁵ Also, Martin Gilbert, who has worked with testimony extensively to produce his monumental work *The Holocaust*, finishes with the words: 'Simply to survive was a victory of the human spirit'.⁷⁶ It is perhaps not surprising therefore, that fuelled by the fear that people would 'judge with facile hindsight',⁷⁷ many later testimonies are written in a similar tone. For example, Livia Bitton-Jackson writes in the Foreword to the revised edition of her memoir of Auschwitz:

My stories are of gas chambers, shootings, electrified fences, torture, scorching sun, mental abuse, and constant threat of death.... But they are also stories of faith, hope, triumph and love. They are stories of perseverance, loyalty, courage in the face of overwhelming odds and of never giving up.... My story is my message: Never give up.⁷⁸

A statement such as this is in keeping with Todorov's reading of testimonies as signs of human endurance and of his belief that suffering can draw out moral sensibilities. While Wiesel wants to emphasize the dignity of the Jewish victims, he does not want the testimonies of witnesses to be used to convey comforting notions about the triumph of hope or goodness, far removed from the terrible suffering of the Holocaust. In a similar manner, while witnesses writing in the ghettos and concentration camps emphasized the theme of Jewish resistance and refute the possibility of unjust accusations of Jewish passivity, they wanted to stress Jewish suffering in at least equal measure. For Wiesel, the problem is that the Holocaust has become a 'desanctified theme, or if you prefer, a theme robbed of its passion, its mystery'.⁷⁹ The experience of Sally Grubman, a survivor of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, sheds further light on how the Holocaust as a pedagogic model is often problematic:

There is a tremendous interest in the Holocaust that we didn't see when we came [to the United States] I see an awakening of consciousness, but also some confusion about the reality. American Jewish teachers invite me into their classrooms to speak, but they do not want me to make the Holocaust a sad experience. They want me to turn us into heroes and create a heroic experience for the survivors. There is this book they use, *The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance*, but the Holocaust never was a history of courage and resistance. It was a destruction by fire of innocent people, and it's not right to make it something it never was. We are not heroes. We survived by some fluke that we do not ourselves understand. And people have said, 'Sally, tell the children about the joy of survival.' And I can see that they don't understand it at all. If you're in a canoe and your life is in danger for a few minutes and you survive, you can talk about the joy of survival. We went through fire and ashes and whole families were destroyed. And we are left. How can we talk about the joy of survival?⁸⁰

Grubman's unease is with the attempt to portray a uniformity of experience, and one that conveys 'heroic' sentiments. For Langer, all attempts to focus on the 'meaning' of survivors' testimonies is problematic; he is also critical of readers who concentrate on particular episodes or individual lines of testimony as 'keys to the mystery of why one Jew survived while another did not'.⁸¹ For Langer, the recent explosion of interest in the Holocaust has fostered an environment that imposes unnecessary structures upon Holocaust representation. In particular, it has led to the elevation of testimonies that exhibit morally correct behaviour and those that conform to pre-existing Holocaust narratives. He is sceptical of Todorov's view that morality was particularly visible in the camps, and of survivors, such as Bitton-Jackson, who believe that their experiences can be used to emphasize 'faith, hope, triumph and love'.

The democratization of the Holocaust – whereby we no longer look at testimony to tell us something about the past, but instead use it to tell us something about the present or about ourselves – means that when we return to the archives of, for example, *Oneg Shabbat*, it is to confirm our current concerns. If Langer is correct, if no meaning can be discerned from the reading of Holocaust testimonies, then we return to Elie Wiesel's understanding of the Holocaust as 'a mystery begotten by the dead'.⁸² This is the arena that the battle for Holocaust memory has to traverse: on the one hand, the Holocaust is treated as unique and, on the other, it is the test of morality. Nevertheless, witnesses writing in the concentration camps wanted future generations to do more than just remember them – they wanted to provide historical documentation of Jewish life during German occupation. For example, Ringelblum stressed the wish 'to capture every event in Jewish life in the heat of the moment, when it was still fresh and pulsating'.⁸³ Furthermore, Ringelblum and other members of *Oneg Shabbat*, as a result of the constraints they were under, realized that their diaries were fallible documents which were themselves subject to distortions and would therefore need to be interpreted and validated in the future; they did not want their writings to be treated as untouchable, sacred reliques.

Langer himself recognizes that his belief that it is impossible 'to reclaim meaning from Holocaust atrocity'⁸⁴ 'leads nowhere but back into the pit of destruction'.⁸⁵ Ironically, witnesses writing in the ghettos and concentration camps shared this recognition and focused on their responses to the destruction in an attempt to retrieve some meaning from their fate. While Wiesel writes of the limitations of traditional categories of explanation in confronting the Holocaust, he has dedicated his life to trying to understand its events. He cannot be silent about the Holocaust because he is committed to its remembrance. Without an understanding of the complex nature of testimony and representation, it is likely that the Holocaust will remain an historical event that people are increasingly fascinated by, but whose events are never understood:

To argue for silence, prayer, the banishment equally of poetry and knowledge, in short, the witness of 'ineffability', that is non-representability, is to *mystify* something we dare not understand, because we fear that it may be all too understandable, all too continuous with what we are – human all too human.⁸⁶

Notes

1 See N.G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000). Finkelstein cites as his 'initial stimulus' Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life: The American Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Novick also critiques the centrality of Holocaust memory in American

society. The British edition of Novick's book is entitled *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000).

- 2 Sabbath delight – a codename for their clandestine Sabbath afternoon gatherings. See E. Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. J. Sloan (New York: Schocken, 1985). Cf. E. Ringelblum, 'O.S.', in *To Live With Honor and To Die With Honor!... Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives O.S. [Oneg Shabbath]*, ed. J. Kermish (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), pp. 2–21.
- 3 The Łódź Ghetto Chronicle, compiled by the Department of the Archives of the Jewish Council in Łódź (German: Litzmannstadt) in southwest Warsaw, documents the life of the Jews of Łódź from January 1941 to July 1944. See L. Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto 1941–44*, trans. R. Lourie, J. Neugroschel et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984). Photographs taken by Mendel Grossman have also survived as part of the archive, see M. Grossman, *With a Camera in the Ghetto*, eds. Z. Szner and A. Sened (New York: Schocken, 1977). In Kovno (Lithuanian: Kaunas) in central Lithuania, the Jewish Council commissioned artists to make a visual record of Jewish life. An engineer by the name of Hirsh Kadushin became the photographic chronicler of the ghetto. Using a small camera concealed in his clothing, he managed to film many different aspects of ghetto life. He obtained the film from a nurse who worked with him in the ghetto hospital. Kadushin's buried photographs were discovered after the war and can now be viewed in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. For a diary of life in the Kovno ghetto, see A. Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary*, trans. J. Michalowicz (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Archives were also set up in Bialystok in north-east Poland; Vilna (Lithuanian: Vilnius), the capital of Lithuania; Cracow (Polish: Kraków) in southern Poland; and Lvov (Polish: Lwów, Germ. Lemberg) in eastern Galicia.
- 4 E. Ringelblum, 'O.S.', p. 10.
- 5 They were mostly written in either Polish or Yiddish (Ringelblum himself wrote in Yiddish).
- 6 C.A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, ed. and trans. A.I. Katsch (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 395.
- 7 'The Last Letter from Mordechai Anielewicz, Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Commander, April 23, 1943', in *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, ed. Y. Arad, Y. Gutman and A. Margaliot, 4th edition (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), pp. 315–16.
- 8 E. Ringelblum, 'O.S.', p. 7.
- 9 Ibid., p. 9.
- 10 Ibid., p. 8.
- 11 Ibid., p. 11.
- 12 L.L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 31.
- 13 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p. 294.
- 14 One of the two milk churns is on display at the ŻIH (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny – Jewish Historical Institute) in Warsaw; the other is on permanent loan to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
- 15 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, p. 30.
- 16 However, a prisoner named Filip Müller did survive and wrote his testimony. See F. Müller, *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers*, ed. and trans. S. Flatauer (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999). The Sonderkommando were in a unique position: they alone could observe the killing; they were 'privileged' prisoners so were

- able to barter for writing materials; and as they were destined to be killed they were not fearful of being discovered.
- 17 For a history of the manuscripts and their discovery, see B. Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1985).
- 18 See Mark, *Scrolls of Auschwitz*.
- 19 See N. Cohen, 'Diaries of the Sonderkommando', in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Y. Gutman and M. Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 526.
- 20 Cited in D.G. Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1989), p. 558.
- 21 See Cohen, 'Diaries of the Sonderkommando', pp. 524–5.
- 22 M. Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Fontana Press, 1987), p. 649.
- 23 Ibid., p. 744.
- 24 Cited in Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction*, p. 548.
- 25 S. Laks, *Music of Another World*, trans. C. Kisiel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 1989), p. 79.
- 26 P. Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, trans. S. Woolf (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 256.
- 27 See Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*; T. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
- 28 See D. Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and his essay in this volume.
- 29 These figures come from the database of the Yad Vashem Library.
- 30 The first of the *Yizkor* books, *Lodzer Yiskor Buch* was published in New York in 1943. The first *Yizkor* book translated into English is *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl*, ed. B. Kagan (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1997).
- 31 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, p. 375. It was later republished as *If This is a Man*, trans. S. Woolf (London and New York: Orion Press, 1959). For the history of the writing of *Survival in Auschwitz*, see Levi's own remarks in idem., *The Reawakening*, trans. S. Woolf (New York: Collier Books, 1965), p. 195.
- 32 P. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. R. Rosenthal (New York: Vintage, 1988), p. 58.
- 33 Einaudi (Turin) in 1958.
- 34 Cited in S. Felman, 'The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's Shoah', in S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 204.
- 35 G. Korman, 'The Holocaust in American Historical Writing', *Societas*, 2 (1972), 251–70.
- 36 The term *holocaust* comes from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture, starting in the third century BC when the term *holokaustos* (translated as 'totally burnt') became – via the Latin *holocaustum* – the Greek version of the Hebrew *olah*: a burnt sacrificial offering which can be given only to God. It was first used in the translation of 1 Sam. 7: 9, meaning 'a burnt offering to God' and was later expanded to refer to the mass murder of human beings. See J. Petrie, 'The Secular Word HOLOCAUST: Scholarly Myths, History, and 20th Century Meanings', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2 (2000), 62.
- 37 Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, pp. 133–45.
- 38 A. Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth 1939–1945* (London: Faber, 1996), p. 15.
- 39 J.K. Roth and M. Berenbaum, eds., *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 43.

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23

Memory, Memorials and Museums

Dan Stone

More than anything else, memorials erected permanently testify to transitoriness.

Reinhart Koselleck¹

It seems natural to us that any society would want to commemorate its achievements, its most celebrated public figures and its disasters. Yet the preoccupation with memory that marks our age is, in fact, a relatively novel phenomenon. An obsession with memory as expressed in memorials, museums and public commemorations is one of the characteristic expressions of modernity.² Modernity is the age – beginning around the time of the French Revolution – in which the distinction between past and present developed, so that, aided by the process of secularization, the experience of time began to seem like an infinite continuum, at each moment of which what had gone before became irrecoverable.³ Modernity is marked by two competing experiences of time: acceleration and loss. The response to these irreconcilable phenomena takes very different shapes: either the development of utopian, future-oriented thinking, such as Marxism, the belief in the unfolding of Reason (Kant) or the development of World Spirit (Hegel), or the development of historicism, a way of understanding the past that suggests that no matter what changes, certain ‘essences’ remain untouched, such as (typically) the nation (Ranke). This latter way of thinking, while it accepts change, also generates resistance to it, thus giving rise to nostalgia, yearnings for a ‘golden age’, the feeling of ‘loss’ (of tradition, authenticity, community), and the need for collective memory as a kind of compensation for that loss and as a marker of stability in uncertain times.⁴ As Peter Fritzsche puts it, ‘The innovations of memory work rely in large part on a consciousness of and identification with loss, a disorientation in modernity that encourages new rounds of self-reflection and self-assertion in the troubled space of time.’⁵

No starker characteristic of ‘uncertain times’ can be found than genocide, which has typically been carried out in the modern age as a utopian way of

overthrowing the superstitions of the past, and creating a fully-fledged nation-state by eliminating those groups (usually defined by the perpetrators as 'ethnic' or 'racial' groups) who are perceived (for whatever irrational reason) to be blocking the attainment of that goal.⁶ The Holocaust has come to stand as the archetypal genocide; indeed, for some, the Holocaust is so extreme that it must be distinguished from other genocides on one or another vigorously defended ground. Irrespective of this debate (discussed in more detail by Dirk Moses⁷), it is clear why it is that, in an age in which memory has become so important, commemorating one of the greatest catastrophes of the age has become such a central part of western consciousness. Alon Confino argues that

the crucial issue in the history of memory is not how a past is represented but why it was received or rejected. For every society sets up images of the past. Yet to make a difference in society, it is not enough for a certain past to be selected. It must steer emotions, motivate people to act, be received; in short, it must become a socio-cultural mode of action.⁸

The Holocaust epitomizes this process of memory-work.

Yet from the start of the memorialization process – which began even before the end of the Second World War with the efforts of the ghetto and camp archivists and diarists⁹ – enormous difficulties arose. These difficulties echoed those that emerged first after the First World War.¹⁰ Since memorials have traditionally been erected to commemorate great individuals or national triumphs, what form of monument could ever prove suitable to so profound a catastrophe?¹¹ Do Holocaust memorials and museums actually subvert the good intentions of their authors, since the continuity (in time, in the community, in national identity) they imply is untrue to the civilization-shattering occurrence they supposedly represent? After the occurrence of an event that called into question the self-assurance of western civilization, would it not be absurd simply to imitate old-established ways of commemoration, as though signalling a return to stability and continuity when the reality was rupture and dislocation?¹² The division between those who have sought to incorporate the Holocaust into traditional forms of commemoration – easily recognizable, representational statues; narrative museums; and formal ritual following conventional patterns (often derived from religious ceremonies) – and those who have sought to find ways of commemoration that in themselves embody a fundamental uneasiness or mistrust of the possibility of the enterprise of Holocaust commemoration – 'counter-monuments'; memorials and sites that require an input from the visitor; disorienting architecture – is one of the best ways of understanding the developments in Holocaust memorialization that have taken place since the end of the war.

Andreas Huyssen correctly notes that 'the increasing frequency with which Holocaust museums are built and monuments erected in Israel, Germany and

Europe, as well as the United States, is clearly part of a larger cultural phenomenon' of memory.¹³ But there is a conundrum at the heart of Holocaust commemoration: the Holocaust demands to be commemorated, yet our modern obsession with memory may encourage nostalgia, a yearning for supposedly simpler eras before the rupture of the Holocaust, and hence 'forgetting'. The compelling need to commemorate the Holocaust is problematized as one realizes that the form that the commemoration takes may actually contribute more to a process of forgetting than of meaningful remembrance (by which is meant remembrance that has an effect on the politics of the present, and is not merely the mouthing of empty slogans – 'never again!' – or the performance of self-righteous, platitudinous, 'official' rituals). This is why the Holocaust's memorial landscape is so varied, complex, and hotly debated.

Memorials

The pre-eminent scholar of Holocaust literature, Lawrence Langer, notes that 'when memory imprints on us the meaning of the presence of "absence" and animates the ghost that such a burden has imposed on our lives, then the heritage of the Holocaust will have begun to acquire some authenticity in our postwar culture'.¹⁴ 'An appropriate memorial design,' James Young argues, 'will acknowledge the void left behind and not concentrate on the memory of terror and destruction alone'.¹⁵ It has taken many years for this view of Holocaust memorials to become the dominant one, and for Langer's and Young's sophisticated understanding of the memorial process to become the dominant reading. The first memorials were rather different.

Timothy Snyder distinguishes two types of collective memory. The first, 'mass personal memory', involves the ability of many individuals actually to recall from their own experience an event or sequence of events that were of national importance. He gives the example of the Polish–Ukrainian fighting in the years 1939–47, in which mutual barbarism scarred many hundreds of thousands of individuals. The second type is 'national memory', which Snyder describes as 'the organizational principle, or set of myths, by which nationally conscious individuals understand the past and its demands on the present'.¹⁶ He gives the example of Lithuanian memory of its 'struggle' over the city of Vilnius in the interwar years. While, as we will see, the national context is not the only one in which Holocaust memory is carried, the distinction between the memories of individuals who experienced the events of the Holocaust and the 'collective memory' of whole societies comprised primarily of individuals who did not, is vital in understanding the development of Holocaust commemoration. The generations that have come after the Holocaust have developed forms of collective memory that are driven by the need to keep what Young refers to as 'the void'

open, for they do not automatically experience the traumatic recall undergone by survivors.¹⁷

In the early years of Holocaust commemoration, then, what is most clearly in evidence is a form of 'mass personal memory' in which those who actually lived through the events were responsible for the shape that the memorialization process took. No better example can be found than the Warsaw Ghetto monument, unveiled before 20,000 spectators in 1948. On one side it portrays disaster, with a representation of Jews being driven out reminiscent of a biblical scene. On the other, front side, however, it focuses on heroism, celebrating the Ghetto Uprising of April 1943. The result is a memorial that satisfies the requirements of Stalinist proletarian realism on the one hand, and a mythical narrative of exile and redemption on the other.¹⁸

Although Rappoport's Warsaw Ghetto monument represents clearly mass personal memory, it is important to note the constraints that the sculptor faced by virtue of the fact that this was the time when Poland was being taken over by communism. By comparison with most other monuments erected in the communist countries (and not just to the Holocaust) this one was open about the identity of the victims and able to portray suffering in a way that was soon to become unusual. Under the prevailing 'Marxist-Leninist' doctrine of the Soviet bloc, fascism was understood as a tool of big business at a time of capitalist crisis. Furthermore, under communism all social conflicts brought about by clashes of religion, race or gender were presumed to have been solved as a consequence of having solved the problem of class division. The result of this hegemonic doctrine was that understanding the Holocaust as an assault on the Jews could not occur, both because communism refused to accept that antisemitism was anything other than a tool used by 'the bosses' to steer 'the masses' away from recognizing their real class interests, and because identifying different victim groups went against the myth that all the victims of Nazism were fighters for the new society to be brought about by communism. Interestingly, the closer to the centre of power (that is, Moscow) one got, the more relaxed this rule became, so that Soviet historians could to some extent discuss the fate of the Jews as separate from the Red Army, Soviet people or communist partisans.¹⁹ But in the Warsaw Pact countries this *Verbot* was remarkably strong and led to all manner of verbal and iconic acrobatics on the monuments that were erected.

There are some very famous cases. Perhaps the best known is that of Babi Yar, the gorge outside Kiev, where the Nazis shot some 35,000 Jews over two days at the end of September 1941. Although later other people were killed there, the monument that was eventually erected in 1959 (after public protest, galvanized by Yevgeni Yevtushenko's poem 'Babi Yar', which began with the line 'Over Babi Yar there are no monuments') contained no mention of Jews, a striking fact when one remembers that this was the site at which the third largest Jewish community in the USSR was murdered. The inscription in the

enormous, socialist-realist monument read: 'Here between 1941 and 1943, the German Fascist invaders executed more than 100,000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war.'²⁰ A similar example is that of the memorial built at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1967. Apart from the fact that the monument itself was a nebulous and indeterminate shape, reminiscent of sarcophagi, clearly designed not to offend anybody (after all, the Auschwitz Museum, as an internationally important site, could not ignore western opinion completely), the inscription was shockingly bland. In nineteen languages, supposedly the number spoken by the victims, the stones mentioned only the '4 million people' who 'suffered and died here at the hands of the Nazi murderers'. This elision of victims' identities in the interest of communist ideology (as well as a massive exaggeration of their number²¹) was carried over into the main museum exhibit too, as I will explain below. Removed shortly after the collapse of communism, only in 1996 were these stones replaced, after years of debate among the members of the International Auschwitz Council, with new ones which read: 'For ever let this place be / A cry of despair / And a warning to humanity, / Where the Nazis murdered / About one and a half / Million / Men, Women, and children, / Mainly Jews, /From various countries / Of Europe.'²²

These are just two of the most celebrated examples of communist obscurantism. Almost every site where a massacre took place was marked by such memorials, which hid as much as they revealed. At the forest clearing just outside Zbylitowska Góra, near Tarnów in Galicia, the plaque marking the massacre of the town's 6,000–8,000 Jews and several thousand Catholic Poles in June 1942 refers only to the 'murders undertaken by Hitlerites of c.10,000 citizens'. In Ponary, where most of Vilnius' Jews were shot, and in Rumbuli, where thousands of Latvian Jews were killed, the monuments made no reference to the Jews.

Communist monuments across eastern Europe had much in common: they tended to be huge and represented figures in triumphant poses. The archetype might be Fritz Cremer's memorial to the resistance fighters at Buchenwald. The Soviet Union's collective memory of the Great Patriotic War (the Second World War in the USSR 1941–45) was key to defending the regime's post-war legitimacy, and the control of the memorial landscape by imposing a single memorial narrative on a complex past at traumatic sites was clearly fundamental to this project.²³ Yet, even if in public ceremonies only one version of the past was allowed – the party's – there was much truth in the claim that the tremendous sacrifices made by the Soviet people had brought about the defeat of fascism.²⁴ In the satellite countries, however, such claims made on monuments left a bad taste in the mouth. The remarkable collection of monster-sized monuments at Treptow Park (East Berlin), as well as numerous such examples across the region, blotted out individual memories of suffering as well as national narratives of collaboration, resistance, and occupation, at least in public, as the myth that the whole region had fought against fascism for the communist

underground was applied without regard for the complexities of what had really occurred.²⁵

The elimination of Jews from post-war communist collective memory was just part of a broader smoothing of memory in the communist countries that disregarded the complexity of difference in order to propagate a heroic narrative of communist resistance. The numerous small, often barely noticeable memorials erected by the few local Jews who still remained in eastern Europe represented more than just the expression of a memorial instinct, but were a brave attempt to challenge official memory. In Zbylitowska Góra, for example, as well as the state-erected monument, three small memorials were placed by the Jewish community. Similarly, on the site of the camp at Płaszow, where the Jews of the Cracow ghetto were initially deported, the small memorial erected by the Jewish community contrasts sharply with the enormous (but powerful) monument built by the communist authorities in 1964.

Before one becomes too fixated on communist distortions of memory, however, it is vital to remember that in the West things were little better. Recent studies have emphasized the extent to which the authorities in post-war western Europe also set about propounding heroic national narratives.²⁶ These were designed to ease the process of post-war reconstruction, driving out clashes and contradictions from myths of national unity and moral righteousness. The effect of these narratives – based also on the confusing mix of survivors (from concentration camps, forced labourers, POWs) in Europe in 1944–45 – was not only to overlook the reality of widespread collaboration with Nazism across Europe, but also to whitewash differences between types of victim, so that ‘racial victims’ like Jews or Romanies were rendered less relevant than those few who took part in anti-Nazi resistance.²⁷ As a result, it is not possible to speak of Holocaust memorials at this period; only the first institutions – the Wiener Library in London, YIVO in New York, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris – set up to record the experience of the Jews during the war acted as repositories for collective memory.

In the United States and Israel this silence about the fate of the Jews was replicated. In the former country, a widespread interest in the Holocaust did not come about until the late 1960s.²⁸ Indeed, Young reminds us of the 1947 dedication of a Holocaust memorial in New York, a memorial that was never built.²⁹ In the latter, where the ideology of the ‘new Jew’ implied a negative assessment of the Diaspora, the experiences of survivors were not acceptable in the public realm in the first post-war decades. Once again, institutions, such as Yad Vashem (1953) or Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta’ot (Ghetto Fighters’ House, 1949), were set up – and in the Israeli context it is interesting to note their stress on ‘resistance’ – but memorials were few and far between, with those built tending to be small and removed from the main thrust of everyday life, such as Ze’ev

Ben Zvi's *To the Children of Exile* at Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek (1947), Israel's first Holocaust memorial.³⁰ Survivors put most of their commemorative energies into the *Yizker-Bikher*, memorial books devoted to particular towns, regions or countries.³¹

Not until the 1970s and 1980s did a widespread interest in building Holocaust memorials develop in western Europe, Israel and the US. And then the difficulties about which James Young has so eloquently written became clear. How was it possible to create an adequate material response to the Holocaust? Should the focus be on suffering or redemption? Are there limits to representation of taste? Are there somehow limits of representation because of the extremity of the event being commemorated?³² All these issues were addressed in the different kinds of memorials that were built.

In Germany (West Germany until 1991, for the GDR did not commemorate the Holocaust³³) the difficulties were manifold. What was it that one was commemorating in the land of the perpetrators? This question has motivated many artists to subvert the traditional meanings of memorials, creating objects and places where the visitor is confronted with the challenge of being forced to consider their own involvement in the 'memory-work'. The clearest example of this is in the so-called counter-monuments, 'self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being'.³⁴ These are not spaces for calm contemplation, but confrontations with a dangerous past. The most famous examples include Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Monument against Fascism* in Hamburg-Harburg. Here they erected a 40-foot high lead column on which people were encouraged to write; the monument was gradually lowered into the ground until it finally disappeared in 1993. Similarly, Horst Hoheisel's Aschrott-Brunnen Monument in Kassel reproduced a 40-foot high fountain built by the Jewish architect Sigmund Aschrott, destroyed by the Nazis in 1939. But Hoheisel reproduced it upside-down and buried the structure in the ground, so that it became a 'negative form monument', one that did not claim simply to make good the wrong that had been perpetrated by replacing it. Rather, it is the negative space, the absence, both of the original monument and of the Jews of Kassel, deported in 1941–42, that is recognized. As Hoheisel himself put it:

I have designed the new fountain as a mirror image of the old one, sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again.³⁵

His 'warm memorial' at Buchenwald – a stone slab engraved with the names of the 51 national groups victimized there, kept permanently heated at 36.5 degrees Celsius – performs a similar function. While there is 'nothing there', visitors

kneel to touch the warm stone, redolent of the body heat of the now dead victims. As Young rightly points out, the aim of such a counter-monument is

not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violations; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet.³⁶

This impulse not to comfort, not to suggest presence, but to represent absence, is most clear in two of the most beautiful Holocaust memorials that have been built: Micha Ullman's book-burning monument in Berlin and Rachel Whiteread's memorial to the Jews of Vienna. In Berlin's Bebelplatz, surrounded by the grand buildings of Friedrich Schinkel's eighteenth-century city, and opposite the monument to Frederick the Great on Unter den Linden, the Nazis burned books by Jewish and non-Jewish 'degenerate' authors on 10 May 1933. Today, there appears to be nothing there, until on closer inspection one notices a glass pane set into the street through which one can see an empty, white room of shelves. No design could be more straightforward; no greater impact could be made on the visitor, who is forced to confront the entire problematic of absence and commemoration in one simple gesture. The British sculptor Rachel Whiteread, famous for her casts of everyday objects, from chairs to houses, made – in the face of long-running controversy and obstacle – almost the exact inverse of Ullman's memorial in her memorial to the Jews of Vienna in that city's *Judenplatz*. Whiteread has made a cast of a library, with all the books on the shelves facing inside. Her memorial is a large white cube, with the 'leaves' of the books facing the visitor. The result of this spatial inversion is that it suggests presence but actually makes tangible a feeling of absence, the void made by the Holocaust. It also engendered a sometimes ugly attempt to prevent the memorial from being built, as Austria was again reminded of its belated attempt to grapple with its Nazi past, as it had been when Hans Haacke's *Und ihr habt doch gesiegt*, a replica of a Nazi monument, was erected in Graz in 1988.³⁷

But the most striking proof of Young's dictum is provided by Berlin's Central Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The monument was originally proposed by TV personality Lea Rosh and historian Eberhard Jäckel. Backed by Chancellor Kohl – and hence, in a controversial gesture, opposed by the SPD – the monument was hotly debated in the Reichstag and in the public sphere until the decision was taken in favour of building late in 1998. By then Christine Jakob-Marks' winning design had been voided, its replacement by Peter Eisenman altered several times, and the concept had been radically reworked so as to incorporate a library and educational resource centre. The model of

Peter Eisenman's memorial suggests that the field of steles will be an emotionally charged space. As Young notes, 'it echoed a cemetery, even as it implied that such emblems of individual mourning were inadequate to the task of remembering mass murder'.³⁸ The memorial is still unfinished, but it was the debate over the memorial rather than the shape of the memorial itself that was really revealing. Critics argued that such a massive 'central monument' in the heart of Berlin would be an attempt to close off this darkest chapter of German history; that it would be a convenient place to take visiting dignitaries rather than having to visit an actual camp (which one could continue to underfund with impunity); and that such a monolith could never account for the varied and complex nature of memory: it would be yet another attempt by the state to impose a single narrative on the past. Those in favour argued that no other gesture could so honestly represent the Germans' attempts to deal with their Nazi past, and that it would be an important counterbalance to the fears of those who were unnerved by the idea of Berlin as the capital of Germany, especially in its glitzy, postmodern form in which many of the scars of the past have been covered over. A memorial that 'insists on its incompleteness, its working through of an intractable problem over any solution',³⁹ though it will not satisfy everyone, at least does not insist that the past is dead and buried.

Many other types of memorial exist, from those built thousands of miles from the scenes of the Holocaust, especially in the US, to those built in concentration and death camps, and those that provide local reminders of smaller, if no less terrible, events. The latter might include Christian Boltanski's *Missing House* in Berlin, where, on the wall of a demolished house in the heart of Berlin's pre-war Jewish district, the names and occupations of the inhabitants have been placed, to the ghostly imprint of the human figures in the wall of Grunewald train station in Berlin, site of the deportation of the city's Jews. Many of the most poignant are in Poland, home of Europe's largest pre-war Jewish community, three million of whom (over 90 per cent) were killed by the Nazis. Whole towns that were predominantly Jewish have in the years since the collapse of communism begun discovering and memorializing their Jewish inhabitants, after years of neglect. Perhaps the best known, and most striking, is the memorial at the Jewish cemetery of Kazimierz Dolny. Here a huge wall has been built out of tombstones, with a jagged gash running through the centre. Merely the use of desecrated tombstones is a reminder of the affront to Jewish life that was committed by the Nazis; the rent in the wall is a statement of the irreparable break in Jewish existence in Poland brought about by the Holocaust. A similar idea governs the main memorial at Treblinka, a rent obelisk surrounded by hundreds of smaller stones symbolizing the numerous devastated Jewish communities, and the *Umschlagplatz* memorial in Warsaw, the site of the deportation of the ghetto's Jews, now an eerie liminal space that is neither part of the surrounding city nor divorced from it. Once again, in contrast to the monolithic,

representational monuments typifying the early post-war years, these memorials, with their focus on loss and absence, are the more powerful for being so apparently understated. This is something that the Yad Vashem museum has learnt over the years, as its memorials have become less grand, more focused on thematizing loss and the confrontation with memory itself.

Many experimental memorials have also been built in the US, where there are no direct links with the events of the Holocaust, other than in the large numbers of survivors who made their lives there. This experimentation is clearest in art, typified by the scandal caused by the Museum of Jewish Heritage's recent exhibition *Mirroring Evil*,⁴⁰ but the attempt by generations born after the war to confront the Holocaust is also evident in American memorials. They are as much bound up with American ideals and political debates as with European ones. George Segal's Holocaust memorial in San Francisco, for example, a plaster cast of ten bodies and a single standing figure behind barbed wire, expresses powerfully the chaos of the Holocaust, but is given a curiously redemptive edge by virtue of its position overlooking the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by the beautiful landscape. But the most clear expression of redemption is provided by Nathan Rappoport's 'Liberation', an emaciated survivor draped in the arms of a GI, situated in New Jersey's Liberty State Park, within sight of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

Museums

There are now many Holocaust museums around the world, although a small number – the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (Oświęcim), Yad Vashem (Jerusalem), the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC) and the Imperial War Museum (London) – are the most important in terms of size and international influence. The concentration and death camps should be considered separately from purpose-built museums, for they did not immediately become sites of memory, the major tourist destinations that they are today.⁴¹ It is interesting to observe that, over the years, the methodology of museum curatorship has changed, so that where the emphasis used to be primarily on presenting a narrative of the Holocaust through text and photograph, gradually more stress came to be placed on the importance of the 'authenticity' of displays – acquiring artefacts from the time – and on the need for testimony – allowing visitors to hear the voices of survivors and to bring a sense of individual experience to a potentially overwhelming narrative of catastrophe.⁴² Similarly, the focus of the exhibitions has changed from Nazi antisemitism and Jewish resistance to the destruction of Jewish culture and redemption through the founding of Israel or liberation by US troops. This development tells us a good deal about changes in memory culture: individualization and the desire to be 'anchored' in the past as ways of combating the dissipation of time in an

ever-accelerating present. Finally, it is important to note the increasing importance being paid to the architecture of museums, so that the building itself is understood as embodying the challenge presented to memorialization by the Holocaust. There has been a growing awareness that museums do not simply represent a dead past for the purpose of elucidation and education; rather, as Andreas Huyssen puts it, they are 'sites of cultural contestation and negotiation'.⁴³

Contrary to the expectations of many cultural pundits, who had been proclaiming the 'death of the museum' on numerous occasions since 1945, museums have once again become important sites in contemporary culture. Some argue that this turn to museums as repositories of memory is a reactionary 'compensation' for the ravages of time or an attempt by governments to 'help' people what to think; others that they are just another part of our consumer culture, in which a visit to a nicely packaged past is the heritage industry's equivalent of a day's shopping. Yet this does not quite get to grips with the changes that have occurred either in contemporary memory culture or in museum methodology.⁴⁴ Much soul-searching and innovation have gone into recent museums, and while they certainly illustrate aspects of contemporary culture such as nostalgia and consumerism, they also provide, as one critic notes of the USHMM, 'a critical means for deepening psychological identification and broadening symbolic extension'.⁴⁵

Certainly, the clash between private memories and public memory is nowhere clearer than in a state-funded museum. As Edward Linenthal notes, 'These two contrasting images – the massive might of official remembrance, and the quiet, intimate remembrance of individual survivors – capture the complexity and volatility of Holocaust memory'.⁴⁶ Yet there is an awareness of this issue within these institutions, which also promote scholarly research, public debates and related exhibitions. A brief history of the developments in Holocaust museums can help us to understand their place in broader contemporary memory culture, and reveals a growing awareness of the complexities of memory.

Yad Vashem or, to give it its full name, 'The Memorial Authority for the Holocaust and Heroism', represents very clearly the changes that have taken place in Israeli memory vis-à-vis the Holocaust. Its founding in 1953 reflected the place of the genocide of the Jews in the new state: an emphasis was placed squarely on resistance.⁴⁷ The museum narrated the events in a traditional way – through photographs and text – that suggested the irresistible *telos* of European antisemitism in the Holocaust and saw the creation of the state of Israel as a correction to Diaspora existence and a 'happy ending' to the tale of catastrophe.⁴⁸ By the late 1960s, however, as the Holocaust seeped more deeply into Israeli consciousness, a new wave of memorial-building at Yad Vashem created a series of less grandiose, more contemplative and interactive monuments. Yad Vashem has now become a veritable 'memory landscape' with its library, museum,

'path of the righteous gentiles' and numerous different memorials. Situated on *Har Hazikaron* (Mount Memory), Yad Vashem is more than a museum; it is primarily the guardian of Israel's secular religion, the *Gründungsmythos* – mythic narrative of foundation – of catastrophe and redemption.⁴⁹

As with memorials, the most recently built museums reflect a sensibility that seeks to create a sense of tension in the visitor but without descending into kitsch or sensationalism. These are issues of which James Ingo Freed, architect of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), was profoundly aware. He fought what he saw as the attempt, intrinsic to the public planning process, to turn the building into a neutral, unchallenging space, responding instead to Elie Wiesel's argument that the building should disturb. 'At the same time,' Freed writes, 'it must not be a reconstruction because that would devalue the Holocaust; a reconstruction would be a Disneyland – clean, cute, no tension. There is a profound risk of aestheticization with this particular subject, of leaching out the raw power.'⁵⁰ Freed's building, with its evocations of constriction, disorientation and dislocation, provides a powerful architectural statement about the nature of the Holocaust, and a more suitable container for a Holocaust exhibition than a neutral space does.⁵¹ Of course, there have been no shortages of attacks on the USHMM for exactly these reasons. Freed himself acknowledged that it is very hard for architects not to aim at closure, with the result that the museum could be 'too heroic, too monumental, too beautiful', and many would argue that the attempt to make the building – as opposed solely to the exhibits against a neutral supporting space – part of the overall experience of a Holocaust museum ends by aestheticizing the horror to an uncomfortable degree.

Furthermore, the museum's display has been severely criticized, on several grounds. Philip Gourevitch, for example, noted that 'the relics of Nazi genocide become if not glamorous then distinctly elegant' thanks to 'the aesthetic sensibility with which the museum's artefacts and graphics have been selected and displayed'.⁵² And almost all critics have lambasted the use of 'identification cards', little booklets detailing the experiences of one individual in the Holocaust years. Visitors receive an ID card on entering the museum and can follow the progress of their 'twin' during the tour around the museum. This device has been attacked not only as kitsch, but as reinforcing notions of American individualism, although it seems as though most visitors like the idea.⁵³

Some have gone further, accusing the museum of subtly reinforcing certain prejudices while simultaneously attempting to counter others. A Holocaust museum, some think, provides a way for Americans to feel that their country represents something other than the embodiment of absolute evil, thereby avoiding confrontation with the uglier sides of US history, especially slavery and the genocide of Native Americans: 'whereas a serious and sustained encounter with the history of hundreds of years of enslavement and oppression of blacks might

imply costly demands on Americans to redress the wrongs of the past, contemplating the Holocaust is virtually cost-free: a few cheap tears.⁵⁴ Cole notes that the ‘peepshow’ telling of the Holocaust – identified by Gourevitch – is ‘more than simply a desire for “titillation” in an America schooled in Hollywood’s celebration of technicolour violence. . . . it is more about a sense of the “Holocaust” being the “Other”, and thus being portrayed as the great antithesis to all-American values.’⁵⁵ Richard Handler says the museum ‘reproduces rather than challenges the cultural politics of nationalism and individualism’ because, while it condemns racial intolerance, it simultaneously does not demonstrate the need for individuals to do anything about it: ‘the culture of individualism and equality leads people to imagine an abstract and universal humanity while at the same time making them reluctant to participate in the specific relations of dependence necessary to redress particular injustices’⁵⁶

Merely the placing of the USHMM is problematic in some people’s eyes. Its position next to the Mall suggests its place in American history is as central as the Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Likewise, the New York Museum of Jewish Heritage – which devotes a large amount of space to the Holocaust – stands in Battery Park, lower Manhattan, opposite the Statue of Liberty, which is the first thing that visitors see through the window as they emerge from the Holocaust exhibition (contrast this with the blocked windows of the USHMM’s Hall of Remembrance, preventing visitors from viewing the central monuments of the American national narrative on the Mall). On the one side of the Hudson Rappoport’s *Liberation*; on the other, the Jewish Museum, with the Statue of Liberty in the middle. What this implies about the role of the Holocaust in American history and politics unnerves some commentators.

Britain’s first permanent state-funded Holocaust exhibition opened in 2000 (a smaller, private one, Beth Shalom, had been in existence for some years). Rather than being custom-built, it occupies space within the Imperial War Museum (IWM). This fact worried many commentators, who saw a museum originally designed to glorify the achievements of the British Empire, and whose entry lobby is full of warplanes and tanks, as no place for a Holocaust exhibition. Yet just as the IWM has changed, so that its many sensitive exhibitions offer searching critiques of warfare through art and testimony as well as more traditional forms of museum exhibition, so too its Holocaust exhibition was well received by critics. In many ways, it is a small-scale replica of the USHMM, following a similar narrative strategy, playing down the aesthetic appeal of Nazism, relying on the power of numerous ‘authentic’ objects to give visitors a ‘feel’ of the past, and making careful and extensive use of survivor testimony, which can be heard at strategically placed ‘listening posts’ throughout the exhibition.⁵⁷

The same questions were asked about the IWM as about the USHMM: why did Britain need a Holocaust museum? Was this a way of making the British

feel good for not being Nazis while the government continued to sell arms to unpleasant regimes overseas, to bomb countries it did not like and to enforce a harsh asylum and immigration policy at home? And the exhibition itself has been in part criticized: more space should have been devoted to Romanies and other victims of Nazi genocide; it could make more of the Allies' inadequate responses to news of the Nazi genocide as it emerged during the war; and, given that the building that now houses the IWM was originally an asylum, the section on the development of eugenics and racial hygiene in Germany could have been extended to show the worldwide influence of racial science, especially its British origins. Nevertheless, the exhibition is widely considered an excellent introduction to the events of the Holocaust and reveals the distance that has been covered from the days when Yad Vashem set up its first narrative exhibition.⁵⁸

What is striking about the USHMM and IWM is the air of melancholy that surrounds them. This is not the same as the feeling of horror that one gets from discovering the events of the Holocaust; rather, it is a result of the fact that, where Yad Vashem concentrated on antisemitism and Nazi hatred, and Jewish resistance and bravery, today's new museums place more emphasis on the Jewish communities that were destroyed – see the entrance to the IWM exhibition, or the powerful *Tower of Faces* at the USHMM – and the disorientation of survivors. In other words, Holocaust museums have increasingly acquired a commemorative as well as an educational function. And this commemorative function is inseparable from their entertainment function, for the poignancy of nostalgia for lost worlds is – for those experiencing it vicariously – bound up as much with pleasurable as with melancholy emotions.

The increasing sensitivity to the commemorative role of museums, as well as an awareness of their importance in shaping and responding to the contemporary memory culture, is made clear in Sybil Milton's claim that the common denominator of the majority of Holocaust memorials 'is a universal willingness to commemorate suffering experienced rather than suffering caused'.⁵⁹ In other words, the perpetrators often do not occupy the space one would expect. This commemorative function versus the museum's need to explain the workings of the machinery of destruction creates a major dilemma. The danger is that, in attempting not to glamorize the Nazis, the victims of Nazi genocide can appear to be the victims of an invisible agent, people to whom terrible things just happen.

Just as Cole is correct to note of Yad Vashem and USHMM that 'In giving to the past a sense of closure and an ending, these two museums offer a sense of meaning', so the 'national pavilions' at the Auschwitz Museum prove that Fritzsche is right when he argues that 'Because of their boundedness in time and space, national narratives have an unusual ability to organize remembrance and to make the past sensible'.⁶⁰ The development of Auschwitz as a museum has seen

two distinct phases: communist and post-communist. It was the material survival of much of the camp's structure and buildings – in contrast to say Treblinka or Bełżec – that allowed Auschwitz to be made a museum in the first place. Since, as we have seen, hatred of Jews was not something that communist ideology took seriously, the authorities decided to base the museum in Auschwitz I (Stammlager) on national displays. Each country that had nationals killed at Auschwitz was invited to set up a display in one of the former barracks. The result was not only that there was an over-representation of communist countries, but that Austria was given a splendid opportunity mendaciously to claim that it had been occupied by Germany as 'the first victim of National Socialism'. Jews were represented in a separate 'national pavilion' as though the nationals of countries such as Bulgaria killed at Auschwitz were not killed for the most part because they were Jews, and suggesting that there was a Jewish 'nation' like a Hungarian or Belgian one.

Under communism, too, Auschwitz became a site of Polish national pilgrimage. The camp was first opened as a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners, 75,000 of whom were murdered there, and the museum was primarily devoted to commemorating *Polish* martyrdom. It thus fitted the communist anti-fascist narrative but also subtly undermined it by stressing the attempt by the Nazis (the analogy was not lost on most visitors) to wipe out the Polish nation. Yet although Auschwitz was indeed a site of Polish suffering – a fact unknown to most Jews in these years – over 90 per cent of those killed there were Jews, as was rightly pointed out after 1989. The result was the development of a plan to redesign the museum's exhibition, and to place more emphasis on Birkenau (Auschwitz II) as the main killing site of Jews and Romanies. Unfortunately, it also generated some ugly battles over memory along the way, for example, over the erection of a Carmelite convent just outside the grounds of the museum but within the borders of the original camp; over the erection of large Stars of David and Crucifixes in a field in Birkenau where corpses had been burnt; and simply over whether there was enough sympathy to go round so that Auschwitz could be both a symbol of Polish and Jewish suffering.⁶¹

Numerous other death camps and concentration camps – among them Majdanek, Mauthausen, Natzwiler-Struthof, Dachau and Theresienstadt – survived relatively intact and have been made into museums. The development of each reflects the post-war history of political and national narratives. Perhaps the most striking example is Majdanek, which is little visited but which forces those who do visit it to undergo a fierce confrontation with the past, not only because the buildings, including gas chambers, are mostly intact, but because of the hugeness of the terrain and the overwhelming displays – in the former barracks – of countless pairs of shoes and other belongings of the victims. Each of these camps, as well as the many smaller ones that scar the map of Europe and barely penetrate popular consciousness, contribute to sustaining Holocaust

memory in their different ways. But each has also been involved in controversies over the meaning of the events that took place there, and how to situate them in national memory.⁶² At the sites of destruction one is tempted to think that here one comes closest to the events themselves. But it is important to remember that for museums, as for historiography, one is only ever confronted with a representation of the past, a particular story told in a certain way with certain emphases and omissions designed to meet certain needs in the present.⁶³

The fact that museums cannot re-present the past makes Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum extension to the Berlin Museum even more significant as an example of the contemporary sensibility to the built environment in the wake of the Holocaust. The building – long before any exhibits filled it – was hailed as one of the most moving statements about the disorientation that the Holocaust had left in its wake, but without succumbing to total despair. As is now well known, the building, with its awkward twists and turns, its space-distorting shape, is a zinc-clad snake built round a 'void', a space running through the museum that can sometimes be glimpsed but into which visitors can never enter. The Holocaust Tower brings the meaning of this absence even more sharply into focus: it is entirely empty and unlit, save for a tiny gap for light to penetrate at the very top. To have made the tower entirely black would have been kitsch, as well as a failure to recognize the rebirth of Jewish life in Berlin that has taken place in recent years. Libeskind's museum not only shows how architecture can discomfort, it reveals the absence that characterizes the post-Holocaust world. It therefore does not allow catastrophe to dominate but, in revealing absence, remains an 'architecture of hope', offering not closure but an ever-present question: it is 'an architecture of the question'.⁶⁴ No building better illustrates the fact that what Young demands of memorials can also be incorporated into architecture: that 'the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution'.⁶⁵

Memorial days

It is precisely this desire to make questioning the notion of memory-work itself central to the commemorative process that renders memorial days so problematic. There are many reasons why Israel's *Yom Hashoah*, as well as the memorial days held in the US, Britain and many other European countries (19 April, the start of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and 27 January, the day the Red Army liberated Auschwitz, respectively) are problematic: as performances they are almost inevitably kitsch, with their school choirs and candle-lit poetry readings; they potentially re-victimize genocide victims who are excluded (especially the Armenians, victims of current geopolitical machinations); and they are inherently part of a political process that provides cheap brownie points for governments. None of these problems is necessarily intractable, however. If a Holocaust

memorial day were ever to cause a government to rethink, for example, its asylum policies there would be no reason to complain. By drawing attention to genocides other than the Holocaust, such days can also have an important educational input. From the point of view of memory culture, however, memorial days seem to subvert their own intentions.

First, they are almost unavoidably ‘national’, and since nation-building is at the forefront of the causes for genocide, it ill behoves defenders of ‘national tradition’ to commemorate genocide’s victims in their name. In Israel, which many argue has the best justification for having a memorial day (as it has had since 1955) the day is intimately tied to the secular calendar that also includes, in rapid succession, the day of mourning for Israeli soldiers (*Yom Hazikaron*) and Independence Day (*Yom Hatzma’ut*). Second – and bearing in mind the split between questioning and continuity with which we began – it is hard to envisage a nationally organized memorial day that does not rely on formulaic but contentless slogans that involve no real mental effort on the part of participants. The format of such memorial days tends to incorporate the Holocaust into familiar narratives – political, national or religious – thereby reinforcing rather than challenging social mores and practices. Just as memorials can – by virtue of their ‘being there’ – be agents of forgetting just as easily as of remembering, so a once-a-year memorial day can allow people to forget the horror and the challenge of the Holocaust.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Some critics argue that the regularization of Holocaust memory, rather than signalling forgetting, is actually beneficial. Jeffrey Alexander, for example, writes that ‘the intensifying momentum to memorialize the Holocaust indicates a deepening institutionalization of its moral lessons and the continued recalling of its dramatic experiences rather than to their routinization and forgetting’.⁶⁷ Similarly, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that the Holocaust is at the forefront of a ‘cosmopolitanization’ (*Kosmopolitisierung*) of global memory, which is responsible for promoting a universalist message of human rights.⁶⁸

There is a more critical view too. According to Jan-Werner Müller, ‘the current culture of memorialization and musealization has a tendency to shade into a culture of pure sentimentality, in which we have become “addicted to memory” and where “excessive memory” leads to “complacency and collective self-indulgence”’.⁶⁹ Similarly, Kerwin Lee Klein argues that the proliferation of memory studies results from a conservative search for cultural compensation for the ravages of modernity and globalization, in which all critical impulses are drained from the work of history.⁷⁰ Nira Yuval-Davis and Max Silverman argue that a Holocaust memorial day in Britain acts as a hindrance rather than a spur to promoting anti-racism.⁷¹

Yet as this chapter has shown, there are many different ways in which memory, in the context of museums and memorials, can play itself out in contemporary society, not all of which are necessarily conservative, nostalgic, melancholic, or therapeutic. As Huyssen notes, perhaps the turn to memory

is to be taken seriously as a way of slowing down the speed of modernization, as an attempt, however fragile and fraught with contradiction, to cast life-lines to the past and counteract our culture's undisputed tendency toward amnesia under the sign of immediate profit and short-term politics.⁷²

In particular, the 'evocation of the incomplete'⁷³ always leaves space for renewed questioning, in ways that traditional forms of monumentalization – which insist on closure and continuity – do not. Libeskind's Jewish Museum extension to the Berlin Museum and the debate over Berlin's Central Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe are the best examples of how continual questioning rather than routinization keeps memory from ossifying into platitudes. It is no coincidence that these two monuments are situated in Berlin, the heart of both the Nazi empire with its grandiose monuments to timelessness,⁷⁴ and of the most profound attempt to deal with that legacy, an attempt that refuses – as some conservative critics demand – to draw a line under the past, a demand which itself (and contrary to its intentions) acknowledges the inescapable role of the past in shaping and understanding the present.

Notes

- 1 R. Koselleck, 'War Memorials', in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 288.
- 2 I am using 'memory' to refer to 'collective memory' or 'social memory', as opposed to the neurological functioning of memory, which is of course part of the make-up of all human beings. See J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); P. Burke, 'History as Social Memory', in *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, ed. T. Butler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 97–113; S. Radstone, ed., *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).
- 3 See H. Arendt, 'The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern', in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 1993), pp. 41–90; P. Fritzsche, 'The Case of Modern Memory', *Journal of Modern History*, 73 (2001), 87–117; idem., 'Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2001), 1587–618; idem., 'How Nostalgia Narrates Modernity', in *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture*, eds. A. Confini and P. Fritzsche (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 62–85; Koselleck, 'The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity', in *The Practice of Conceptual History*, pp. 154–69; D. Stone, 'Making Memory Work, or Gedächtnis macht frei', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37 (2003), 87–98.
- 4 R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

- 5 Fritzsche, 'The Case of Modern Memory', 116. Cf. S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); E. Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (2000), 175–92.
- 6 See M. Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State. Vol. 1: The Coming of Genocide* (London: I.B. Tauris, forthcoming). See also D. Stone, 'Genocide as Transgression', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6 (2003). On the importance of the way in which victim groups are defined by perpetrators, see S. Straus, 'Contested Meanings and Conflicted Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3 (2001), 349–75.
- 7 See also D. Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust: A Study in Historiography* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), chapter 5; idem., 'The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond "Uniqueness" and Ethnic Competition', *Rethinking History*, 8 (forthcoming 2004); A. Dirk Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the "Racial Century": Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36, 4 (2002), 7–36, and Moses' essay in this volume.
- 8 A. Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), 1390.
- 9 For some of the most celebrated diarists, see H. Kruk et al., *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps 1939–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); O. Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto: A Journal of 890 Days in the Lodz Ghetto* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002); *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, ed. R. Hilberg, S. Staron and J. Kermisz (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999); *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, ed. A.I. Katsh (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. J. Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); Avraham Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary*, ed. M. Gilbert (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Jozef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Lodz Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002); *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lódz Ghetto*, ed. A. Adelson (London: Bloomsbury, 1996). For a good discussion, see R.M. Shapiro, ed., *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1999).
- 10 P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); B. Bushaway, 'Name Upon Name: The Great War and Remembrance', in *Myths of the English*, ed. R. Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 136–67; A. Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919–1946* (Oxford: Berg, 1994); J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); C. Moriarty, 'Private Grief and Public Remembrance: British First World War Memorials' and W. Kidd, 'Memory, Memorials and Commemoration of War in Lorraine, 1908–1988', both in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Evans and K. Lunn (Oxford: Berg, 1997), pp. 125–42 and 143–59; A. King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).
- 11 One can distinguish between 'monuments' – celebrating something or someone – and 'memorials' – marking a tragic event; but this distinction does not do away with the problem I am discussing. A more meaningful difference is for 'memorial' to refer to the broad spectrum of commemorative activities, and 'monument' to refer to material objects that provide a focus for these activities. Cf. J.E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 3–4.

- 12 See A. Benjamin, 'Interrupting Confession, Resisting Absolution: Monuments after the Holocaust', in *Theoretical Interpretations of the Holocaust*, ed. D. Stone (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 9–26. See also F.R. Ankersmit, 'Remembering the Holocaust: Mourning and Melancholia', in *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 176–93.
- 13 A. Huyssen, 'Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age', in his *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 255. See also G.H. Hartman, 'Public Memory and its Discontents', in his *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 99–115.
- 14 L.L. Langer, 'Introduction', in C. Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, trans. R.C. Lamont (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), p. xviii.
- 15 J.E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 198.
- 16 T. Snyder, 'Memory of Sovereignty and Sovereignty over Memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939–1999', in *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. J.-W. Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 39, 49–50.
- 17 Some argue that this 'memory work' is a form of melancholia or over-identification with the victims. This seems to me to conflate the construction of collective memory with an all-pervasive trauma; whole post-war societies – especially several generations after the events in question – are hardly likely to be traumatized in a clinical sense by attempting to maintain the meaning of past traumas as open questions rather than consign them to the dead past. See C. Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); E. Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- 18 The best analysis is Young, *The Texture of Memory*, pp. 155–84.
- 19 See the essays in Z. Gitelman, ed., *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). See also Gitelman, 'The Soviet Politics of the Holocaust', in *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, ed. J.E. Young (New York: Prestel Verlag, 1994), pp. 139–47; idem, 'History, Memory and Politics: The Holocaust in the Soviet Union', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 5 (1990), 23–37; J. Bergman, 'Soviet Dissidents on the Holocaust, Hitler and Nazism: A Study of the Preservation of Historical Memory', *Slavic and East European Review*, 70 (1992), 477–504; D. Romanovsky, 'The Holocaust in the Eyes of Homo Sovieticus: A Survey Based on Northeastern Belorussia and Northwestern Russia', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 13 (1999), 355–82; A.V. Blum, '"The Jewish Question" and Censorship in the USSR', in *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation*, ed. J. Rose (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), pp. 79–103.
- 20 For more detail, see John Klier's contribution to this volume.
- 21 See F. Piper, *Auschwitz: How Many Perished. Jews, Poles, Gypsies...* (Cracow: Poligrafia ITS, 1992).
- 22 J. Webber, *The Future of Auschwitz: Some Personal Reflections* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1992), p. 29, n. 31; idem, 'Creating a New Inscription for the Memorial at Auschwitz-Birkenau: A Short Chapter in the Mythologization of the Holocaust', in *The Sociology of Sacred Texts*, eds. J. Davies and I. Wollaston (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp. 45–58.
- 23 A. Assmann, 'Erinnerungsorte und Gedächtnislandschaften', in *Erlebnis-Gedächtnis-Sinn: Authentische und konstruierte Erinnerung*, eds. H. Loewy and B. Moltmann

- (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1996), pp. 13–29 discusses this attempt to control powerful sites.
- 24 See, for example, N. Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); S. Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); I. Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994); A. Weiner, 'Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 1114–55; C. Merridale, 'War, Death and Remembrance in Soviet Russia', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, eds. J. Winter and E. Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 61–83; C. Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Verso, 2000); N. Schleifman, 'Moscow's Victory Park: A Monumental Change', *History & Memory*, 13, 2 (2001), 5–34.
- 25 See the essays in I. Deák, J. T. Gross, and T. Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
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24

The Holocaust and Genocide

A. Dirk Moses

Introduction

How does the Holocaust relate to genocide as a concept and an event? This question has caused considerable controversy because scholarly discourse and identity politics cannot be separated neatly. While the term 'genocide' was coined during the Second World War and enshrined in international law in 1948, the Holocaust as a specifically Jewish tragedy did not become an object of consciousness until almost two decades later. Ever since, those highlighting a distinctive experience for European Jewry have sought to separate it from that of other victims of the Nazis as well as other cases of ethnic and racial extermination.¹ Sometimes this endeavour takes on sectarian overtones. When President Carter established the United States Holocaust Museum and Memorial in 1979 and referred to 'eleven million innocent victims exterminated' – a figure that included five million non-Jewish Nazi victims – the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer accused him of attempting to 'de-Judaize' the Holocaust. Indignant survivor groups led by Elie Wiesel campaigned successfully to ensure that the permanent exhibition made only passing reference to 'other [non-Jewish] victims'.² Bauer went so far as to condemn tendencies to 'submerge the specific Jewish tragedy in the general sea of suffering caused by the many atrocities committed by the Nazi regime' as part of a 'worldwide phenomenon connected with dangers of anti-Semitism'.³

While the Holocaust has assumed totemic status for much of diasporic Jewry, it has become a 'cosmopolitan memory' and a transnational moral source for many non-Jews, at least in the West. At the 'Intergovernmental Conference on the Holocaust' in Stockholm in 2000, for example, European countries committed themselves to fighting 'genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia', signalling that the Holocaust has become the 'civilizational foundations of a new official European memory'.⁴ Yet the universal appeal of the Holocaust entails an inescapable dilemma. For as the ultimate standard of

moral evaluation, representatives of other victims groups will inevitably claim their own 'holocaust'.⁵ And sure enough, books have appeared proclaiming, for example, an 'American Holocaust' of the Indigenous peoples of North America, and a 'Forgotten Holocaust' of Chinese in Nanjing at the hands of the Japanese army in 1937–38 and Poles under the Nazis.⁶ Such claims have in turn stimulated still more ambitious attempts to prove once and for all that the Jewish Holocaust is 'uniquely unique'.⁷

Mirroring such competitions about collective suffering, two rival communities of scholars have emerged to study the Holocaust and genocide. Until recently, little dialogue has taken place between them.⁸ The issue is not just that very few of them dispose over sufficient expertise to make plausible linkages between different genocidal episodes, nor only that genocide scholars are usually social scientists who routinely make comparisons and generalizations based on a generic concept, while Holocaust scholars are historians concerned with explaining specific events. It is that these communities tend to operate with different philosophical, indeed metahistorical assumptions about the nature of evil and modernity.

Many students of genocide resent the implicit – and sometimes explicit – claims to uniqueness in Holocaust research. Like Mark Levene, they ask 'Is the Holocaust Simply Another Example of Genocide?' and end up 'Locating the Holocaust on the Genocide Spectrum' with Henry H. Huttenbach, to name the titles of well-known articles by two researchers in the field.⁹ Some of them claim that Holocaust uniqueness is tantamount to denial of indigenous genocides, because it reinscribes Eurocentrism and detaches the Holocaust from its colonial origins.¹⁰

Historians of the Holocaust, by contrast, often regard such questions and the trans-national contextualization of genocide studies as the trivialization of what they consider the defining event of the twentieth century.¹¹ The name of one journal, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, implies a distinction denied by another, the *Journal of Genocide Research*.¹² The outside observer is left to ponder the question: are the differences between the Holocaust and (other) instances of genocide more important than the similarities? Indeed, is the Holocaust intrinsic to, or prototypical of, genocide? What is the master category here, Holocaust or genocide?

The public imagination seems to regard the differences as more striking and the Holocaust as paradigmatic. The logical corollary of equating the Holocaust with genocide is to make genocide consubstantial with state-sanctioned mass murder. The Australian historian, Inga Clendinnen, expressed the common view when she wrote:

When I see the word 'genocide' I still see Gypsies and Jews being herded into trains, into pits, into ravines, and behind them the shadowy figures of

Armenian women and children being marched into the desert by armed men. I see deliberate mass murder: innocent people identified by their killers as distinctive entities being done to death by organised authority. I believe that to take the murder out of genocide is to render it vacuous.¹³

Such a view is far removed from the intentions of the originator of the concept of genocide, Raphael Lemkin (1900–59), as well as from the framers of the UN ‘Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide’ (1948), who devised an inclusive and differentiated definition of genocide that included non-lethal forms of racial and ethnic persecution. This comes as no surprise. As Peter Novick points out in his study of the North American construction of ‘the Holocaust’ as a distinct event, most people, including Jews, initially viewed Jewish suffering during the Second World War as part of the wider global conflagration. When American Jewish groups backed Lemkin’s campaign for their country to ratify the UN Convention, they took pains to point out that the unique aspect of wartime killing was the Nazi murder of ‘almost nine million civilians’, a figure that included many non-Jews.¹⁴ But is this not an illegitimate (self-) effacement of Jewish victimhood due to the antisemitism and facile universalism that led the Allies to ignore the plight of European Jewry during the war? Are not Lemkin’s conception and the UN definition thereby suspect? Has our understanding of the war and Nazi plans not sharpened since the late 1940s and 1950s? Close inspection of Lemkin’s writings reveals that he and many UN delegates were well aware of the Nazis’ exterminatory intention toward Jews, but that they conceptualized genocide broadly none the less.

Over the past sixty years, then, the Jewish experience has been lifted out of its original contextualization in the category of genocide, and distinguished with the term ‘Holocaust’ (or Shoah). Paradoxically, it has come to be regarded at once as the prototypical genocide and as unique, singular, unparalleled, or unprecedented. The original master category, genocide, was replaced by a new one, Holocaust. Yet recent research is returning to the Lemkian origins of the concept by stressing the links between the Holocaust and other instances of ethnically motivated mass murder and extermination. This chapter answers its opening question by revisiting Lemkin’s influential work, as well as the UN debates about a law criminalizing genocide. It will then trace the evolution of genocide scholarship that made the Holocaust its prototype, and conclude by discussing briefly the recent comparative and non-exclusive turn in the literature that seeks to situate the Holocaust in broader processes without, however, effacing its distinctive features.

Raphael Lemkin and the origins of the genocide concept

What are the origins of the concept of genocide? As is well known, the Polish-Jewish jurist, Raphael Lemkin, invented the term in 1944 for his book on Nazi

imperialism, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*.¹⁵ Its origins, however, go back much further and they show that genocide is neither the product of an abstract love for humanity nor of an exclusive preoccupation with Jews. As a boy, he had been first awakened to the persecution of human cultural groups by the story of the attempted extermination of Christians by the Roman emperor Nero. By learning about the travails of other ethnic groups through the centuries – the Huguenots of France, Catholics in Japan, Muslims in Spain – he concluded that ethnic extermination was a universal and enduring problem. The persecution of Jews was part of this sorry tale, and he was well aware of their suffering; the Jews of his region near Białystok had suffered pogroms in 1906. ‘I heard the screamings of Jews,’ he reported, ‘when their stomachs have been opened, filled with feathers, and tied with ropes.’¹⁶ But his sympathies were for people everywhere. ‘I identified myself more and more with the suffering of the victims,’ he wrote in his unpublished autobiography.¹⁷

Why did Lemkin’s sense of solidarity lead him to defend group rights as opposed to individual or human rights? Growing up in the multinational world of east-central Europe, his cultural imagination was irreducibly particular. Like the Polish romantic nationalists of the nineteenth century, he shared the national cosmopolitanism of Herder and Mazzini with their belief in the individuality principle and the unique role of each people in the ‘symphony of nations’:¹⁸

It became clear to me that the diversity of nations, religious groups and races is essential to civilization because every one of these groups has a mission to fulfill and a contribution to make in terms of culture. To destroy these groups is opposed to the will of the Creator and to disturb the spiritual harmony of mankind.¹⁹

In an unpublished manuscript, he continued the analysis:

The philosophy of the Genocide Convention is based on the formula of the human cosmos. This cosmos consists of four basic groups: national, racial, religious and ethnic. The groups are protected not only by reason of human compassion but also to prevent draining the spiritual resources of mankind.²⁰

Undergirding the protection of group existence against extermination, then, is the communitarian assumption that nations and nationhood are intrinsically valuable because, unlike other human collectives such as political parties, they produce culture, endow individual life with meaning, and comprise the building blocks of human civilization.²¹

Crimes against individuals were established by domestic law and international conventions governed their treatment in times of war, but what about

cultural groups? Appalled by the massacres of the Assyrian Christians in Iraq, indignant that the Turkish perpetrators of the Armenian deportations and massacres were able largely to escape prosecution, and alarmed by the rise of Hitler, Lemkin resolved to draft an international law to ensure that such action would be criminalized.²² Although only a young lecturer in comparative law in Poland and the Deputy Prosecutor of the District Court of Warsaw, he submitted a proposal to the Fifth International Conference for the Unification of Criminal Law, sponsored by the League of Nations, held in Madrid in 1933, to establish two new crimes: *barbarity* (destruction of national groups) and *vandalism* (destruction of their unique cultural artifacts).²³ Such 'acts of extermination directed against the ethnic, religious or social collectivities whatever the motive (political, religious, etc)', he implored, should be considered 'offences against the law of nations by reason of their common feature which is to endanger both the existence of the collectivity concerned and the entire social order'.²⁴ Ultimately, the delegates could not accept its impingement on the sacred principle of national sovereignty and, consequently, peoples and national minorities were to have no legal protection in the coming blood-letting unleashed by the German state, as Lemkin observed dryly ten years later at the height of the war.²⁵

Lemkin's urgency issued from this prescient appreciation of the danger the Nazis posed to the region, especially its Jews. Indeed, he had warned of Nazi imperialism in his conference submission, angering the German representative and even the Polish foreign minister, who was then currying favour with his country's western neighbour.²⁶ When in exile in the United States as an academic and government advisor after 1941, he worried about the safety of his family, 49 of whom were eventually murdered by the Germans, and he spread the word among his colleagues and superiors about the Nazis' exterminatory intentions toward European Jewry. Receiving a scant hearing, he resolved to publish the records of the German occupation he had been collecting and devise a term for what Winston Churchill, in August 1941, a month after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, had called 'a crime without a name', namely, the extermination of 'whole districts'.²⁷

In November 1944, Lemkin published *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, a massive 674-page book in which he first used and explained the meaning of genocide. What precisely he meant, however, has been a subject of some controversy. Is mass killing intrinsic to genocide? Indeed it is, Steven T. Katz and Yves Ternon have asserted, and the Holocaust is prototypical of genocide.²⁸ Or does he equate 'cultural' genocide with 'biological' and 'physical' genocide? If so, genocide is a much broader term not conceptually indentured to the Holocaust, as Ward Churchill insists.²⁹ To elucidate Lemkin's intentions, we must consider this text as well as shorter articles he wrote soon thereafter.

It is important to note that Lemkin devotes only one of 26 chapters in Parts One and Two of *Axis Rule* to genocide. Part Three, which comprises more than half the book, reproduces the German occupation decrees across Europe. The nine chapters of Part One are each devoted to a technique of occupation: administration, police, law, courts, property, finance, labour, legal status of the Jews and genocide. This structure suggests that the book is not an analysis of genocide *per se*, but a study of German occupation in which genocide is a particular tool of conquest. Indeed, he writes, 'genocide is a new technique of occupation aimed at winning the peace even though the war itself is lost'.³⁰ Yet in the preface, he implies that all of the techniques were aspects of genocide, such that it forms the conceptual core of his book:

The picture of coordinated German techniques of occupation must lead to the conclusion that the German occupant has embarked upon a gigantic scheme to change, in favor of Germany, the balance of biological forces between it and the captive nations for many years to come. The objective of this scheme is to *destroy or to cripple* the subjugated people in their development so that, even in the case of Germany's military defeat, it will be in a position to deal with other European nations from the vantage point of numerical, physical, and economic superiority.³¹

A sentence later, however, he seems to restrict genocide to extermination, thereby distinguishing it from other techniques.

The practice of extermination of nations and ethnic groups as carried out by the invaders is called by the author 'genocide', a term deriving from the Greek word *genos* (tribe, race) and the Latin *cide* (by way of analogy, see homicide [*sic*], fratricide) and is treated in a chapter under the same name. (Chapter IX)

So does genocide mean exterminating or 'crippling' a people? He begins Chapter Nine by declaring that genocide is 'the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group'. But what does destruction mean? Is it consubstantial with the total disappearance of a people as a biological entity? Not as such:

Genocide has two phases: one destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization of the area by the oppressor's own nationals.³²

Here destruction can mean crippling, an interpretation supported by the references scattered throughout the book to non-murderous genocidal policies directed toward other peoples occupied by the Nazis.³³ And sure enough, in an article written in 1946 Lemkin suggests that genocide is 'the criminal intent to destroy or cripple permanently a human group'.³⁴

Plainly, he has combined his original formulations, barbarity and vandalism to form a new, more comprehensive concept. Vandalism – the destruction of cultural works – was now a technique of group destruction.³⁵ So is genocide a synonym for the forced assimilation of the conquered people? Apparently not. Terms like 'denationalization' or 'Germanization' – the imposition of the conqueror's 'national pattern' on the conquered people – were unsatisfactory, he continued, because 'they do not convey the common elements of one generic notion and they treat mainly the cultural, economic, and social aspects of genocide, leaving out the biological aspects, such as causing the physical decline and even destruction of the population involved'.³⁶

Readers will be left at sea only if they do not recall Lemkin's conception of nationhood. Nations comprise various dimensions: political, social, cultural, linguistic, religious, economic and physical/biological. Genocide is a 'coordinated plan of different actions' that attacks them 'with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves'. Annihilation cannot be reduced to mass killing. 'Generally speaking, genocide does not entail the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation'.³⁷ Yet an essential aspect of nationhood is the physical/biological one. He thought the term 'Germanization' of the Poles inadequate, for example, because 'it means that the Poles, as human beings, are preserved and that only the national pattern of the Germans is imposed upon them. Such a term is much too restricted to apply to a process in which the population is attacked, *in a physical sense*, and is removed and supplanted by populations of the oppressor nations'.³⁸ Assimilation, or 'the destruction of the national pattern of [an] area and the imposition of the German pattern instead', he called 'absorption'.³⁹

That genocide possesses an irreducible biological core is also implicit in Lemkin's prescient observation that the Nazis were trying to tip Europe's biological scales permanently in their favour. Clearly, the cultural debilitation of a people can affect its biological well-being, yet nowhere in his published work does he use the term 'cultural genocide'. Accordingly, policies that target national culture are genocidal only if they are intended also to destroy 'the biological and physical structure of the oppressed group', as he put it in an article in 1945.⁴⁰ A nation can be destroyed or permanently crippled, then, by policies that attack its ability to reproduce itself culturally *and* biologically. There is only one form of genocide; the adumbrated techniques of genocide, whether physical or cultural, are designed to achieve the same end. Mass

killing not intended to exterminate a group is not genocide, but the remnants of an oppressed population who remain in a denationalized state are its victim.

What was the place of the persecution of Jews in this schema? This is an important question, because Bauer and Katz, in notably unguarded statements, contend that when Lemkin wrote his book he 'did not yet fully comprehend the total planned annihilation of the Jewish people in Europe'.⁴¹ Consequently, they maintain, Lemkin conflated the fate of Jews, whose total physical extermination the Nazis intended, with that of other nationalities, who were subject to violent denationalization. The latter is genocide but must be distinguished from the Jewish experience, which is a Holocaust. Lemkin's text reveals, however, that he was acutely conscious of the Nazis' radical plans for Jews. He devoted a specific chapter to Jews, outlining the 'special status' the occupiers created for them in every country they conquered. Nor was he unaware of the extermination camps: 'The Jewish population in the occupied countries is undergoing a process of liquidation (1) by debilitation and starvation; and (2) by massacres in the ghettos.' 'The Jews for the most part are liquidated within the ghettos, or in special trains in which they are transported to a so-called "unknown" destination.' They were 'one of the main objects of German genocide policy'.⁴² On pages 21 and 22 of *Axis Rule*, he stated:

The Gestapo administers large concentration camps where such persons [politically undesirable persons and Jews] are being held. The rounding up of the Jews in all the occupied countries and deporting them to Poland for physical extermination is also one of the main tasks of the Gestapo and S.S. units. The Chief of the Gestapo in Poland, Krüger...organized the liquidation of the ghettos in Polish towns, with the physical annihilation of half a million inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto.

Lemkin quoted the *Polish Fortnightly Review* as evidence for the proposition that the Nazis were using gas chambers, electrocution and death trains.⁴³ He was, in other words, well aware that the Jews were 'to be destroyed completely'.⁴⁴

And yet, he included their experience in his 'one generic notion' of genocide. Why did he not distinguish the Jewish case from that of other victims of the Germans in the manner of Bauer and Katz? Because he thought the various techniques of genocide issued in the same catastrophic end: the destruction of nationhood or group culture, one way or the other. Even if the Poles were not totally exterminated, Polish culture would be, and that fact represented as grave a loss to humanity as the loss of Jewish culture. Lemkin was more concerned with the legal protection of cultural collectives than with its individual members, for whom other legal instruments already existed.

The United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948

Did the attempted extermination of European Jewry provide the moral impetus for the United Nations to establish genocide as a crime in international law?⁴⁵ Is, in other words, the Holocaust the paradigm on which genocide is based? At first glance, it would appear so. The UN delegates ultimately removed the 'cultural genocide' provision in a draft convention in order to highlight those murderous policies that 'shocked the conscience of mankind'. Many delegates were convinced by the Danish complaint that it showed 'a lack of logic and of a sense of proportion to include in the same convention both mass murder in gas chambers and the closing of libraries'.⁴⁶ Moreover, during the drafting of the genocide convention, the so-called Nuremberg Trials were taking place which historians like Michael Marrus think 'authoritatively pointed to [the murder of European Jewry] as an established fact of great historical importance'.⁴⁷ The inclusive approach of Lemkin, it appears, was abandoned to make genocide resemble the Holocaust.

Yet on closer inspection, Lemkin's basic propositions were largely accepted. In December 1946, the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution affirming genocide as a crime denying 'the right of existence of entire human groups' that issued in 'great losses to humanity in the form of cultural and other contributions'.⁴⁸ This is pure Lemkin, and it comes as no surprise that he was a tireless lobbyist of UN delegates, many of whom had contact with him and his ideas. His reputation stood high. Britain's representative reminded all that, had his proposals been accepted in Madrid in 1933, the Nuremberg prosecutors would have been in a legally stronger position. Significantly, the term genocide was preferred to extermination in order to ensure that national destruction was not limited to mass killing.⁴⁹

It is true that not all of Lemkin's proposals were enshrined in law, a fact that critics of the UN Convention interpret as the perversion of his intention. In particular, they point out that he was one of three experts appointed to help formulate a draft convention (the 'Secretariat's Draft'), which included a special provision on 'cultural genocide' which was traded away in cynical power politics.⁵⁰ In fact, he did not use that formulation. The Secretariat's Draft defined genocide very broadly as acts committed with the 'purpose of destroying [a human group] in whole or in part, *or of preventing its preservation or development*'.⁵¹ To be sure, Lemkin is recorded as supporting the inclusion of this phrase against objections that it was not an essential component of genocide.⁵² It should be remembered, however, that the Secretary-General had instructed the drafters to formulate as wide a position as possible so that the various UN committees could omit what they wished.⁵³ The term 'cultural genocide' was introduced only in the subsequent Ad Hoc Committee's amended draft convention with which Lemkin was not involved. What is more, the Ad Hoc

Committee Draft was a compromise in which culturally destructive policies were not listed as a technique of genocide, as they had been in *Axis Rule*, but as a discrete form of genocide in a separate article, detached from Lemkin's insistence, in his published work, that such policies are techniques of genocide and must have intended physical/biological consequences.⁵⁴

In other words, the Secretariat Draft reflects Lemkin's efforts to put in an ambit claim for the cultural techniques of genocide, while he is not responsible for the term 'cultural genocide' in the Ad Hoc Committee Draft. None the less, because of its inclusion in this form, it was indeed possible for delegates to complain that closing libraries was being equated with mass murder. This did not mean that they took minority rights lightly. Many of them agreed to omit the cultural genocide article only if it was incorporated, in altered form, in another UN instrument.⁵⁵ As it happened, minority rights fell by the wayside and were not recognized in the UN Declaration on Human Rights, which lends credence to the claim of Ward Churchill that the Ad Hoc Committee conspired to remove cultural techniques of genocide (or 'cultural genocide') because its members had no intention of desisting from their own colonialist policies of assimilation and domination.⁵⁶

Despite all this, the UN did not embrace mass murder as the primary mode of group destruction. In fact, it largely retained Article II of the Ad Hoc Committee Draft, which listed four genocidal techniques: killing members of a group; impairing their physical integrity; inflicting measures and conditions aimed at causing their death; and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.⁵⁷ The final convention includes a fifth element: the forced transfer of children from one group to another, originally in the subsection on cultural policies in the Secretariat's Draft, but now intended to complement the emphasis on the physical/biological consequences of genocidal techniques.⁵⁸ Mass murder, then, is only one of five techniques. Moreover, by stipulating an intention to destroy a group 'in whole or in part', the General Assembly affirmed Lemkin's argument that permanently crippling a group was genocidal.

Clearly, what the UN defined as genocide was the first part of Lemkin's proposal in 1933, namely, barbarity. It excluded the equivalent of the second part, vandalism. The origins of the modern crime of genocide, then, precede the Holocaust and are based on Lemkin's understanding of the Armenian genocide.⁵⁹ This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Ad Hoc Committee rejected the Soviet proposal to include in the preamble the statement that the 'crime of genocide is organically bound up with fascism-nazism and other similar race "theories".'⁶⁰ It retained the formulation that the world was 'profoundly shocked by many recent instances of genocide', but even this generalization was replaced in the final convention by the timeless 'recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity'.⁶¹

The Armenian genocide, not the murder of European Jewry, was also the origin of a key term of the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg, namely 'crimes against humanity', with which Britain, France and Russia had accused Turkey in 1915.⁶² A similar formulation appeared in the 'Commission on Responsibilities and the Authors of War' at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which recommended that 'all persons belonging to enemy countries... who have been guilty of offences against the laws and customs of war or the laws of humanity, are liable to criminal prosecution'. As it happened, the US opposed the idea of such wide-ranging trials, and the Kaiser was eventually charged with offences against 'international morality and the sanctity of treaties'.⁶³ In 1945, the Americans were in favour of prosecuting war crimes and 'crimes against humanity', which included 'murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population'. These prohibitions, however, were not radically new. They were based on the Hague and Geneva Conventions, and therefore part of customary international law, as Robert Jackson, the US prosecutor, was at pains to emphasize.⁶⁴

To be sure, the moral shock of Nazi policies occasioned the development of this legal tradition by the Allies in the lead-up to the IMT. 'Crimes against Humanity' were abstracted from 'War Crimes' to protect all civilian nationals in times of war. In fact, thanks to the relentless lobbying of Lemkin, the indictment of the IMT included 'deliberate and systematic genocide, viz., the extermination of racial and national groups... particularly Jews, Poles, and Gypsies'. The British prosecutor, Sir Hartley Shawcross, hastened to add, in the manner of Lemkin, that 'Genocide was not restricted to extermination of the Jewish people or of the gypsies. It was applied in different forms to Yugoslavia, to the non-German inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine, to the people of the Low Countries and of Norway'.⁶⁵ Indeed, as the historian Donald Bloxham has shown recently, the basic orientation of the Allies, particularly the British, was to play down as much as possible the racially-specific dimension of Nazi crimes.⁶⁶ The priority was prosecuting the German leaders for waging an aggressive war ('crimes against peace'); persecutions of their own population were salient only in so far as they were connected to waging war.⁶⁷ Consequently, none of the Nazis was convicted of genocide, let alone for pre-war crimes, as a dismayed Lemkin, who had been working for the sympathetic US prosecutor, Micky Marcus, noted.⁶⁸ For this reason, the United Nations, which was meeting in its first session when the first Nuremberg judgment was issued on 30 September/1 October 1946, decided that its definition of genocide should cover crimes committed during peacetime, and rejected the British suggestion that genocide be based on the 'Nuremberg Principles'.⁶⁹ Delegates had in mind the persecution of German Jews before the war, but there is no evidence to suggest that they separated the Jewish experience from that of other victims of Nazism.

Genocide research: The Holocaust as prototype?

The genocide definitions of Lemkin and the UN did not come with an explanatory theory, so scholars have had to provide their own. In general, they have done so in two ways. One paradigm, which I call 'liberal', regards the Holocaust as the paradigmatic genocide and therefore emphasizes the exterminatory intention of the state to kill groups of people. The other, a reaction to the first, is 'post-liberal' because it averts the issue of perpetrator agency and intention by highlighting anonymous 'genocidal processes' of cultural and physical destruction.⁷⁰ Neither is particularly faithful to the original formulations.

The dominant approach is the liberal one, because until recently genocide studies have been virtually monopolized by North American social scientists in thrall to theories of totalitarianism. While it rejects the claims of Holocaust uniqueness, it none the less frames the Holocaust as the prototypical genocide. By regarding it as the ultimate case, liberals thereby bring Holocaust uniqueness into comparative genocide studies by the back door. Representative are the Canada-based scholars Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn. In a series of publications in the 1980s, culminating in their widely used textbook *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, they criticized the UN Convention and proposed their own influential definition of genocide.⁷¹ The UN definition was inadequate, they contend, because it omits political and social groups as possible targets. The point of this inclusive-sounding rhetoric, however, is not to expand the purview of genocide, but to restrict it. Like Bauer, they regard the Convention's itemization of non-lethal forms of group destruction as incoherent, and therefore confine genocide to mass killing: it is 'a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator'.⁷² By redefining the term in these two ways, the Soviet Union's 'class murders', for example, could be counted as genocidal, an intellectually and politically satisfying result during the Cold War.

The origin of this line of thinking is an early commentary on the genocide convention by a Dutch legal scholar, Pieter Drost, whose thesis was indicated by the title of his book, *The Crime of State*.⁷³ The tradition lives on. In 1986, the prolific genocide scholar Barbara Harff spoke for many when she defined genocide 'as a particular form of state terror... mass murder, premeditated by some power-wielding group linked with state power'. Predictably, she added: 'The Jewish Holocaust...is employed as the yardstick, the ultimate criterion for assessing the scope, methods, targets, and victims of [other] genocides'.⁷⁴ In another influential article, Harff and Ted Gurr followed Chalk and Jonassohn in excluding the non-lethal techniques of genocide in the UN Convention 'because this extends the definition to innumerable instances of groups which have lost their cohesion and identity, but not necessarily their lives'.⁷⁵ The

preoccupation with state authority and murder was continued by Irving Horowitz, Lyman Legters and Vahakn Dadrian.⁷⁶ Even today there are those who insist that they honour genocide by regarding it as 'state-organized mass murder and crimes against humanity'.⁷⁷

Needless to say, this approach, which represented the scholarly orthodoxy in the 1980s, was a radical narrowing of Lemkin's intentions, although Chalk asserts that he would have approved of these innovations.⁷⁸ In fact, the UN definition does not mention the state, and Lemkin explicitly opposed the inclusion of social and political groups during the deliberations on the Secretariat's Draft of the UN Convention.⁷⁹ This should come as no surprise, as they were not the culture creating or bearing collectives that Lemkin believed contributed to human civilization. The liberal paradigm does not grasp what he and the UN delegates were trying to achieve in the 1940s.

This consensus has not gone unchallenged. Early in her career, the American sociologist Helen Fein was wont to reduce genocide to 'calculated murder',⁸⁰ but by the later 1980s she had aligned her position more closely with Lemkin's. In an important intervention in 1990, she took issue with Chalk and Jonassohn's capricious rendering of the concept. Is the state really paramount in colonial situations where settlers kill the indigenous people? Why should genocide be limited to mass killing? She also noted correctly that 'Although most contemporary genocides take place in the Third World, much of the theory about genocide is derived from a dominant or exclusive focus on the Holocaust, which occurred in a modern, western, Christian and post-Christian society'.⁸¹ Indeed, the empirical work in the 1970s concerned South America, Africa and the Indian subcontinent where genocides of indigenous peoples and decolonization were taking place.⁸² Yet her own approach, typical of the North American social scientists, of categorizing genocides according to their context – developmental, despotic, retributive, ideological, and so on – did not satisfy post-liberal critics because it is more descriptive than explanatory, essentially modifying rather than challenging the orthodoxy.⁸³

The post-liberal alternative began with Jean-Paul Sartre's contribution to the controversial 'Russell Tribunal' of prominent intellectuals who considered US war crimes during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s.⁸⁴ He made two innovations: contextualizing the war in the history of European imperialism and arguing that people could live out objective 'genocidal relationships' irrespective of their subjective intentions. The only American genocide scholar to take Sartre seriously was Leo Kuper who, despite caveats, conceded the 'affinity between colonialism and genocide'. This was hardly surprising given that he is an expert on Africa, a rarity among genocide theorists at the time, who customarily write mostly about the Holocaust and the Armenian case. Tellingly, Kuper also stressed that the state need not be the genocidal perpetrator and that human groups need not be physically destroyed in their entirety.⁸⁵ Lemkin seemed to

be taken seriously once again, although this was unclear for Israel Charny who restricted genocide to mass killing, but undertaken by any perpetrator with any motivation on any group.⁸⁶

The questioning of the liberal perspective continued in earnest in the 1980s. The Native American historian and activist, Ward Churchill, made the innovative suggestion that genocide be categorized according to the degree of exterminatory intent, much like the US murder law, because the concept of intention needed to be differentiated.⁸⁷ But his ideas were ignored.⁸⁸ Undeterred, other scholars pressed on. An important collection of essays edited by Isidor Wallimann and Michael N. Dobkowski in 1987 began with the declaration that:

In a world that historically has moved from domination based primarily on the will of given individuals (in the Middle Ages, for example) to one in which individuals are dominated by anonymous forces such as market mechanisms, bureaucracies and distant decision making by committees and parliaments, the emphasis on intentionality almost appears anachronistic.... [In] the modern age, the issue of intentionality on the societal level is harder to locate because of the anonymous and amorphous structural forces that dictate the character of our world.⁸⁹

Their book contained an application of Sartre's notion of 'relations of genocide' to the Australian frontier by Tony Barta, a thought experiment vehemently opposed by liberals who feared that genocide would be rendered meaningless if the Holocaust paradigm was abandoned.⁹⁰

It certainly appeared as if the post-liberals wanted to replace one prototype with another, namely, 'relations of genocide' would supersede genocidal intent. Many of them, especially Churchill, insisted that cultural genocide was intrinsic to genocide *per se*, and they invoked Lemkin to license their propositions. Yet it was Lemkin who foreground exterminatory consciousness when he wrote that genocide was 'a co-ordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.'⁹¹ Nor did he favour cultural genocide, as established above. Post-liberals similarly misunderstand him when they advocate the inclusion of political groups in the UN Convention, which permits political collectives, such as the Indonesian communists, to be classed as victims of genocide.⁹²

The most significant post-liberal contribution of the 1990s is Churchill's *A Little Matter of Genocide*, a learned and vitriolic attack on liberal and exclusivist scholarship. It makes many telling points, but displays the limitations of an approach that sets out to negate an orthodoxy. Consequently, rather than arguing that any claim to the uniqueness of a particular genocide is unsatisfactory, its author insists that the 'American Holocaust' (to use the term of his

colleague, David E. Stannard) of the indigenous peoples is ‘unparalleled’ and therefore paradigmatic.⁹³

Plainly this debate has reached an impasse, but the withering attacks of post-liberalists like Churchill, Stannard and others have made a difference. Liberal positions, while still commanding some support, no longer dominate the field. The rhetoric of uniqueness is losing ground. Gavriel Rosenfeld, for example, while rejecting many post-liberal claims, nevertheless concedes that the uniqueness argument is no longer intellectually and morally sustainable:

A deemphasis on the term ‘uniqueness’ would appear to be particularly timely, moreover, in view of the Holocaust’s ongoing historicization. As the significance of the Holocaust is increasingly conceived in universal terms, those who continue to advocate its uniqueness will be seen as pursuing a quixotic task. Their battle against universalization is destined to be a losing one, as the term ‘Holocaust’ has already become an ideal-type construct.⁹⁴

New research directions

Since the mid-1990s, the realization has been dawning that a new approach is needed. For a younger generation, the liberal/post-liberal polemics have run their course. Representative is David Moshman’s observation that ‘Given that every genocide is unique, any prototype-based concept of genocide will distort one’s understanding of some genocides as it filters them through whatever genocide is taken as central and defining’.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Yugoslavian killing fields, Rwandan genocide and increasing awareness of the Khmer Rouge’s crimes in Cambodia awakened the consciousness of the scholarly community that ‘never again’ was a meaningless slogan if it meant no more than ‘never again would Germans kill Jews between 1941 and 1945’.⁹⁶ The purpose of the genocide concept and law, after all, was to prevent its recurrence. The sight of atrocities occurring today, rather than in the mists of time, stimulated new research with new questions. The discursive space opened up, then, for a non-sectarian, non-competitive and non-hierarchical analysis of modern genocide. This change is evident in three ways.

First, the Holocaust is employed as a heuristic device to illuminate processes in other genocides. An early major study along these lines was Robert Melson’s *Revolution and Genocide*, a comparison of the Holocaust and Armenian genocide that identified common circumstances of national crisis in which the extermination of minorities became a policy option for revolutionary elites.⁹⁷ Most recently, the Cambodian specialist Ben Kiernan finds that considering the Nazi fear of German territorial loss and national annihilation helps lay bare central components of the Khmer Rouge paranoia and radicalism.⁹⁸ Similarly,

Donald Bloxham employs the concept of ‘cumulative radicalization’ from Holocaust historiography to explain the evolution of policy in the Armenian genocide.⁹⁹ In his examination of the Rwandan genocide, Mahmood Mamdani identifies the commonality between Nazis and Hutu leaders of ‘race branding’ that enables them ‘not only to set a group apart as an enemy, but also to exterminate it with an easy conscience’.¹⁰⁰ The little-known Australian case of ‘mixed-race’ indigenous children taken from their mothers by the state, Paul Bartrop observes, ‘did not involve killing’, but ‘its ultimate objective was the same as Hitler’s was for the Jews; namely that at the end of the process the target group would have disappeared from the face of the earth’.¹⁰¹ The attempt to extract theoretical insights of general application is also becoming more widespread, as Dan Stone exemplifies in relation to the violence and modernity of the murderous German ‘special action units’.¹⁰² Articles and books that plead for Holocaust uniqueness or its equivalent now appear like records playing hits from a bygone era.¹⁰³

Second, scholars are increasingly contextualizing the Holocaust in broader processes of nation- and empire-building. This does not entail an easy equation between ‘modernity and the Holocaust’ or its reduction to ‘just another example of European colonialism’, but tracing the escalating violence within Europe and on its periphery that the competitive states system and colonialism have unleashed over the last 400 years. Most prominent among them is Mark Levene, whose many articles have culminated in a massive new book, *Genocide in the Modern Age*.¹⁰⁴ Jürgen Zimmerer, an expert on German Southwest Africa, Isabel Hull and Tony Barta are also working on the links between German colonialism and the Holocaust, while this author conceptualizes the 100 years between 1850 and 1950 as ‘the racial century’ of European genocides.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Mark Mazower entreats his colleagues to end their Eurocentric perspective in which ‘a small number of decontextualized European exemplars – notably, the Holocaust and Stalin’s USSR’ – set the agenda. On the contrary, he avers, they ‘may be better understood in a historical context that stretches back to the age of empire and forward to encompass the spread of independent, more or less, violent states across the globe’.¹⁰⁶

Third, the Holocaust is studied along with other genocides and ethnic cleansings of the twentieth century without the need for scholars to make pious gestures to establish their moral credentials. The enormity and distinctive features of the Holocaust are universally appreciated in the research community. Its members now can engage in the kind of non-competitive comparative history that Lemkin would have supported, namely, discerning similarities between cases as well as differences. Notable recent examples of this approach are important collections edited by Alexander Laban Hinton, Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, Ann Curthoys and John Docker, and Colin Tatz and his collaborators, and the comparative analyses of Omer Bartov,

Norman Naimark and Eric D. Weitz.¹⁰⁷ Significantly, virtually all the scholars on the cutting edge of comparative research are historians, indicating that archival experience as well as conceptual and textual reflection are necessary to identify and make plausible connections between cases.

Conclusion

Here we have authentic comparative genocide studies, then, sixty years after Lemkin coined the 'one generic concept' to link, rather than divide, the attempt to exterminate or cripple cultural groups. But does this solve the vexed question of whether 'Holocaust' or 'genocide' is or should be the master concept in the field? Lemkin offers a compelling answer. The Nazi policies were radically new, he conceded, but only in the context of modern civilization. Wars of extermination had marked human society from antiquity until the religious conflagrations of early modern Europe, after which the doctrine became normative that war is conducted against states rather than populations.¹⁰⁸ The Nazis, then, were at once an irruption of barbarism into civilization and 'Obviously...the most striking and the most deliberate and thorough' of genocidal imperialists. 'They almost achieved their goal in exterminating the Jews and Gypsies in Europe.'¹⁰⁹ The Jewish experience is both distinctive in its extremity and part of a broader pattern. What struck Lemkin most, however, were the perpetrators rather than their victims. The Nazi occupation experiment represented 'a flawless and almost scientific system, the perfection of which has still not been achieved by another people even today'.¹¹⁰

As might be expected, Lemkin would entreat his concept of genocide, but what he is arguing is that its highlighting of the attempt to exterminate or cripple cultural groups, by whatever means, does not imply that distinctions cannot be made between cases. It is not a blunt instrument to bludgeon all phenomena into the same box, but a surgical tool designed to dissect and identify genocidal policies. It does not entail that all genocides are the same in every respect.

Yet how can comparative genocide studies develop when public consciousness is suffused by what the historian Richard J. Evans calls the 'cult of memory' surrounding the Holocaust?¹¹¹ Holocaust and genocide studies can draw sustenance from one another because they are both scholarly expressions of the universal human preoccupation with explaining and reducing suffering. To be sure, the travails of one's own group need not issue in the empathetic recognition of that of other groups, but when it does it is a powerful moral source. We know that this human solidarity was Lemkin's moral source. We also know that he suffered greatly from the death of his family in the Holocaust and that he lobbied in vain to have the US intercede on behalf of European Jews during the war. From his personal tragedy, he drew the strength to carry on the

campaign for the legal recognition of genocide – protection for all cultural groups – in the face of considerable adversity. His was no disengaged, scholarly pursuit or activism. Fortunately, his ecumenical spirit was infectious and carried the day with the UN. Lemkin's spirit was alive, for example, when Elie Wiesel, the high priest of 'Holocaust consciousness', called for the recognition of the genocide of the Aché in Paraguay in the 1970s and urged US intervention in Bosnia in the 1990s.¹¹² Scholarly works and a convention are hardly likely to banish genocide, but if 'never again' is to have a redeeming meaning, Lemkin's ecumenical spirit, rather than truculent expressions of ethnic self-assertion, is the sure precondition of any policy of prevention.

Notes

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- 2 Y. Bauer, 'Whose Holocaust?' in *Genocide and Human Rights: A Global Anthology*, ed. J. N. Porter (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), p. 42; P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 220.
- 3 Bauer, 'Whose Holocaust?', 35, 38.
- 4 D. Levy and N. Sznaider, 'Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5, 1 (2002), 100f. See also H. Flanzbaum, 'The Americanization of the Holocaust', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1 (1999), 91–104.
- 5 J.C. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5, 1 (2002), 5–85.
- 6 D.E. Stannard, *American Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); I. Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); R.C. Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986). See also V.N. Dadrian, 'The Convergent Aspects of the Armenian and Jewish Cases of Genocide', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3, 2 (1988), 151–69.
- 7 G. Heinsohn, 'What Makes the Holocaust a Uniquely Unique Genocide?', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2 (2000), 411–30; P. Papazian, 'A "Unique Uniqueness"?' *Midstream*, 30, 4 (1984), 14–18; S.T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Y. Bauer, 'Comparison of Genocides', in *Studies in Comparative Genocide*, ed. L. Chorbajian and G. Shirinian (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), pp. 31–43. An excellent analysis of this debate is D. Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust: A Study in Historiography* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), chapter 5.
- 8 I.W. Charny, 'Comparative Study of Genocide', in *The Encyclopedia of Genocide*, vol. 1, ed. I.W. Charny (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1999), pp. 10f; S. Totten and S.L. Jacobs, eds., *Pioneers of Genocide Studies: Confronting Mass Death in the Century of Genocide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).
- 9 M. Levene, 'Is the Holocaust Simply Another Example of Genocide?', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 28, 2 (1994), 3–26; H.H. Huttenbach, 'Locating the Holocaust on the Genocide Spectrum', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (1988), 289–303.

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Index

- Aalders, Gerald, 57
Abel, Theodore, 200
Abraham, David, 165 n5
Abs, Hermann, 163
Ache, 550
Adam, Uwe Dietrich, 41, 42, 174, 175, 179
Adelsberger, Lucie, 369
Adenauer, Konrad, 402
Adevărul, 448
Adler, Jacques, 354
Adorno, T.W., 6, 470, 477, 478, 480–2, 483, 486 n24
Africa, 184, 545
Agamben, Giorgio, 478, 479–80
Ainsztein, Ruben, 344, 345
Aktion Arbeits scheu Reich, 388
Aktion Reinhard, 99, 100, 242, 245, 282, 283, 350
Albanians, 462
Aleichem, Sholem, 292
Alexander, Jeffrey, 524
Alexandrescu, Sorin, 457
Algeria, 328
Allen, Michael Thad, 161
Alliance of Young Democrats (Hungary), 451
Allianz, 148, 161
Alltagsgeschichte, 14
Alsace-Lorraine, 543
Alter, Viktor, 280
Althaus, Paul, 298
Aly, Götz, 57, 59, 122, 133, 180–1, 182, 208
Amendola, Giovanni, 32
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ('Joint'), 286, 288, 333, 431
Améry, Jean, 204, 211
amidah, *see* Jewish resistance
Amsterdam, 320, 330, 331, 332
Anderson, Benedict, 322
Anielewicz, Mordecai, 488, 489
Anschluss, 58
Antall, József, 451–2
Anti-Defamation League, 384
antisemitism, 1, 2, 3, 9–23 *passim*, 25, 26, 27, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, 121, 122, 123, 133, 147, 175, 176, 200–1, 207, 208, 259, 262, 263, 264, 265, 267, 280, 283, 291, 300, 307, 311, 313, 314, 324, 334, 335, 349, 374, 400, 420, 422, 423, 424, 426, 427–8, 433, 435–6, 511, 517, 533, 535; Christian, 296, 298–9, 302–4, 305–6, 310, 311, 313, 315; economic, 52–64; 'eliminationist', 120, 206–7; French, 408; post-communist eastern European, 440–68; Stalinist, 276, 288, 420–1, 424, 426; 'utilitarian', 455; without Jews, 441, 454
Antohi, Sorin, 457
Antonescu, Ion, 432, 433, 434, 445, 446, 447, 455, 456, 457
Arad, Yitzhak, 350, 351
Arajs Kommando, 122
Arbeitsgemeinschaft für kirchliche Zeitgeschichte, 301
Ardeleanu, I., 456
Arendt, Hannah, 34, 70, 71, 174, 201, 202, 205, 320–1, 326, 343, 345, 358, 403, 415
Argentina, 257
Armenian genocide, 542–3, 545, 547, 548
Armenians, 392, 535
Aron, Raymond, 30, 178
Aronson, Shlomo, 178
Arrow Cross, 445, 449, 455, 456
art, 480–2; theft of, 57, 61
'Aryan paragraph', 302
Aryanization, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 61, 142, 145, 149, 150, 151, 155, 161, 374, 400
Aschrott, Sigmund, 514
Association des Juifs en Belgique, 330
Atac la persoana, 448
Atlantic Charter, 187
Atlas, Yeheskal, 356
Atlee, Clement, 273 n56

- Auschwitz, 6, 41, 72, 95, 97, 98, 99, 160, 176, 185, 189, 204, 217, 218, 221, 222, 223, 227, 229, 233, 236, 253, 266, 278, 283, 314, 326, 355, 365, 367, 369, 370, 373, 378, 399, 400, 401, 403, 423, 425, 427, 435, 451, 471, 477–8, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 497, 498, 500, 501, 502; Carmelite convent at, 428, 522; debate over bombing of, 259, 268; implications for philosophy, 470, 473, 474, 476, 478–9, 480–1, 484, 498; liberation, 523; ‘Scrolls of’, 491; women’s orchestra at, 372; *see also* Birkenau; Oświęcim
 ‘Auschwitz-Album’, 217
 Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 96, 218, 238, 436, 452, 512, 517, 521–2; under communism, 522
 Auschwitz Trial, 6, 204, 211, 403–4, 405, 411, 412, 414
 Australia, 129, 546; genocide in, 548
 Austria, 24, 54, 61, 160, 308, 327, 387, 496, 522; war crimes trials in, 399
 Austro-Hungarian Empire, 25, 228, 233
 Babi Yar, 222, 278, 283, 289–92, 423, 511–12; monument at, 292, 423, 512
 Bad Godesberg, 305
 Bad Harzburg, 144
 Baden, 313
Badische Zeitung, 388
 Baeck, Leo, 334
 Bajohr, Frank, 3
 Bank of England, 153
 banks, 56, 93, 148–9, 150, 153, 255
Banner, The, 282
 Barasz, Ephraim, 351
 Barbie, Klaus, 399, 407–8
 Barkai, Avraham, 53, 146
 Barmen Declaration, 301, 302
 Barnett, Victoria, 301
 Barta, Tony, 546, 548
 Bartels, Erik, 387
 Barth, Karl, 300, 301
 Bartov, Omer, 124, 134, 548
 Bartrop, Paul, 548
 BASF, 165 n4
 Basso, Lelio, 32
 Bauer, Fritz, 404
 Bauer, Otto, 31
 Bauer, Yehuda, 52, 59, 346, 348, 352, 357, 358–9, 533, 540
 Bauhaus, 227
 Bauman, Zygmunt, 68, 257
 Baumel, Judith Tydor, 369
 Baumgärtel, Friedrich, 301
 Bavaria, 18, 25, 26, 30, 297
 Bayreuth, 216
 Becker, Jurek, 436–7
 Beckett, Samuel, 481
 Beer Hall Putsch, 26, 30
 Behrendt, Johannes, 389
 Belgium, 57, 253, 257, 319, 330, 332, 334, 335, 522
 Belgrade, 189, 190
 Belorussia, 55, 122, 125, 127, 128, 129, 282, 285, 330, 349, 424
 Belsen Trial, 401
 Bełżec, 99, 189, 221, 228, 231, 232, 236, 244, 248, 249, 266, 278, 391, 522; trial, 411
 Bender, Ryszard, 450
 Bender, Sarah, 351–2
 Ben-Gurion, David, 258, 405, 406
 Benshalom, Rafi, 353
 Bentham, Jeremy, 227
 Ben-Tov, Arie, 353
 Ben Zvi, Ze’ev, 514
 Berdichev Ghetto, 278, 293
 Bergelson, David, 280, 286
 Bergen-Belsen, 255, 259, 377
 Bergen, Doris, 306
 Beria, Lavrenty, 287, 288
 Berkhoff, Karel, 122
 Berkowits, Eliezer, 470, 471, 473–5, 476, 477, 485 n7
 Berlin, 13, 54, 76, 99, 181, 189, 202, 205, 216, 241, 267, 309, 375, 389, 512, 515–16
 Berlin Museum, Jewish Museum Extension, 523, 525
 Bermuda Conference, 263
 Bernstein, Jay, 469
 Bertram, Cardinal, 312
 Bessarabia, *see* Moldova
 Bessel, Richard, 13, 22 n38
 Best, Werner, 13, 17, 208
Beth Shalom (Britain), 520
 Bettelheim, Bruno, 343, 345
Bettlerwoche, 388
 Bevin, Ernest, 264–5, 273 n56
 Beyer, Frank, 436
 Białystok, 72, 92, 100, 536
 Białystok Ghetto, 329, 351–2

- Bibo, Istvan, 431, 432
 Biebow, Hans, 403
 Bielefeld, 301
 Bielski partisans, 355–6
 big business, 3, 141–72, 421–2, 511
 Binding, Karl, 387
 Binion, Rudolf, 25
 Birenbaum, Halina, 499
 Birkenau, 218, 222, 223, 227, 229, 237, 238, 370, 388; family camp, 378, 390, 491, 522; memorial at, 512; *Zigeunerlager* (Gypsy Camp), 389; *Zigeunernacht*, 391, 396 n33; *see also* Auschwitz; Brzezinka
 Birn, Ruth Bettina, 121, 463
 Bismarck, Otto von, 312, 386
 Bitton-Jackson, Livia, 499, 501, 502
Black Book, The, 280, 283, 287, 289, 294, 423
 Blanchot, Maurice, 478
 Blatman, Daniel, 351
 Błonski, Jan, 450
 Bloxham, Donald, 6, 543, 548
 Böckenförde, Ernst-Wolfgang, 308, 309
 Boer War, 224
 Boia, Lucian, 457
 Boltanski, Christian, 516
 Bondy, Ruth, 367, 376
 Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 302
 Bonn Convention, 383
 Bordeaux, 410
 Borges, Jorge Luis, 499
 Boris III, 435, 459–60
 Bormann, Martin, 300
 Born, Friedrich, 353
 Borut, Jacob, 12
 Bosnia, 500, 550
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 60
 Bousquet, René, 410
 Bracher, Karl Dietrich, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 145
 Brack, Victor, 189, 190
 Braham, Randolph L., 132, 431, 445
 Braiterman, Zachary, 471
 Brandenburg, 313
 Brazauskas, Algirdas, 455
 Brechtken, Magnus, 185
 Breitman, Richard, 183, 261, 262, 263, 390
 Bremen New Testament, 303
 Breslau, 301
 Brezhnev, Leonid, 293
 Britain, 4, 15, 40, 129, 153, 157, 178, 253–75, 399, 402, 520–1, 523, 543; and Palestine, 258, 264; Foreign Office, 259, 261; Home Office, 255, 261; Ministry of Labour, 263; Treasury, 255
 British Jewish Fund for Soviet Russia, 282
 Brno, 389
 Broad, Pery, 383, 390
'Bromberger Blutsonntag', 92
 Broszat, Martin, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 42, 44, 75–6, 91, 177, 178, 204, 205, 206, 414
 Browning, Christopher R., 1, 4, 76, 77, 78, 82, 126, 206, 208, 256, 412
 Brumberg, Abraham, 451
 Brun, Gudrun, 387
 Bruskina, Masha, 423
 Bryansk, 184, 188, 293
 Brzezinka, 238; *see also* Birkenau
 Buber, Martin, 333
 Buchenwald, 255, 389, 436, 500, 512, 514
 Buchheim, Hans, 32
 Budapest, 80–1, 82, 221, 345, 353, 432
 Budraß, Lutz, 169 n55
 Buduca, I., 456
 Bukovina, 432, 456, 457
 Bulgaria, 132, 434–5, 522; Jews in, 434; post-communist, 459–60
 Bullock, Alan, 26, 33, 37, 264
 Bultmann, Rudolf K., 315
 Bund, 100, 277, 280, 286, 351
 Burgenland, 387
 Burleigh, Michael, 68, 182, 389
 Burrin, Philippe, 183
 Buzatu, Gheorghe, 455, 456–7
 bystander, 4, 254, 255, 330, 399; as concept, 256–7, 259
 Calvinism, 313
 Cambodia, 547
 Canada, 129
 Čarnogurski, Ian, 454
 Carp, Matatias, 433
 Carter, Jimmy, 533
 Ceausescu, Nicolai, 6, 433, 444, 446, 454, 457
 Central Jewish Historical Commission (Poland), 425–6; *see also* Jewish Historical Institute
Central Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin), 515–16, 525

- Central Office for the Fight against the Gypsies, 387
- Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities (Bratislava), 428
- Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* (Paris), 513
- Centre for Jewish Studies (Budapest), 432
- Cesarani, David, 71, 267
- Chalk, Frank, 544, 545
- Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, 386
- Chandler, Alfred, 166 n6
- Charlesworth, Andrew, 1, 4, 77
- Charny, Israel, 546
- Chary, Frederick B., 460
- Chausy, 293
- Chechens, 288
- Chelmno, 99, 189, 236, 238, 266, 278, 400, 496
- Cheyette, Bryan, 266
- Childers, Thomas, 15
- children, 372–8; and play, 373–4; as smugglers, 373
- Chile, 257
- Chmiel, M., 555 n112
- Cholavsky, Shalom, 330
- Christian Democratic Movement (Slovakia), 454
- Christian Scientists, 307
- Christian Social Party (Austria), 25
- Churches, 4–5, 296–318, 432; and swastika, 298, 304; Catholic, 12, 101, 102, 297, 302, 306, 307–12, 313, 336, 425, 461; Greek Catholic, 102; Lutheran, 306, 307, 314; Orthodox, 102; Protestant, 12, 297, 298, 299, 301, 306, 307, 313, 314; Reformed, 306, 307; resistance, 296, 297, 300, 302, 303, 308; since 1945, 313–15; *see also* antisemitism; Confessing Church; German Christians
- Churchill, Ward, 537, 542, 546, 547
- Churchill, Winston, 537
- Cibulka, Frank, 448, 457
- Civilta cattolica*, 311
- Class, Heinrich, 10
- Clendinnen, Inga, 534
- Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea, 445
- Cohen, Asher, 353
- Cohen, Josh, 2, 6, 7, 532 n73
- Coja, Ion, 447, 456, 458
- Cold War, 1, 33, 54, 69, 199, 200, 209, 255, 276, 285, 399–400, 415, 421, 464, 544
- Colditz Story, The*, 227
- Cole, Tim, 3, 132, 521
- collaboration, 3, 5, 55, 101, 102–3, 120–40, 186, 219, 290, 319, 321, 343, 354, 399, 403, 407, 411, 424, 426, 429, 512
- Columbia, 257
- Commerzbank, 150, 161
- Commonwealth of Independent States, 330
- communism, 3, 6, 17, 89, 104, 120, 153, 342, 420–39, 444, 451; as first victim of Nazism, 422; and Jews, 124, 126, 277, 424, 426, 434–5; and monuments, 512; resistance, 421
- Communist International, 421
- Confessing Church (*Bekenntnde Kirche*), 299, 300, 301, 302, 306
- Confino, Alon, 509
- Consistoire Central*, 332
- Conway, John, 299, 301
- Corni, Gustavo, 72, 73, 83
- Coughlin, Father, 262
- Covaci, Maria, 454
- Cracow, 96, 97, 100, 333
- Cracow Ghetto, 241, 351, 513
- Cremer, Fritz, 512
- Cresswell, T., 249
- Creia, Petru, 440
- Crimea, 281, 286
- Crimean Tatars, 281, 288
- Croatia, 2, 120, 328, 445, 446, 458–9, 461–2; Independent State of, 461–2
- Csoori, Sndor, 453
- Csurka, Istvan, 452, 453
- Cuba, 216, 253
- Curthoys, Ann, 548
- Cuttleslowe Wall, 242
- Czechoslovakia, 150, 267, 287, 300, 422, 425, 428–30, 433, 454; ‘anti-cosmopolitanism’, 428; communist takeover, 428; Jewish population in, 429; post-war trials in, 428
- Czech Republic, 142, 160, 446, 448–9, 464
- Czerniakow, Adam, 329
- Dachau, 96, 522
- Dadrian, Vahakn, 545
- Daimler-Benz, 152, 159
- Daluege, Kurt, 127
- Danube, 221
- Danzig, 97, 327, 328

- Danzig-Westpreußen, 92, 94
 Darmstadt, 313
 Darwin, Charles, 386
 Dawidowicz, Lucy, 75, 176, 177
 Deák, István, 452
 Dean, Martin, 1, 3, 55, 77
 Degussa, 159, 161
 Delbo, Charlotte, 365, 497
Delegatura, 103
 Demjanjuk, John, 406
 Denazification, 301
 Denmark, 142, 319, 328, 435
 Derrida, Jacques, 478
 Des Pres, Terence, 501
 Detroit, 152
 Deuerlein, Ernst, 26
 Deutsche Bank, 148, 149, 150, 161,
 163, 165 n4
Deutsche Vaterlandspartei, 10, 11
Deutsche Volksliste, 94
Deutschvölkischer Schutzbund- und
 Trutz-Bund, 11
 Dieckmann, Christoph, 122, 127
 Dietrich, Donald, 312
 Dillmann, Alfred, 386
 Dimitrov, Georgi, 31
 Diner, Dan, 54
 Dinur, Benzion, 345
 Displaced Persons (DPs), 227
 Djuvava, N., 457
 Dobkowski, Michael N., 546
 Dobroszycki, Lucjan, 77, 329
 Docker, John, 548
 Doctors' Plot, 276, 288–9, 421
 Domachevo, 129
 Douglas, Lawrence, 203, 397
 Dovette, David, 352
 Dragan, I.C., 456
 Dresden Bank, 150, 161
 Dreyfus, Alfred, 290
 Dreyfus, Jean-Marc, 57
 Drost, Pieter, 544
 Dumitrușcu, Gheorghe, 454, 456
 Duraczyński, Eugeniusz, 91
 Düsseldorf, 401
 Düsseldorf Industry Club, 144
 Dwork, Debórah, 375, 376–7, 378
 Dworzecki, Mark, 345–6, 347

 East Germany, *see* German Democratic
 Republic
 East Prussia, 234, 236

 Eck, Nathan, 345, 347
 Eckart, Dietrich, 27
Economist, The, 384
 Ehrenburg, Ilya, 280, 283, 284, 289, 423
 Eichholtz, Dietrich, 157
 Eichmann, Adolf, 6, 43, 186, 188, 189, 202,
 203, 229, 232, 327, 389, 410, 414–15,
 429; trial of, 6, 65, 70, 174, 202, 259,
 342–3, 397, 403, 405, 406–7, 411, 412,
 413, 414, 428, 495
 Eidintas, Alfonsis, 128
Einikayt, 280
Einsatzgruppen, 74, 126, 127, 175, 177,
 179, 184, 186, 200, 203, 205, 221,
 222, 278, 389, 421, 496, 548; in
 Poland, 92, 328
Einsatzgruppen Trial, 400, 401, 402,
 404, 411
Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, 56, 57
 Eisen, George, 373–4
 Eisenbach, Artur, 99
 Eisenhower, Dwight, 258
 Eisenman, Peter, 515–6
 Eliot, T.S., 216
 Ellis Island, 517
 Engelking, Barbara, 358
 Erickson, Robert P., 1, 4, 5, 298–9
 Erlich, Henryk, 280
'Erntefest', 237
 Eschwege, Helmut, 436
 Eskenasy, Victor, 456
 Estonia, 95, 123, 276, 277, 285,
 422, 424
 Estonian Political Police, 123
Europa (Romania), 448
'iuthanasia programme', *see* T4
 Evans, Richard J., 549
 Everac, P., 456
 Evian Conference, 263
ewige Jude, Der, 421

Fachgruppen der Wirtschaft, 54
 Fackenheim Emil, 470, 471, 475–7,
 Falter, Jürgen, 15, 30
 Fatran, Gila, 353
 Faulenbach, Heiner, 305
 Faurisson, Robert, 447, 448
 Feder, Gottfried, 27
 Federal Republic of Germany, 428, 433,
 435, 436, 463; monuments in,
 514–16; war crimes trials in, 403–5,
 412, 413; penal code, 404

- Fefer, Itsik, 280, 282, 283, 284, 286
 Fein, Helen, 85 n44, 545
 Feingold, Henry, 260, 263, 269
 Feldman, Gerald, 141, 148
 Felman, Shoshana, 257
 Feminism, 364, 371
 Fenelon, Fania, 372
 Fest, Joachim, 33
 Filip, Teodor, 447
 Finkelstein, Norman, 68, 487
 Finland, 435
 First World War, 10, 11, 13, 25, 164,
 224, 234, 238, 261, 302, 305, 306,
 312, 345, 441, 452, 453
 Fischer, Fritz, 28
 Fleming, Gerald, 43, 177
 Fodor, János, 449
 Foley, Frank, 267, 274 n73
 Forbes, Neil, 153, 154
 forced labour, 54, 93, 99, 152, 157–9,
 163, 513
 Ford, 151
 Forster, E.M., 241
 Four Year Plan, 156, 157
 Fox, Thomas C., 1, 6
 Fraenkel, Ernst, 31, 32, 34, 36, 55
 France, 6, 28, 40, 57, 61, 142, 190,
 253, 308, 322, 328, 332, 335, 342,
 347, 352, 543; collaboration, 407,
 411; *l'épuration* (purge), 399; *Milice*,
 409–10; national myths, 255;
 ‘occupied zone’, 410; resistance,
 342, 352, 355, 408–9, 410, 413;
 Vichy Regime, 408–11, 413;
 ‘Vichy syndrome’, 402, 407;
 war crimes trials in, 398, 399,
 405, 407–11
 Frank, Anne, 290, 411
 Frank, Hans, 34, 93, 328
 Franz, Kurt, 249
 Frederick the Great, 515
 Freed, James Ingo, 519
Freikorps, 301
 French Revolution, 311, 508
 Friedländer, Saul, 19, 178, 187, 312
 Friedman, Ina, 393
 Friedman, Phillip, 66, 67, 70, 74, 75,
 78, 79, 320–1, 326, 342
 Friedman, Saul, 262
 Friedrich, C.J., 34
 Friedrich, Jörg, 404
 Fritzsche, Peter, 29, 508, 521
 Gailus, Manfred, 299, 301
 Galicia, 98, 228, 233, 512
 Galles, Arie, 237
 Gandhi, Mahatma, 346
 Garrard, John, 281
Gazeta de Vest, 448
 Gdańsk, 459; *see also* Danzig
 Gecas, Antanas, 129
 Gelber, Edward E., 342
 Gellately, Robert, 548
 gender, 5, 364–82 *passim*
 General Government, 34, 78, 92, 93,
 94, 95, 96, 102, 103, 180, 188, 328,
 333, 349, 391
 General Motors, 151–3
Generalplan Ost, 94, 95
 Geneva Convention, 543
 genocide, 7, 254, 400, 508–9, 524, 533–55;
 ‘cultural’, 539, 541; UN Convention
 on, 7, 533, 535, 541–3, 544, 545, 546
 Gens, Jacob, 321, 331, 350
 Genschel, Helmut, 53
 Gerlach, Christian, 57, 122, 133,
 185, 187
 Gerlach, Wolfgang, 302, 317 n16
 German Central Bank, 153
 German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*),
 297, 298–9, 300, 303–6
 German Communist Party, 12, 421
 German Democratic Party, 12
 German Democratic Republic, 31, 61, 144,
 163, 303, 398, 422, 425, 430, 435–7,
 463, 514; anti-Zionism, 436; post-war
 antisemitism, 435–6; war crimes trials
 in, 400, 402
 German Foreign Office, 312
 German Protestant Church (*Evangelische
 Kirche Deutschlands*), 314
 German Social Democratic Party, 12
 German Southwest Africa, 548
 German Workers’ Party (*Deutsche
 Arbeiterpartei*), 26
 Gerz, Jochen, 514
 Gestapo, 96, 186, 189, 199, 201, 302,
 327, 344, 368, 399, 400, 409, 413,
 489, 540
 ghettoization, 3, 65–87, 99, 158,
 181, 241–2, 278, 328, 540
 Gibb, C.E., 325
 Gilbert, Martin, 71, 266, 329, 501
 Giles, Geoffrey, 13
 Gironde, 410

- Giurescu, Dinu C., 457
 Glazar, Richard, 247
Gleichschaltung, 145, 299
 Globocnik, Odilo, 188, 190
 Główacki, Albin, 98
 Gmurczyk, Adam, 449
 Gnizi, Haim, 353
 Godesberg Declaration, 305
 Goebbels, Joseph, 17, 18, 76, 224,
 390, 393; diaries of, 34, 187, 188
 Goeth, Amon, 218, 219
 Golczewski, Frank, 130
 Goldberg, B.-Z., 286
 Goldberg Committee, 320
 Goldenberg, Myrna, 367, 369, 371
 Goldhagen, Daniel J., 10, 13, 16, 22 n37,
 120, 121, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211,
 256, 412
 Goldstücke, Eduard, 429
 'Gold Train', 133
 Gollancz, Victor, 258
 Golovanivsky, Savva, 283
 Gomulka, Władysław, 426
 Gorbachev, Mikhail, 443
 Göring, Hermann, 156, 175, 178, 327
 Gottlieb, Roger S., 358
 Gourevitch, Philip, 258, 519
 Grabitz, Helge, 412
 Gradowski, Zelman, 491–2
 Graz, 515
 Greater Romania Party, 446–7, 454,
 455, 456
Great Escape, The, 224
 Grébert, A., 456
 Greece, 435
 Gregor, Neil, 159
 Greiser, Artur, 188, 400, 403
 Griffin, Roger, 29, 466 n20
 Gringauz, Samuel, 66, 67, 68, 69,
 70, 71, 73
 Grodno, 100, 351
 Gross, Jan T., 101, 102, 121, 124, 128
 Grossman, Vasily, 282, 283, 284,
 289, 293, 294, 423
 Grubman, Sally, 502
 Grunberger, Richard, 145
 Grunewald, 245, 247, 516
 Gryn, Hugo, 250 n5, 253, 254,
 255, 256
 Gulag, 448, 455, 458
 Gurewitsch, Brana, 371–2
 Gurr, Ted, 544
 Gutman, Yisrael, 67, 71, 78, 350, 351
 Györkö, Istvan, 449
 Gypsies, *see* Romanies
 Haacke, Hans, 515
 Haberer, E., 393
 Hadamar, 245
 Haffner, Sebastian, 178
 Hague Convention, 543
Halakha, 323, 333, 334
 Hamann, Brigitte, 25
 Hamburg, 13, 54, 253, 514
 Hamilton, Richard, 15
 Hancock, Ian, 5–6
 Handler, Richard, 520
 Hannover, 301
 Hardman, Anna, 371–2
 Harff, Barbara, 544
 Harnack, Adolf von, 315
 Hart, Kitty, 222
 Hartog, L.J., 187
Hashomer Hatzair, 353
Haupttreuhandstelle Ost, 93
 Hausner, Gideon, 495
 Hayden, Robert, 462
 Hayes, Peter, 142, 147, 148, 158,
 159, 161
 Hegel, G.W.F., 508
 Hegelianism, 475–6, 477
 Heidegger, Martin, 470, 472
 Heiden, Konrad, 26, 200
 Heilbronner, Oded, 1, 2
 Heim, Susannah, 180–1, 182
 Heinemann, Marlene, 378
 Heinonen, Reijo, 303–4
 Heller, Bunim, 283
 Helmreich, Ernst, 306
 Henriot, Philippe, 409
 Herbert, Ulrich, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19,
 86 n67, 158, 181, 208
 Herder, Johann Gottfried, 536
 Herf, Jeffrey, 436
 Heschel, Susannah, 1, 4, 5
 Heydrich, Reinhard, 17, 42, 43, 74, 75,
 79, 175, 177, 178, 179, 188, 190,
 203, 205, 208, 326, 334, 389
 Hilberg, Raul, 40, 52, 65, 70, 73, 74, 80,
 82, 99, 120, 174, 179–80, 185, 202,
 205, 207, 217, 320–1, 325, 326, 343,
 366, 373, 404
 Hildebrand, Klaus, 157
 Hillesum, Etty, 370

- Hillgruber, Andreas, 40, 175, 176, 177
 Himmler, Heinrich, 17, 18, 41, 42, 43, 75,
 76, 94, 95, 127, 177, 183, 184, 188,
 189, 190, 199, 203, 205, 210, 216,
 248, 264, 387, 388, 389, 390
 Hindenburg, Paul von, 144, 147
 Hindley, Meredith, 269
 Hinton, Alexander Laban, 548
 Hirsch, Emanuel, 298, 303
Historikerstreit, 16, 180
 Hitler, Adolf, 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 17, 18, 24–51
 passim, 76, 91, 104, 144, 145, 152,
 153, 155, 156, 173, 174, 175, 176,
 177, 178, 180, 185, 186, 187, 188,
 190, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206, 209,
 264, 297, 299, 300, 301, 302, 307,
 308, 309, 310, 312, 313, 326, 342,
 345, 387, 389, 390, 421, 422, 428,
 455, 456, 459, 500, 537; *Führerprinzip*,
 145; *Mein Kampf*, 24, 25, 31, 39,
 141, 455; 30 January 1939 Reichstag
 speech, 183, 187; 20 July 1944
 assassination attempt, 302
 Hitler-Stalin Non-Aggression Pact, 277, 422
 Hlihor, C., 456
 Hlinka, Andreas, 454
 Hlinka Guard, 455
 Hobsbawm, Eric, 239, 323
 Hoche, Alfred, 387
 Hochhuth, Rolf, 309, 310, 313
Hochland, 308
 Hoechst, 165 n4
 Hoffmann, Gabriel, 455, 457, 459
 Hoheisel, Horst, 514
Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 534
 Holocaust denial, 440–68; outright,
 446–50; ‘deflective’, 450–9
 Holocaust Educational Trust, 260
‘Holocaust’ TV series, 208, 411, 495
 homosexuals, 394
 Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), 103–4,
 105, 425, 426
 Höppner, Rolf-Heinz, 188, 190
 Horkheimer, Max, 167 n20
 Horn, Gyula, 455
 Horn, Wolfgang, 30
 Horowitz, Irving, 545
 Horowitz, Sara R., 371
 Horthy, Miklós, 132, 445, 446,
 452, 453
 Höß, Rudolf, 203, 238, 239,
 400, 403, 425
 House of Commons, 267
 Hugenberg, Alfred, 147
 Hukanović, Rezak, 500
 Hull, Isabel, 548
 Hungarian National Socialist Party,
 see Arrow Cross
 Hungarianist Movement, 449
 Hungary, 2, 57–8, 74, 83, 120, 122–3,
 132–3, 265, 319, 330, 332, 335,
 345, 353–4, 400, 430–2, 433, 435,
 446, 459, 522; anti-Zionist campaign,
 431; post-communist, 445, 449,
 451–3, 455–6, 464; post-war
 antisemitism in, 430–1, 452–3;
 post-war trials in, 432–3
Hunnia Füzetek, 449
 Huttenbach, Henry H., 125, 534
 Huxley, Aldous, 498
 Huyssen, Andreas, 509, 518, 525
 Iași pogrom, 125, 433, 454
 IBM, 168 n46, 254
 IG Farben, 147–8, 152, 154, 157,
 158, 160, 165 n4, 422
 Iliescu, Ion, 446, 454, 455
 Imperial War Museum (London), 259,
 261, 517, 520–1
 India, 253, 346
 Indian subcontinent, 545
Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 301
 Institute for Social Research (Hamburg),
 208, 209; *see also* Wehrmacht
 exhibition
Instytut Zachodni, 92
 intentionalism/functionalism, 3, 15,
 34, 38, 43, 48 n67, 120, 177–80,
 183, 204–5, 326, 402, 411
 International Auschwitz Council, 512
 International Organization for
 Migration, 392
 Ioanid, Radu, 433
 Iron Guard, 445, 454–5
 Irving, David, 42, 43, 51 n107, 177
 Isaacson, Judith, 370, 498
 Israel, 5, 65, 69, 70, 236, 287, 319,
 330, 336, 341, 342, 398, 406, 408,
 413, 422, 424, 426, 433, 434, 435,
 451, 455, 471–2, 474–5, 477, 509,
 513, 514, 518, 523, 524
 Italian Fascism, 32, 142
 Italy, 308, 310, 328, 435
 Izieu, 408

- Jabès, Edmond, 478
 Jäckel, Eberhard, 39, 175–6, 179, 204,
 206, 515
 Jackson, Robert, 543
 Jakob-Marks, Christian, 515
 James, Harold, 148, 149, 150, 165 n4
 Jankowski, Henryk, 459
 Janowska, 221, 232
 Jansa, Janez, 461
 Jasenovać, 458–9
 Jedwabne, 90, 101, 124–5, 128, 451, 455
 Jehovah's Witnesses, 306, 307
 Jena, 305
 Jersak, Tobias, 187
 Jerusalem, 343, 348, 406, 414, 477, 495
 Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC),
 280–1, 282, 283, 285–6, 287, 421
 Jewish Councils, *see Judenräte*
 Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), 89,
 98, 426, 513
 Jewish resistance, 5, 101, 319, 341–63,
 423, 517; *amidah*, 345–7, 350, 354,
 356, 357, 358–9; armed, 342–5, 346,
 348–52; definition of, 346–7, 352;
 and French resistance, 352, 354;
 Lithuanian Division, 348, 352;
 women in, 368, 378–9; *see also* rescue
 John XXIII, 311
 Jonassohn, Kurt, 544, 545
 Jones, Richard, 237
 Jong, Lou de, 330
 Jospin, Lionel, 409
Journal of Genocide Research, 534
Judenplatz (Vienna), 515
Judenräte (Jewish Councils), 5, 66, 70, 100,
 130, 278, 319–40 *passim*, 367, 429;
 as 'leadership' or 'headship', 324–6
Judenreferat, 186
 Justice and Life Party (Hungary), 452

 Kahane, Rabbi, 242
 Kalinin, 91
 'Kanada' (Birkenau), 223
 Kangeris, Karlis, 137 n33
 Kant, Immanuel, 469, 508; *Critique of Pure
 Reason*, 469; post-Kantianism, 470
 Kantor, Alfred, 236
 Kaplan, Chaim, 488, 490
 Kaplan, Marion, 356–7, 366
 Kapp, Wolfgang, 10
 Karl VI, 385
 Karpf, Anne, 267

 Karsai, Elek, 132
 Karski, Jan, 216
 Kassel, 514
 Kater, Michael, 14
 Kattowitz (Katowice), 92
 Katyn, 91, 96
 Katz, Steven T., 68, 537, 540
 Katzenelson, Berl, 345
 Kaunas, *see Kovno*
 Kazimierz Dolny, 516
 Kearney, Richard, 484
 Keneally, Thomas, 218
 Kenrick, Donald, 388, 392
 Kershaw, Ian, 35, 36, 157, 186
 Kertzer, David, 311
 Kessel, Sim, 497
 KGB, 128
 Kharkov, 91; Gestapo in, 281
 Khmer Rouge, 547
 Khrushchev, Nikita, 288, 290, 293
 Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta'ot, 513
 Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek, 514
Kiddush hahayim, 346
 Kielce, 100, 426
 Kiernan, Ben, 547, 548
 Kiev, 184, 188, 278, 289, 291, 423, 511
 Kieval, Hillel, 347, 354
 Kindertransport, 260, 268
 King, Christine, 306–7
 King, Martin Luther, 346
 Kipnis, I., 284
Kirchenkampf (Church Struggle),
 299, 300, 301, 306; confused with
 resistance, 299
 Kirdorf, Emil, 144
 Kittel, Gerhard, 298
 Klebanov, D.L., 289
 Klein, Kerwin Lee, 524
 Klier, John, 1, 4
 Klukowski, Zygmunt, 102
 Knaani, Tikva Fatal, 351
 Kobrak, Christopher, 1, 3, 4
 Koch, Erich, 403
 Kofman, Sarah, 478, 480
 Kogon, Eugen, 199
 Kohl, Helmut, 515
 Konin, 222
 Konstantinów, 97
 Kopper, Christopher, 148
 Koretz, Rabbi Zvi, 334
 Korey, William, 423, 443
 Koselleck, Reinhart, 508

- Koshar, Rudy, 13
 Kovács, András, 453
 Kovner, Abba, 350
 Kovno (Kaunas), 219, 221, 236, 278, 349
 Kovno ghetto, 65, 67, 68, 69, 71,
 219, 329, 348, 504 n3; Jewish
 police in, 331
 Kowalski, Isaac, 343
 Krakowski, Shmuel, 349–50, 351, 352, 355
 Krausnick, Helmut, 173, 174, 179, 414
 Kraut, Alan, 261, 262, 263
 Kremer, S. Lilian, 369
 Kreyzer, Yakov, 280
Kristallnacht, 19, 41, 264, 266, 374, 388,
 400, 496
 Krüger, Hans, 540
 Kubizek, August, 24, 25
 Kugler, Anita, 152
 Kühnl, Reinhard, 17
 kulaks, 288
 Kulemann, Rudolf, 387
Kulturmampf, 312
 Kuper, Leo, 545
 Kursk, 282
 Kushner, Tony, 4
 Kuznetsov, Anatoly, 291, 423
 Kvítka, L., 286
 Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, 478, 479, 480
 Laks, Szymon, 492
 Landau, Ludwik, 102
 Lange, Herbert, 189
 Langer, Lawrence L., 206, 370–1, 489,
 500–1, 502, 503, 510
 Langfus, Dayan, 491
 Lanzmann, Claude, 216–17, 218, 237, 427
 Laqueur, Walter, 266
 Laska, Vera, 379
 Lasker-Wallfisch, Anita, 372, 495, 497, 499
 Latvia, 95, 123, 125, 221, 276, 277, 278, 285
 Lazare, Lucien, 354, 355
 League of Nations, 537
 Lean, David, 227
 Leffler, Siegfried, 297, 305–6
 Legters, Lyman, 545
 Leguay, Jean, 410
 Lemkin, Raphael, 7, 535–46, 548, 549–50
 Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, 144
 'Leningrad Affair', 287
 Letz, R., 456
 Levene, Mark, 534, 548
 Levi, Esther, 377
 Levi, Primo, 204, 217, 369, 370,
 493, 494, 496, 497
 Levin, Dov, 348–9, 351, 352, 355, 424
 Levinas, Emmanuel, 6, 470, 478–9, 480,
 482–4, 498
 Levy, Daniel, 524
 Lewental, Salmen, 491–2
 Lewinska, Pelagia, 476
 Lewy, Guenter, 312, 384
 Libera, Zbigniew, 224
 Libeskind, Daniel, 523, 525
 Liebich, Richard, 387
 Liepaja, 221
 Lifton, Robert Jay, 250
 Linden, Ruth, 378
 Linenthal, Edward, 518
Literatura i zhizn', 291
Literaturnaia Gazeta, 290
 Lithuania, 70, 95, 120, 123, 125, 127, 236,
 276, 277, 278, 285, 329, 348, 349, 424,
 425, 510; post-communist, 455
 Lithuanian 12th Schutzmannschaft
 Battalion, 122, 129
 Lobont, Florin, 1, 6
 Locher, Benjamin, 314
 Łódź, 97, 186, 188, 231, 238
 Łódź Ghetto, 72, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 100,
 101, 238, 241, 321, 329, 367, 368,
 373, 376, 403
 Loew, Judah, 323
 Lohse, Hinrich, 389
 London, 89, 103, 105, 241, 282
 London, Louise, 261, 262, 267
 Long, Breckinridge, 262, 263
 Longerich, Peter, 185, 186, 187
L'Osservatore romano, 311
 Lozovskii, Solomon, 280
 Lublin, 95, 97, 100, 185, 186, 188, 189,
 229, 231, 244, 282, 328
 Lublin Ghetto, 329
 Lublin Reservation, 184
 Łuczak, Czesław, 91, 93
 Lueger, Karl, 25
 Luftwaffe, 152, 237
 Lukas, Richard, 91
Lunost', 291
 Luther, Martin, 190
 Lutz, Charles, 353
 Lvov (Lwów, Lviv), 100, 105, 221,
 228, 229, 232, 242, 283, 425
 Lyons, 399, 407
 Lyotard, Jean-François, 7, 478

- Macedonia, 460
 Mackensen, August von, 302
 Mackensen, Stefanie von, 301–2
 MacQueen, Michael, 128
 Madagascar Plan, 176, 183,
 184, 185
 Madajczyk, Czesław, 89, 91
 Majdanek, 95, 96, 100, 219, 221,
 224, 229, 231, 237, 238, 282,
 283, 373, 403, 522; trial, 411
 Mamdani, Mahmood, 548
 Man, Paul de, 257
 Mann, Mendel, 344
 Manolescu, N., 448
 Marburg, 13
 Marcus, Micky, 543
 Margalit, Gilad, 384
 Markish, Perets, 280, 283, 286
 Markov, A., 291
 Marquardt, Friedrich Wilhelm, 314
 Marrus, Michael, 261, 262, 359, 541
 Marx, Karl, 31, 284
 Marxism, 15, 16, 17, 28, 29, 31,
 32, 33, 35, 102, 144, 145,
 420, 422, 436, 511
 Mason, Tim, 17, 33, 145, 146,
 177, 178
 Matthäus, Jürgen, 4
 Mauthausen, 96, 522
 Maybaum, Ignaz, 484–5 n2
 Mayer, Arno, 182
 Mazower, Mark, 548
 Mazzini, Giuseppe, 536
 McQueen, Steve, 224
 Mečiar, Vladimír, 448, 467 n65
 Meier, Golda, 287
 Meier, Kurt, 303, 306
 Meinecke, Friedrich, 46 n33, 199
 Melson, Robert, 547
 memorial days, 523–4; *see also* Yom
 Hashoah
 memory, 7, 143, 162, 165, 204, 276,
 397, 415, 427, 429, 440, 508–32;
 ‘collective’, 510; ‘mass personal’,
 510; ‘national’, 510
 Mendelsohn, Ezra, 453
 Merin, Moses, 321
 Merker, Paul, 435–6
 Messianism, 484
 Michel, Henri, 352, 354
 Michman, Dan, 5, 345, 352, 360
 n18, 361 n37
 Międzyrzec, 249
 Mikardo, Ian, 273 n56
 Mikhoels, Shlomo, 280, 281, 282, 286,
 288, 289
 Milejkowski, Israel, 83
 Milgram, Stanley, 206
 Milligan, Lord, 129
 Millu, Liana, 370
 Milošević, Slobodan, 462
 Milton, Sybil, 364, 365, 392, 521
 ‘Mingrillian Affair’, 287
 Minsk, 186, 188, 229, 282, 286, 289, 423
 Minsk Ghetto, 283, 284
 Mir, 127
 Mircu, Marius, 433
Mișcarea, 448
 Mitterrand, François, 408
 Mogilew, 189, 293
 Moldova (Bessarabia), 276, 277, 285,
 330, 432, 454, 456, 457; Republic of,
 443, 456
 Moltmann, Jürgen, 314–15
 Mommsen, Hans, 35, 38, 39, 42, 75, 159,
 178, 205, 207, 414
 Mónus, Áron, 455
 Mormons, 307
 Morocco, 190
 Morrison, Herbert, 265
 Morse, Arthur, 259, 260, 261
 Moses, A. Dirk, 7, 509
 Moshman, David, 547
 Mosley, Oswald, 262
 Motola, G., 370
 Moulin, Jean, 408
 Mulack, Christa, 314
 Müller, Hans, 308
 Müller, Jan-Werner, 524
 Müller-Hill, Benno, 389
 Munich, 13, 26, 27, 30, 308, 387
 Munich Agreement, 428
 Munteanu, I.A., 454
 Muşat, Mircea, 454, 456
 Museum of Jewish Heritage (New York),
 517, 520
 Musial, Bogdan, 126, 189
 Mussolini, Benito, 26, 309, 310
 Naasner, Walter, 161
 Naimark, Norman, 549
 Nancy, Jean-Luc, 478, 479, 480
 Nanjing, 534
 Napoleon, 311

- Narew Valley, 238
 National Alliance (Czech Republic), 448
 National Archives (US), 260
 National Armed Forces (Poland), 104
 National Democratic Party (Poland), 104
 National Radical Camp (Poland), 449
Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztebund, 14
 Natzwiler-Struthof, 522
 Nazi Party (NSDAP), 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 30, 146, 147, 197, 200, 297, 301, 305, 495
 Neacșu, I., 456
Nederlandsch-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap, 332
 Nekrasov, Viktor, 290, 423
 Neo-Nazism, 392
 Neris River, 221
 Neshamit, Sarah, 346
 Netherlands, 57, 253, 319, 320, 330, 332, 335; post-war purge, 399
 Neuhäusler, Johannes, 308, 309, 312
 Neumann, Franz, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 145, 167 n20
 Neumann, Victor, 457
 New Apostolic Church, 307
 New York, 177, 241, 432, 513
 Nicolae, I.C., 447
 Niemöller, Martin, 299, 301, 302
 Niemöller, Wilhelm, 300–1
 Ninth Fort (Kaunas), 219, 221, 278
 Nister, Der, 280, 283
 NKVD, 91, 98, 104, 126, 286, 288, 289
 Noakes, Jeremy, 1
 Nolte, Ernst, 16, 17, 33
 Norman, Montagu, 153
 Norway, 543
 Novick, Peter, 165 n5, 494, 500, 535
 Novitch, Miriam, 383
NS-Rechtsspiegel, 388
 Nuremberg Laws, 374, 386, 387, 435
 Nuremberg Rallies, 216
 Nuremberg Trials, 6, 34, 155, 166 n10, 179, 198, 199, 200, 281, 392, 397, 401, 403, 405, 406, 408, 409, 415, 425, 493, 506 n40, 541, 543; successor trials, 199, 400
 Oberheid, Heinrich, 305
 Ochsenmann, Karl, 377
 Ofer, Dalia, 365–6, 368, 371
 Ohlendorf, Otto, 179, 200, 391
 Ohrdruf, 258
Ohm Kruger, 224
Oliver Twist, 227
Omakaitse, 123
 Omarska, 500
Oneg Shabbat, 65, 100, 487–8, 489, 490, 492, 503
 Opel, 151–3
 Operation Barbarossa, 98, 126, 181, 184, 209
 Operation Reinhard, *see Aktion Reinhard*
 Operation Typhoon, 188
 Ophuls, Marcel, 411
 Orban, Viktor, 451–2
 Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*), 97, 128, 186, 249; Reserve Battalion 101, 206, 256
 Osherovich, Hirsh, 283
 Osiel, Mark, 397
 Ost, D., 466 n39
 Oświęcim, 233; *see also Auschwitz*
 Ottoman Empire, 385
 Overy, Richard, 154, 156
 Oxford, 242, 427
 Ozerov, Lev, 289
 Pacelli, Eugenio, *see Pius XII*
 Pádányi, Viktor, 449, 456, 459
 Palestinians, 422
 Pamyat, 433, 443–4
 Pan-Germanism, 25, 27
 Pánis, Stanislav, 448
 Papacostea, Ș., 457
 Papal States, 311
 Papon, Maurice, 405, 408, 409–10, 411
 Paraguay, 257, 550
 Parczew Forest, 350
 Paris, 89, 178, 410, 500; Algerian rally in, 410
 Pasternak, Boris, 293
 Pătrășcanu, Lucrețiu, 432
 Păunescu, Adrian, 447, 456, 458
 Pavelić, Ante, 445, 458
 Pearl Harbor, 187
 Peled, Yael, 351
 Pelt, Robert Jan van, 238
 People's Army (*Armia Ludowa*), 104
 perpetrators, *see Täterforschung*
 Petropoulos, Jonathan, 57
 Petwaidic, Walter, 34
 Petzina, Dietmar, 156
 Phayer, Michael, 311–12

- Phelps, Reginald, 26
 Pikarcz, Mendel, 330
 Pine, Lisa, 1, 5
 Pippidi, A., 457
 Pius XI, 309
 Pius XII, 307–12
 Piwonski, Jan, 189
 Płaszów, 97, 218, 219, 369, 513
 Platner, Ayzik, 283
 Platon, General, 356
 PLO, 436
 Plotkin, Diane M., 378
 Podchlebnik, Michel, 236
 Pohl, Dieter, 1, 3, 127, 185, 189
 Pois, Robert, 26
 Polakovič, Stefan, 455
 Poland, 3, 42, 70, 74, 88–119, 121, 150,
 175, 184, 206, 227, 276, 280, 282,
 300, 307, 309, 326, 328, 329, 330,
 332, 334, 349, 366, 368–9, 391, 421,
 425–8, 430, 437, 446, 455, 487,
 510–1; *kresy* (pre-1945 eastern
 regions), 90, 93; monuments in,
 516–7; post-communist, 449–51,
 455, 459, 464; post-war antisemitism,
 426–7, 451; resistance in, 97, 102;
 ‘Underground State’, 103, 350; war
 crimes trials in, 399, 400, 403, 425
 Poliakov, Leon, 173, 259, 346
Polin, 427
Polish Fortnightly Review, 540
 Polish Government-in-Exile, 89, 91, 101,
 103, 105, 350
 Polish Institute for National Memory
 (IPN), 125, 128
 Polish National Front, 451
 Polish National Party, 449
 Polish POWs, 91
 Polish Workers’ Party, 104
Politica, 447
 Ponary, 236, 278, 284, 512
 Popescu, C.T., 448
 Porat, Dina, 329
Porrajmos, 385, 392, 394 n8, 412
*Portugeesch-Israëlitisch
 Kerkgenootschap*, 332
 Posen (Poznań), 189
 Potsdam, 142
 Poznanski, Renée, 352, 356–7, 379
 Prague, 323, 327, 328, 429
 ‘Prague Spring’, 428
Pravda, 288
 Preda, Marin, 433
 Pretsch, 390
 Pronicheva, Dina, 291
 propaganda, 9, 10, 198, 278, 280, 283, 299
 property, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 81,
 121, 122, 130, 131, 132, 133,
 163; and identity, 60; *see also*
 Aryanization; restitution
 Protectorate of Bohemia and
 Moravia, 327, 428
 Prussia, 29, 236
 psychohistory, 25, 33
 Public Record Office, 260, 261
Puncte Cardinale, 448
 Püski, Sándor, 458
 Rabbinic literature, 323, 334
 Rabbis, as Jewish leaders, 333–4
 Rademacher, Franz, 189
 Radogoszcz, 231
 Ranke, Leopold von, 508
 Rappoport, Nathan, 426, 511, 517, 520
 Ratajczack, Dariusz, 450
 Rathbone, Eleanor, 258
 Rauschning, Hermann, 37, 49 n85
 Ravensbrück, 502
 Rayski, Adam, 352
 Rebentisch, Dieter, 34
 Red Army, 97, 105, 125, 162, 209, 276,
 279, 285, 344, 424, 511, 523
 Red Cross, 2, 102, 353; Nazi imitation
 of, 245
Red Star, 282
Reichskommissariat Ostland, 128, 189, 389
Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), 190,
 205, 389
*Reichsverband der deutschen
 Industrie*, 144, 156
Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland,
 327, 330
Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden, 332
 Reitlinger, Gerald, 173, 199, 201, 258, 259
 rescue, 353–6
 resistance, as category, 476; *see also* Jewish
 resistance; Churches; Poland; Ukraine
 restitution, 61, 94, 121, 131
 Rewald, Ilse, 375
 Rhineland, 313, 314
 Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 76
 Riga, 188, 189, 328, 389
 Ringelblum, Emmanuel, 65, 100, 487, 488,
 489–90, 492, 503

- Ringelheim, Joan, 364–5, 371, 378
 Rings, Walter, 359
 Rinnen, Anja, 305
 Ritvo, Roger A., 378
 Robinson, Jacob, 78, 79
 Rohrlich, Ruby, 347
 Roland, Charles, 70
Rollkommando Hamann, 127
 Rolnikaite, Masha, 291
 Romanescu, G., 456
 Romania, 2, 6, 74, 83, 120, 121, 125, 132,
 133, 285, 328, 330, 332, 392, 432–4,
 435, 441, 445, 454; antisemitism in,
 433, 434; Communist Party, 432;
 fascism in, 433; national communism,
 444; post-communist, 434, 444,
 446–8, 454–5, 456–7
România libera, 456
România literara, 448
România Mare, 447
 Romanies, 1, 5–6, 31, 98, 105, 223, 269,
 383–96, 412, 461–2, 513, 521; number
 of victims, 391, 399; since 1945, 392;
 targeted on racial grounds, 386,
 388, 390
 Rome, 334
 Romhányi, László, 449
 Ronen, Avihu, 353
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 254, 259
 Rose, Gillian, 503
 Roseman, Mark, 187
 Rosenberg, Alfred, 17, 27, 189, 300, 389
 Rosenfeld, Gavriel, 547
 Rosenkranz, Herbert, 330
 Rosenthal, Denise, 440–1
 Rosh, Lea, 515
 Rossiter, Margaret L., 379
 Rothkirchen, Livia, 430
 Rotta, Angelo, 353
 Rousset, David, 500
 Rousso, Henry, 411
 Rovno, 344
 Rowecki, Stefan, 104
 Rozett, Robert, 1, 5
 Rubinstein, Richard, 470, 471–3, 476,
 485 n3, 485 n4, 485 n6
 Rubinstein, William, 268, 269, 274 n80
 Rückerl, Adalbert, 399
 Rudich, M., 433
 Ruhr, 145
 Rumbuli, 512
 Rumkowski, Chaim, 72, 321
 ‘Russell Tribunal’, 545
 Russia, 330, 443–4, 446, 459, 464, 543
 Russian Revolution, 16, 281
 Rwanda, 415, 547, 548
 Rybakov, Anatoly, 292–3
 SA (*Sturmabteilung*), 41, 305
 Sachsenhausen, 402, 436
 Sack, Robert, 81, 82
 Safran, Hans, 187
 Salonika, 334
 San Jose Conference, 177
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 545, 546
 Sauer, Wolfgang, 32
 Sawoniuk, Anthony, 6, 129, 398
 Schacht, Hjalmar, 153
 Scheffler, Wolfgang, 173
 Schering AG, 165 n4
 Schilde, Kurt, 55
 Schindler, Oskar, 97
Schindler’s List, 208, 218, 411, 494
 Schinkel, Friedrich, 515
 Schlatter, Adolf, 303–4
 Schleunes, Karl, 41, 174, 175, 204, 326
 Schneider, Andrea H., 1, 3, 4
 Schoenfeld, Gabriel, 371
 Scholder, Klaus, 300, 312
 Schöllgen, Gregor, 171 n86
 Schönerer, Georg von, 25
 Schüle, Erwin, 404
 Schulz, Gerhard, 32, 34
 Scurtu, Ion, 455, 456
Schutzmännerchaften, 122, 125, 126–7, 128
 SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), 55, 96; Jewish
 Department, 327
 Second Four Year Plan, 148, 156, 157
 Second Reich, 18, 19
 Second Vatican Council, 311–12, 313
 Second World War, 1, 42, 44, 88, 91, 92,
 124, 144, 165, 224, 255, 259–60, 262,
 265, 268, 276, 308, 328, 341, 345, 352,
 423, 424, 434, 437, 447, 457, 459, 493,
 509, 535
 Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*), 97,
 186, 200
 Segal, George, 517
 Serbia, 229, 458–9, 462
 Sereí, 459
 Seventh Day Adventists, 307
 Seventh Fort (Kaunas), 221
 Shafir, Michael, 440, 441, 444–5, 448, 450,
 455, 456, 458, 467 n65

- Shalev-Gerz, Esther, 514
 Sharf, Andrew, 259, 266
 Shavli Ghetto, 348
 Shawcross, Hartley, 543
 Shelach, Menachem, 361 n37
 Sherman, A.J., 260, 262, 263
 Shirer, William L., 28
Shoah (Lanzmann), 216–17, 237, 427
 Shoah Foundation, 130, 256
 Shostakovich, Dmitry, 290, 423
 Shtern, Lina, 280, 286
 Siegele-Wenschkewitz, Leonore, 298
 Silverman, Max, 524
 Simion, Aurică, 454
 Six Day War, 477
 Skarzysko Labour Camp, 367
 Skoupý, Vladimír, 448
 Slánský, Rudolf, 287, 428–9, 435
 slave labour, 141, 143, 152, 155, 157–8,
 160, 161, 163, 422
 Slavs, 31, 95, 312, 421
 Slevicius, Adolfas, 455
 Slovak National Council, 454
 Slovak National Unity Party, 448
 Slovak People's Party, 454
 Slovakia, 186, 328, 330, 332, 335, 353–4,
 355, 445, 446, 459; collaboration,
 429; National Uprising, 355, 457;
 post-communist, 448, 454, 455, 457
 Slovene National Party, 460
 Slovene People's Party, 460
 Slovenia, 460–1; Jews in, 461
 Slovenian Christian Democrats, 460
 Slovenian National Right, 460
 Small Landlords Party (Hungary), 452
 Smirnov, S.S., 423
 Smolar, Hirsh, 283, 356
 Snyder, Timothy, 510
 Sobibor, 99, 189, 229, 236, 266, 278,
 406; trial, 411
 Social Darwinism, 25, 27, 35, 176
 Social Democratic Party (Slovenia), 460
 Sofia, 460
 Sola River, 238
Solidarność (Solidarity), 90, 427
 Solonari, Vladimir, 443
 Solzhenitsyn, Alexandre, 290
Sonderkommando, 491–2, 504 n16
Sonderweg, 18, 28, 45 n22, 207
 Sonne, Hans-Joachim, 304
Sorrow and the Pity, The, 411
 Sosnowiec Ghetto, 321
 South Africa, 162
 South America, 545
Sovietish haimland, 424
 Soviet POWs, 97–8, 179, 209, 279, 285,
 421, 436, 491
 Soviet Union, 4, 12, 40, 41, 42, 74, 77, 92,
 95, 123, 125, 126, 128, 130, 131, 144,
 157, 173, 174, 176, 178, 182, 184, 187,
 200, 209, 267, 276–95 *passim*, 328,
 329, 330, 348, 358, 389, 391, 420,
 422, 429, 432, 433, 440, 494, 537, 544;
 anti-cosmopolitan campaign, 293;
 anti-Zionist campaign, 443; *Evkom*,
 281; *Evsektsiia*, 281; ‘Great Patriotic
 War’ in, 277–9, 289, 402, 424, 442,
 512; Jewish population in, 277, 282,
 422; monuments in, 289–90, 512;
 nationality policies, 277; post-war
 reconstruction, 285; *Sovinformburo*,
 280, 282; war criminals in, 398, 402
 Spain, 142, 189–90
 Spector, Shmuel, 343–4, 350, 351
 Speer, Albert, 159, 160
 Spielberg, Steven, 208, 218, 256, 411, 495
 Spoerer, Mark, 158
 SS (*Schutzstaffel*), 19, 32, 42, 43, 44, 55, 97,
 99, 126, 132, 155, 158, 159, 175, 186,
 199, 200, 201, 205, 209, 217, 223, 224,
 225, 229, 237, 248, 255, 327, 328, 334,
 343, 407, 436, 492; female, 237;
 Waffen-SS, 199; *see also Gestapo*;
 RSHA; SA; SD; Security Police; WVHA
 SS *St. Louis*, 216, 253–4, 257, 259
 Stahlecker, Walter, 179
 Stalin, Joseph, 104, 105, 287, 288, 290,
 309, 420–1, 426, 435, 548
 Stalingrad, Battle of, 284; commemoration
 of, 289
 Stalinism, 276, 293, 402, 421, 427, 428,
 433, 434, 435, 437, 463, 511
 Standard Oil, 152
 Stannard, David E., 547
 Starikov, A., 291
 Statue of Liberty, 517
 Stauber, Roni, 341
 Steinberg, Lucien, 344–5
 Steinberg, Maxime, 330
 Steiner, George, 238–9, 498–9
 Steinlauf, Michael C., 427
 Stern, J.P., 26
 Sterne, 435, 436
 Stoakes, Geoffrey, 40

- Stockholm Conference, 533
 Stoenescu, A.M., 454, 455, 456
 Stone, Dan, 2, 464–5, 465 n20, 548
 Stone, Norman, 268
 Streck, Bernard, 391
 Streckenbach, Bruno, 179, 390
 Streicher, Julius, 18, 198
 Streim, Alfred, 179, 183, 185
 Streit, Christian, 179, 183, 185
 Stroop, Jürgen 403
 Strzelecki, Andrzej, 223
Stürmer, Der, 189, 198
 Stuttgart Conference, 179–80
 Stuttgart Declaration, 313
 Stutthof, 97, 100, 403
 Suez Crisis, 258
 Suhl, Yuri, 343–4
 Suhr, Friedrich, 189
 Surazhe, 293
 Svencian Ghetto, 348
 Sweden, 2, 123
 Switzerland, 2, 6, 154, 160, 224, 301;
 banks, 54; businesses, 154–5, 160
 Szabó, Albert, 449
 Szálasi, Ferenc, 445, 449
 Szarota, Tomasz, 102
Szczerbiec, 449
Szent Korona, 449
 Sznajder, Natan, 524
 Sztójay, Döme, 132
- T4 programme, 245, 387
 Tarnów, 512
 Tartakower, Arie, 342
Täterforschung (perpetrator history), 4,
 99, 197–215
 Tatz, Colin, 548
 Taylor, A.J.P., 28
 Taylor, Telford, 198, 202
 Tec, Nechama, 347, 355–6, 379
 Tedeschi, Giuliana, 370
 Tejkowski, Boleslaw, 449
 Tel Aviv, 384, 432
 Tenenbaum, Joseph, 201
 Ternon, Yves, 537
Teshuva, 476
 Thalheimer, August, 31
 Theodoru, Radu, 447, 455, 456
 Theresienstadt (Terezin), 334, 355, 367,
 373, 376, 378, 428, 429, 430, 522
 Thierack, Otto, 390, 393
 Thrace, 460
- Thurner, Erika, 390
 Thyssen, Fritz, 144
 Tijn-Cohn, Gertrud van, 331
Tikkun, 476–7
 Tismaneanu, Vladimir, 441–2, 452, 459,
 463–4, 465
 Tiso, Jozef, 445, 454, 455, 457, 467 n65
 Todorov, Tzvetan, 411, 415, 501–2
 Torgyan, József, 452
 Tory, Avraham, 71, 329
 totalitarianism, 32, 33, 34, 293, 303
Totuși iubirea, 448, 458
 Touvier, Paul, 408, 409, 411, 413
 Transnistria, 432, 454, 458
 Transylvania, 433
 Treblinka, 99, 217, 219, 222, 223, 233,
 247, 249, 266, 278, 282, 283, 284, 351,
 391, 400, 406, 427, 460, 488, 490, 498,
 522; Frankfurt trial, 401, 411;
 monument at, 516
- Treganza, Michael, 248
 Treptow Park, 512
 Treue, Wilhelm, 162
 Trevor-Roper, Hugh, 39, 50 n93
 Trunk, Isaiah, 70, 82, 100, 324, 325,
 326, 329, 330, 331, 361 n37
 Tuczyn Ghetto, 343–4
 Tudjman, Franjo, 458–9, 462
 Tudor, Corneliu Vadim, 446–7,
 454, 456
 Tuka, Vojtech, 457
 Tunisia, 328
 Turkey, 2, 543
 Turlea, P., 454
 Turner, Henry Ashby, 30, 146, 147
Týdeník politika, 449
 Tyrell, Albrecht, 26, 30
 Tzur, Eli, 347
- Ukraine, 55, 98, 120, 122, 125, 127,
 128, 282, 285, 289–90, 330, 391, 403,
 422, 423, 425, 443, 510; resistance in,
 102, 104; post-communist, 464
- Ukrainian Uprising Army, 104
 Ullman, Micha, 515
 Ullman, Salomon, 334
 Uman, 237
Umschlagplatz, 231, 516
 Unger, Michal, 368, 376
 Ungureanu, M.R., 457
Union Générale des Israélites de
 France, 330, 354

- Union of Jewish Communities in Romania, 433
- United Nations, 287, 393, 541–3; Declaration on Human Rights, 542; General Assembly, 542; Genocide Convention, *see* genocide
- United States, 4, 15, 65, 89, 120, 129, 142, 143, 152, 158, 253–75, 257, 296, 320, 346, 387, 394, 403, 434, 510, 513, 514, 537; Air Force, 237; entry into war, 187; Congress, 265; Lend-Lease, 178; ‘settlement’ of west, 224, 247–8; State Department, 254, 259, 261, 262, 263; Treasury Department, 265; War Refugee Board, 265, 393
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 254, 258, 259, 262, 268, 384, 390, 392, 517, 518, 519–20, 521, 533
- Unter den Linden, 515
- Ustaša, 445, 458, 461–2
- Vasiliev, Dimitri, 444
- Vatican, 4, 306, 308–11, 459, 462; 1933 Concordat, 309
- Verband der Juden in Deutschland*, 327, 332
- Versailles Treaty, 14, 27, 147
- Vichy Regime, *see* France
- Vienna, 24, 25, 27, 58, 327, 328, 330, 515
- Vietnam War, 545
- Vilnius, *see* Wilna
- Voegelin, Eric, 29
- Volhynia, 95, 98, 105, 344
- völkisch movements, 12, 13, 18, 26, 27, 30, 45 n18
- Volkswagen, 152, 159
- Vollnhals, Clemens, 301
- Voyage of the Damned*, *The*, 153
- Vrba, G., 457, 467 n65
- Vyazma, 184, 188
- Wagner, Richard, 237, 386
- Wagner-Rogers Bill, 260
- Wałęsa, Lech, 451
- Wallenberg, Raoul, 267, 353, 431
- Wallimann, Isidor, 546
- Walter, Dirk, 13
- Wannsee Conference, 187, 216, 390
- Warhaftig, Zorach, 345
- Warsaw, 102, 103, 105, 231, 350, 358, 490, 516, 537
- Warsaw Ghetto, 65, 67, 70, 72, 76, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 97, 100, 358, 367, 368, 403, 487–8, 490, 497, 516, 540; uprising, 71, 79, 101, 241, 329, 335, 342, 349, 351, 427, 488, 489, 511, 523; monument, 426, 511
- Warsaw Pact, 420, 422, 511
- Warsaw Uprising (1944), 89, 104, 425, 426
- Wartheland, 75, 92, 94, 99, 102, 189, 236, 300, 400
- Wassermann, Oscar, 149
- Wasserstein, Bernard, 262, 263
- Waxman, Zoë, 2, 7, 372
- Wehrmacht, 94, 97, 98, 127, 160, 199, 205, 208, 209, 390, 403; exhibition, 208–9, 211, 277–8
- Weichert, Michael, 333
- Weidemann, Bishop, 303
- Weimar Republic, 2, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29, 30, 145, 165 n5, 301, 304, 306, 312, 387
- Weiss, Aharon, 325, 330, 331
- Weiss, Peter, 204
- Weissruthenien (White Ruthenia), 125, 391
- Weitz, Eric D., 549
- Weitzman, Lenore, 365–6, 368, 371
- Wellers, Georges, 352, 354
- Welzer, Harald, 60
- Wermuth, Henry, 496
- West Germany, *see* Federal Republic of Germany
- Westerbork, 377
- Wetzel, Alfred, 189
- Whiteread, Rachel, 515
- Wiener Library, 513
- Wiesel, Elie, 369, 494, 497, 498, 499, 500, 502, 503, 533, 550, 555 n112
- Wiesen, S. Jonathan, 162
- Wilhelm, Hans-Heinrich, 179
- Wilna (Vilnius), 100, 103, 105, 236, 277, 278, 328, 510, 512
- Wilna Ghetto, 291, 321, 328, 331, 335, 348, 350, 351, 374; uprising, 351
- Winton, Nicholas, 267, 274 n73
- Wippermann, Wolfgang, 68, 389
- Wirtschaftsstab Ost, 127
- Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt (WVHA), 161
- Wistula, 221
- Witte, Peter, 185
- Wittmann, Rebecca, 404
- Wolf, Konrad, 436

- Wolken, Otto, 406
 World Jewish Congress, 342
 Wurm, Theophil, 301, 313
 Württemberg, 313, 383
 Wyman, David S., 259, 262
 Wyschogrod, Edith, 479, 480
- Yad Vashem, 130, 319, 324, 329, 342, 343, 345, 346, 354, 359, 373, 411, 513, 517, 518–19, 521
Yad Vashem Studies, 351, 353
 Yahil, Leni, 319, 346
 Yevtushenko, Yevgeny, 290–1, 423, 511
Yiddische Sotsiale Aleinhilf, 333
Yishuv, 2, 320
 YIVO, 65, 513
Yizker Bikher (memorial books), 130, 329, 494, 514; Glebokie, 131
Yom Hashoah, 523
Yom Hatzma'ut, 524
Yom Hazikaron, 524
 Young, James E., 249, 510, 513, 515, 516
 youth movements, 335, 350–1, 354
 Yugoslavia, 229, 391, 425, 435, 460, 461–2, 543, 547
 Yuval-Davis, Nira, 524
- Zabel, James, 304
 Zamość, 95,
 Zaporozhe, 95
 Zbylitowska Góra, 512, 513
Zentralausschuss für Hilfe und Aufbau, 332
Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustiz-verwaltungen, 179, 404
Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung, 327
 Zhdanov, Andrey, 288
Zhdanovshchina, 285
Zigeuner-Buch, 386
 Ziman, Genrikas, 349
 Zimmerer, Jürgen, 548
 Zink, Jörg, 314
 Zionism, 100, 258, 277, 286, 323, 335, 350, 354, 376, 402, 424, 427, 428, 429, 431, 434, 447, 455, 472, 476
 Žižek, Slavoj, 441
Zmen, 466 n33
 Zolli, Rabbi, 334
 Zuccotti, Susan, 310
 Zweig, Ronald, 133
Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Combat Organization), 488
 Zyklon B, 161, 238, 241, 389, 399