ON THE EVE

THE JEWS OF EUROPE BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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minyan quorum of ten adult males required for Jewish prayer
misnagdim opponents (of Hasidism)
mitzvah (pl. **mitzvot**) commandment, good deed
mohel (pl. **mohalim**) ritual circumciser
nigun tune
rebbe leader of a Hasidic sect
seder festive Passover dinner
Sejm lower house of Polish parliament
semikhah rabbinic ordination
shames (Yid.)/**shamash** (Heb.) sexton of a synagogue
shechitah kosher meat slaughter
shochet kosher slaughterer
shtetl (pl. **shtetlakh**) small town
shtibl (pl. **shtiblakh**) Hasidic conventicle
shund trash (esp. literary or theatrical)
soyfer (Yid.)/**sofer** (Heb.) scribe
talmud torah religious school
tefillin phylacteries
tish table (esp. at the court of a Hasidic *rebbe*)
Torah Pentateuch, the Hebrew Bible, the body of Jewish law
tsedoko (Yid.) charity/**tsedakah** (Heb.)
yeshiva (pl. **yeshivot**) talmudical college
yeshiva bokher *yeshiva* student

INTRODUCTION

A specter haunted Europe in the 1930s—the specter of the Jew. Simultaneously feared and despised as a Christ-killer, a devil with horns, subversive revolutionary and capitalist exploiter, obdurate upholder of an outmoded religion and devious exponent of cultural modernism, the Jew was widely regarded as an alien presence. Increasingly excluded from normal society and extruded from common human fellowship, the Jew was transmogrified from fellow citizen into bogey, a subhuman, at best an inconvenience, eventually almost everywhere a hunted beast. Even before the outbreak of the Second World War, this was true not just in those areas of Europe already directly ruled by the Nazis but over the greater part of the continent.

In the 1920s the European Jews had presented the appearance of a vibrant, dynamic, and flourishing people. For the first time in their history they were recognized as citizens in every country in which they lived. Especially in western Europe and the Soviet Union, an ambitious, meritocratic middle class was rapidly climbing the social ladder. The best-educated ethnic group in Europe, Jews shone in all fields of science, dazzled in the theater and literature, and constituted the beating heart of musical life. But this book does not rehearse what are often called the "contributions" of Jews to European culture and society in this period. That is a familiar story.

Within the short space of two decades a dramatic change transformed the Jewish position. By 1939, two years before the Nazi decision to commit genocide, European Jewry was close to terminal collapse. In much of the continent Jews had been deprived of civil rights and were in the process of being turned into outcasts. The demographic outlook was bleak, heading in a downward spiral toward what some contemporaries forecast would be "race suicide."

The great mass of Jews in east-central Europe were sunk in dire poverty—and sinking further into total immiseration. A nation of shopkeepers, the Jews found themselves superfluous men, both in a Soviet Union that had abolished the marketplace and in militantly nationalistic states that complained of Jewish dominance of it. The USSR at least allowed the Jew to change from *homo economicus* to the new Stalinist model worker; Germany, Poland, and Romania regarded the Jews as unregenerate and demanded that they leave.

A large part of the explanation was anti-Semitism. The roots of the antipathy toward Jews have been endlessly explored. No discussion of the Jews in this period is feasible without reference to this antagonism, deeply entrenched in the consciousness of European civilization. But that is not the primary focus of this book, which is squarely on the Jews themselves, not their persecutors.

Nor is anti-Semitism by itself a satisfactory explanation of the Jews' predicament. In large measure the Jews were victims of their own success. Whether in the USSR, Poland, Germany, or France, Jews sincerely protested their loyalty to states of which they were citizens. Yet the more they took advantage of their newfound legal equality and embraced the national life of their countries of residence, the more they evoked a jealous, exclusionist hostility. Many responded by trying even harder to throw off their distinctive traits, hoping to blend in so as to be unnoticed. Confronted by violent enmity, they embarked on a road toward collective oblivion that appeared to be the price of individual survival.

As a result, Jewish culture was in retreat. Religious practice was decreasing and the orthodox, in particular, felt embattled and threatened. Secular alternatives that sought to replace religion as the core of Jewish identity found themselves increasingly overwhelmed by apparently invincible forces of acculturation to the non-Jewish world. The cultural glue that had long bound Jews together was losing its cohesive power. A telling index of this process was the fading away of Jewish languages such as Yiddish and Judeo-Espagnol, the tongues, respectively, of the Jews of northeastern and southeastern Europe.

Yet in a continent that in the 1930s was overwhelmed by economic depression and racist resentment, the Jews found that

assimilation and acculturation, rather than easing their path to acceptance, aroused still more hatred against them. This book therefore examines the position of a people confronted with an impossible dilemma.

Who was the European Jew in the 1930s? Or rather, since the notion of a single national, ethnic, or religious type, so commonly held in that period, is now indefensible, who were the European Jews, in the plural? Were they atomized individuals or did they, or some among them, share ideals, outlooks, assumptions, memories, expectations, fears—in short, can we identify collective Jewish mentalities? What values did they hold in common? Was theirs a distinctive culture or set of subcultures? Can we locate Jewish milieux, whether as geographical sites, as social clusters, or as dwelling places of the imagination? What meaning should we attach to such terms as Jewish literature, music, or art? How cohesive were Jewish communities? How effective were Jews in building social capital—the networks of connectedness in the form of institutions (political parties, representative organizations, charitable bodies, hospitals, schools, newspapers, and so on) that might shape their lives? Was the Jew merely a passive object, acted upon by a hostile, circumambient society, or could the individual, whether alone or in concert with others, try to attain at least some degree of control over the threatening vagaries of fate?

My answer to the last question, at least, may be stated at the outset in the affirmative, even if the results were often tragically out of proportion to the efforts invested. The European Jews in the 1930s were actors in their own history, though they have too often been depicted otherwise. They struggled by every available means to confront what was already perceptible to many as a challenge to their very survival.

They faced a common threat but they were far from a unified monolith. Economically they ranged from a tiny elite of gilded plutocrats to a horde of impoverished pedlars, hawkers, and beggars. A large minority, mainly in east-central Europe, remained strictly orthodox; others, particularly in western Europe and the Soviet Union, were thoroughly securalized; a broad, middling majority of the semi-traditional were comfortably selective in their degree of

religious practice. Politically the Jews were deeply divided but none of the ideologies in which they reposed confidence, whether liberalism, socialism, or Zionism, offered any immediate solution to their predicament. As for utopian schemes for settlement in exotic locations around the world, these too failed to alleviate their deepening plight.

By 1939 more and more Jews in Europe were being reduced to wandering refugees. They were being ground down into a camp people, without the right to a home anywhere and consequently with rights almost nowhere. Growing numbers were confined in concentration or internment camps—not just in Germany but all over the continent, even in democracies such as France and the Netherlands. Indeed, in the summer of 1939, more Jews were being held in camps outside the Third Reich than within it.

From there to mass murder was not an inevitable step. I have tried, as far as possible or reasonable, to avoid the wisdom of hindsight and to bear in mind that the nature and scale of the impending genocide was unforeseeable to those I am writing about—though, as we shall see, there were surprisingly frequent and anguished intimations of doom.

While the word *Europe* appears in the title and although the book is in some ways a forerunner to my history of postwar European Jewry, *Vanishing Diaspora* (1996), the spotlight here is on those parts of the continent that were occupied by the Nazis or their allies between 1939 and 1945. Countries such as Britain and Turkey consequently lie outside my purview.

As in *Vanishing Diaspora*, the Jew is defined inclusively as that person who considered him- or herself or was considered by others as a Jew. In this period, when racial, religious, and secular conceptions of Jewishness battled in the ideological arena and within the souls of individuals, such a broad framework of consideration is essential for understanding what was known at the time, by Jews and non-Jews alike, as the "Jewish question." Indeed, it is precisely in the frontier area of the "non-Jewish Jew" that we may glean valuable insights into the aspirations, the achievements, and the agony of the European Jews.

My account ends with the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe in September 1939. But the reader will very likely have a natural human desire to know what later became of many of the individuals who appear here. The epilogue therefore gives brief details, so far as these have been possible to establish, of their subsequent destinies.

There exists a huge literature on the genocide of the Jews under Nazi rule. We know in precise detail almost every stage of the process by which the Nazis annihilated the Jews in every country of occupied Europe. By contrast, much less attention has been paid to the worlds that were destroyed: the private worlds of individuals and families and the public ones of communities and institutions. What has been written about all this has too often been distorted by special pleading or sentimentality.

This book, therefore, seeks to capture the realities of life in Europe in the years leading up to 1939, when the Jews stood, as we now know, at the edge of an abyss. It discusses their hopes and beliefs, anxieties and ambitions, family ties, internal and external relations, their cultural creativity, amusements, songs, fads and fancies, dress, diet, and, insofar as they can be grasped, the things that made existence meaningful and bearable for them. The fundamental objective has been to try to restore forgotten men, women, and children to the historical record, to breathe renewed life momentarily into those who were soon to be dry bones.

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THE MELTING GLACIER

Four Zones

Ten million Jews lived in Europe in the late 1930s. They were distributed among four zones, each with a different history, divergent conditions of life, and, on the face of things, varying prospects for the future. In the democracies of western Europe, Jews had been emancipated for several generations and enjoyed a civic equality that, in spite of the rising tide of anti-Semitism, protected them, for the time being, against any threat to their security. By contrast, in Germany and those parts of central Europe that had already been absorbed into the Third Reich, Jews were in the process of being stripped of citizenship, subjected to discriminatory laws, driven out of the professions, and deprived of the bulk of their possessions, and were under intense pressure to emigrate. In a third zone, comprising all the states of east-central Europe, anti-Semitism, often drawing on deep popular roots, formed a significant element in political discourse and in most countries had been integrated into public policy in the shape of explicitly or implicitly anti-Jewish laws. Finally, in the Soviet Union, where the Jews had been emancipated in 1917, later than anywhere else in Europe (save only Romania), they enjoyed dramatic upward social mobility in the interwar period. But collective Jewish life, whether religious, political, or cultural, was, like other aspects of existence under Stalin, subject to severe restrictions.

In German, the word *Judentum* means simultaneously "Judaism" and "Jewry." But in the heart of the European Jew since the Enlightenment a schism had arisen between the conceptions of

Judaism as a religion and as a *Volksgemeinde*, a community based on common ethnicity. In France, since their emancipation during the revolution, many Jews had come to regard it as a cardinal principle that Jewishness was a purely religious category and that in every respect they were as French as other Frenchmen. In Germany, where emancipation had come later and where social relations between Jews and gentiles, even in the liberal Weimar period between 1918 and 1933, were more fragile, matters were slightly different. There, writes George Mosse, a scion of the German-Jewish elite, "there was no either/or—either German or Jew. . . . Jewishness was not merely a religion but was primarily linked to pride of family, from which it could not be divorced."[1] In eastern Europe, where boundaries of state and nation rarely ran together, and where most Jews still spoke Yiddish, lived in dense concentrations, and held more closely to their own cultural patterns, Jewishness tended to be seen by Jews themselves as well as by their neighbors as primarily an ethnic category. This was true also in the USSR, where "Jewish" was a legally recognized national distinction.

Like God in France

The democratic zone of interwar Europe was the most comfortable for Jews. But it held the smallest share of the continent's Jewish population, under a million, or less than 10 percent of the total.

In western Europe, however, the security that Jews enjoyed was no longer quite so automatic or unquestioned as in the past. True, a Jew had been elected prime minister of France in 1936. But the socialist Léon Blum's victory as head of the left-wing Popular Front was regarded as a mixed blessing by many French Jews. The government's enemies on the right focused on Blum's Jewishness and used it, to some effect, as a propaganda bludgeon against the left. Even in the Netherlands, with its long history of Christian-Jewish amity, stretching back to the friendly reception of "New Christians" (Marranos) from the Iberian peninsula in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a certain unease entered into the relationship in the 1930s following the arrival of large numbers of refugees from Nazi Germany.

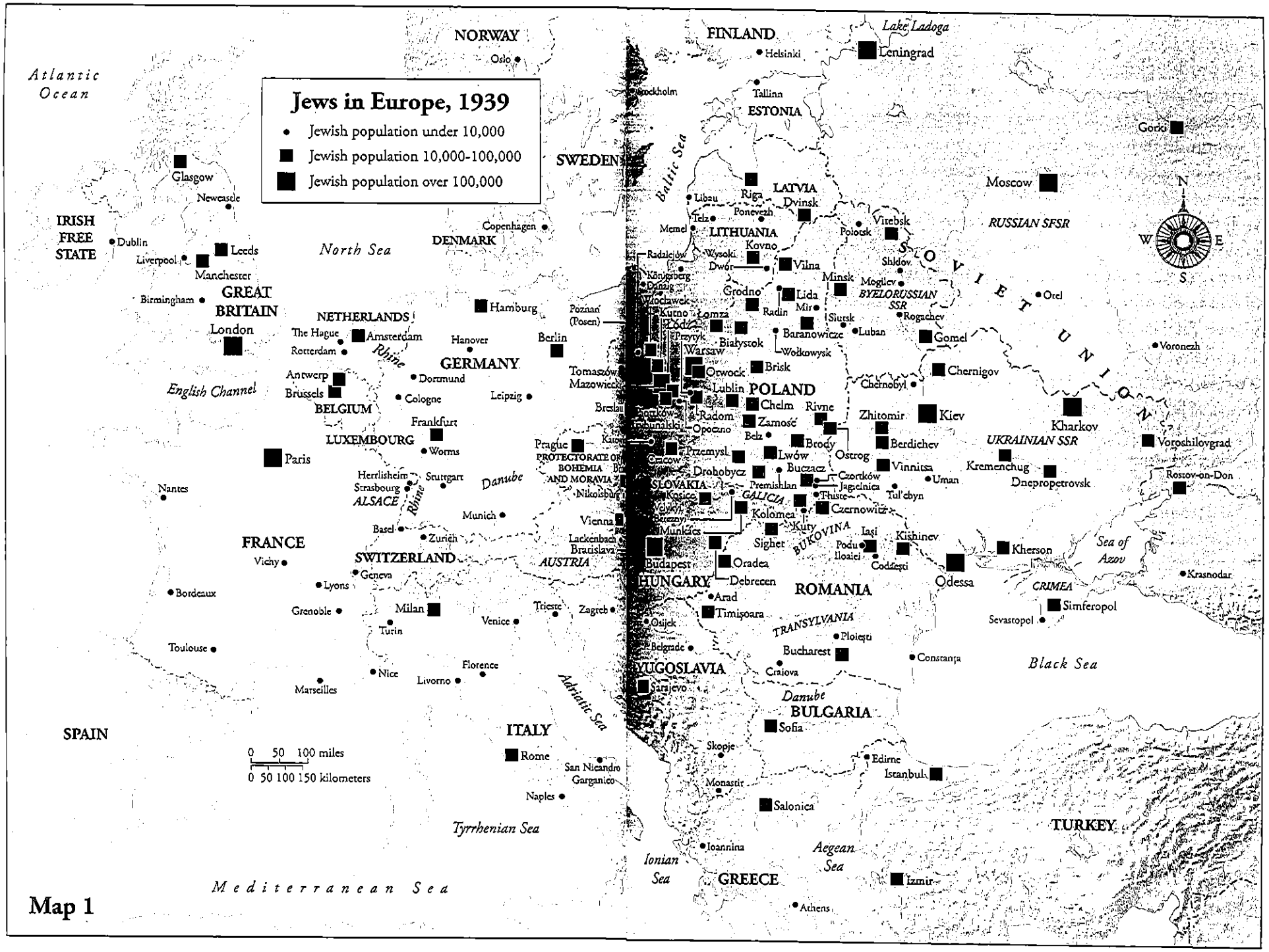
The phrase *heureux comme un juif en France* ("happy like a Jew in France") had come to have the proverbial meaning of *very* happy. But over the previous generation it had often been tinged with irony. At the turn of the century, the Dreyfus Affair had suggested that there were limits to the recognition of Jews as French. Since 1919, with the return by Germany of Alsace and Lorraine to France, French Jews, a majority of whom traced their origins to the two regained provinces, might again feel content to be fully part of the national patrimony. But their enemies now turned the phrase against them, suggesting that the Jews were *too* happy in France, in other words that they were doing too well, at the expense of others.

Mendelssohn's Heirs

In its origin, the phrase was a play on the German/Yiddish *leben wie Gott in Frankreich*, which meant to live *very* well. Under the Weimar Republic in Germany, Jews looked forward to the consolidation of more than a century of progress toward legal equality and social acceptance in a country and culture in which they felt no less at home than French Jews did in France.

That sense of ease was manifested all over Germany in September 1929, when Jews and Christians alike celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Moses Mendelssohn, father of the Jewish enlightenment and progenitor of a dynasty of bankers, musicians, and scholars who remained a significant force in the culture, economy, and politics of the country. The minister of the interior, Carl Severing, and the leading Liberal rabbi in Berlin, Leo Baeck, were among those who delivered encomia to mark the occasion. At a Sunday matinée concert in Mendelssohn's birthplace, Dessau, works by Bach and Beethoven were performed in his honor. A representative of the city of Berlin laid a wreath at the philosopher's grave in memory of a "great fellow-citizen." His descendants, all now Christians, reserved an entire luxury hotel for three days for a gathering of the clan. The series of events was a symbolic high point of the modern German-Jewish symbiosis.[2]

One month later, the Wall Street crash marked the start of the


Jews in Europe, 1939
Jewish population under 10,000
Jewish population 10,000-100,000
Jewish population over 100,000
Atlantic Ocean
NORWAY
Oslo
FINLAND
Helsinki
Lake Ladoga
Leningrad
Stockholm
Tallinn
ESTONIA
Gorki
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Glasgow
Newcastle
Moscow
LATVIA
Riga
Dvinsk
Libau
Ponevezh
Vitebsk
RUSSIAN SFSR
IRISH FREE STATE
Dublin
Liverpool
Leeds
Manchester
North Sea
DENMARK
Copenhagen
Memel
LITHUANIA
Kovno
Polotsk
Shidov
Minsk
Mogilev
BYELORUSSIAN SSR
Orel
Voronezh
Chernigov
Chernobyl
Kharkov
Voroshilovgrad
UKRAINIAN SSR
Kremenchug
Dnepropetrovsk
Rostov-on-Don
Zhitomir
Kiev
Berdichev
Vinnitsa
Ostrog
Brody
Lwów
Przemysl
Drohobycz
Buczacz
Czortków
Jagielnica
Premishlan
Thiste
Tul'chyn
Uman
Kolomea
Czernowitz
Kuty
Iaşi
Kishinev
Podu Iloaiei
Coddesti
Odessa
Kherson
Sea of Azov
Krasnodar
Simferopol
Sevastopol
CRIMEA
Black Sea
Constanta
Ploiești
Bucharest
Craiova
TRANSYLVANIA
ROMANIA
Arad
Timişoara
Oradea
Debrecen
HUNGARY
Sighet
BUKOVINA
Gdynia
Danzig
Königsberg
Radziejów
Wysoki
Dwór
Vilna
Grodno
Lida
Mir
Radin
Slutsk
Luban
Rogachev
Gomel
Baranowicze
Wołkowysk
Białystok
Łomza
Kutno
Włocławek
Poznań (Posen)
Hamburg
Berlin
Hanover
Warsaw
Otwock
Brisk
Lublin
POLAND
Chelm
Rivne
Radom
Zamość
Opoczno
Belz
Tomaszów Mazowiecki
Breslau
Prague
PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA
Cracow
Katowice
Nikolsburg
SLOVAKIA
Košice
GALICIA
Munkács
Lackenbach
Bratislava
AUSTRIA
Vienna
Budapest
Pressburg
Györ
Szombathely
Graz
Trieste
Zagreb
Osijek
Belgrade
YUGOSLAVIA
Sarajevo
Skopje
Monastir
Salonica
Edirne
Istanbul
TURKEY
Aegean Sea
Ioannina
Ionian Sea
GREECE
Athens
Izmir
Adriatic Sea
Danube
BULGARIA
Sofia
Florence
Livorno
Rome
San Nicandro Garganico
Naples
Tyrrhenian Sea
ITALY
Milan
Venice
Turin
Genoa
Nice
Marseilles
Toulouse
Grenoble
Lyons
Bordeaux
Vichy
FRANCE
SWITZERLAND
Basel
Zurich
Munich
Nantes
Paris
Strasbourg
Stuttgart
Herrlisheim
ALSACE
Rhine
Danube
Frankfurt
Worms
LUXEMBOURG
Antwerp
Brussels
BELGIUM
Cologne
Dortmund
Leipzig
The Hague
Amsterdam
Rotterdam
NETHERLANDS
Rhine
GERMANY
English Channel
GREAT BRITAIN
London
Birmingham
Manchester
SPAIN
Mediterranean Sea
0 50 100 miles
0 50 100 150 kilometers
N
S
W
E
SOVIET UNION

Map 1

world's descent into depression and war—and the toppling of German Jewry from its pedestal as the most proud, wealthy, creative, and forward-looking Jewish community in Europe.

Immediately upon attaining power in January 1933, the Nazis launched a campaign of terror and violence against Jews and leftists. Synagogue and shop windows were smashed. Jews were killed or beaten up in random street attacks. A nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1, 1933, met with mixed success. It was followed, however, by the dismissal of almost all Jewish civil servants, including teachers and university professors. Jewish doctors and lawyers were restricted in their professions. State welfare support for Jews was limited. Quotas were introduced for Jewish university students. Such early anti-Jewish measures resulted in at least three hundred suicides.

As early as April 1933, just three months after Hitler's capture of power, Baeck, who emerged as German Jewry's leader and spokesman in its final decade, declared, "The thousand-year history of German Jewry has come to an end."[3] Of the half million "Jews by religion" in Germany, about forty thousand fled the country within a year.

The Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden (Reich Representation of German Jews), with Baeck at its head, secured de facto recognition from the Nazi regime in September 1933 as the representative body of German Jews. For the next six years the Reichsvertretung formed a kind of internal self-government of German Jewry. On the one hand, Baeck and his colleagues sought to shield German Jews from the savage onslaught to which they were subjected. On the other, they found themselves compelled to act in compliance with Nazi orders and to facilitate the orderly execution of Nazi policies. These were, of course, ultimately incompatible functions; but for a time the Reichsvertretung succeeded to some extent in harmonizing them, through its efforts to organize social welfare, education, and cultural activities. While seeking to preserve desperately needed working relationships with the authorities, the Reichsvertretung did not, in the early years, shrink from remonstrance: in May 1934, for example, in response to scurrilous anti-Semitic statements, it dispatched a telegram to Hitler: "Before God and men, we raise our voices in protest against this unparalleled calumny against our faith."[4]

"Content and Sap"

Eastern Europe had been the heartland of Jewish settlement since the early modern period and remained so until 1939. More than half the Jews of Europe lived in this third zone, comprising the states between Germany and the Soviet Union. While Romania and Hungary also boasted large Jewish populations, one country in this region held an undisputed preeminence in the Jewish world.

Numbering 3.2 million in 1939, Poland's Jews formed the largest Jewish community on the continent. Although deeply attached to the country, which most of them regarded unquestioningly as their home, Polish Jews were to a considerable degree isolated from the rest of the population, religiously, socioeconomically, and politically. They had their own residential areas, political parties, newspapers, theaters, labor unions, and professional organizations, often operating in their own language, Yiddish. Together these formed the scaffolding of a largely self-contained world within which it was possible, if one chose, to live almost without venturing into broader society.

The Polish Jews formed, in a legal sense, a community, and were so regarded by the rest of society. But they were deeply divided among themselves. Ben-Zion Gold, who grew up in a strictly orthodox family in Poland in the 1930s, recollects that "religious Jews looked on assimilationists with a mixture of pity and contempt."[5] Theodore Hamerow, a child of professional actors on the Yiddish stage, records how, as a child in the small town of Otwock, near Warsaw, in the 1920s, he would peep through a chink in the fence on Friday night at the Sabbath celebration of neighboring Hasidim: "They appeared to me almost as strange, almost as exotic as the whirling dervishes of Turkey I had read about or the frenzied worshippers of Jagannath in India. I felt an invisible but insurmountable barrier separated me from them. They and I seemed to belong to two totally different social and cultural worlds."[6]

The differences were as much matters of class as of ideology. The lawyer, parliamentarian, and Zionist leader Apolinary Hartglas confessed in his postwar memoirs the contempt with which he regarded

many of his fellow Polish Jews: "I was offended by their lack of European culture, lack of social graces. . . . A sheet of glass separated me from them."[7]

Poland was the main arena in which the conflicting ideological and cultural forces in European Jewry contended for supremacy. Warsaw, with its 381,000 Jews in 1939, the most in any city on the continent, came closest to the status of capital of the European diaspora. Here were the headquarters of the major Jewish political parties, charities, school systems, newspapers, and cultural organs. "Polish Jewry," according to one of its best-informed contemporary observers, "gave content and sap to all our national, political, and cultural movements. Least affected by assimilation, it remained nationally the most conscious, politically the most militant, individually the proudest of the Jewish communities."[8]

Advancing Toward Disappearance

The three million Jews in the Soviet Union in 1939 constituted the fourth zone of European Jewry. In the late Tsarist period, opposition to the persecution of Russian Jews had been a humanitarian cause that engaged gentiles as well as Jews throughout the civilized world. Emancipation of the Jews had been one of the first acts of the Russian Revolution—of the February rather than the October revolution, a distinction that was often glossed over by Jewish Communists in the 1930s. At the same time Jews had been granted freedom to settle beyond the Pale of Settlement, the western regions of the Russian Empire to which they had been restricted in the late Tsarist period.

The Bolsheviks reaffirmed the principles of equality and liberty of conscience but, in the case of Jews, quickly emptied them of much meaning by their antireligious campaign and by creation of the category of *lishentsy* (literally "deprived"). These were members of the "exploiting classes," that is, nonproletarians and nonpeasants, especially merchants and ex-bourgeois, who, together with their families, were disenfranchised under the new regime and turned into social outcasts, deprived of civil rights, discriminated against in higher education, employment, medical care, and food rations

and required to pay higher taxes and rents. They might reclaim civil rights only after five years of productive labor. Jews were heavily represented among the *lishentsy* because of their disproportionate membership of the prerevolutionary, "exploiting" commercial class, which made a partial reappearance during the period of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s. In 1928–31, the number of Jewish *lishentsy* was estimated to be as high as 1,875,000 (a million small traders and 875,000 artisans), two-thirds of the entire Jewish population of the USSR.[9]

Soviet Jewry, although almost as large as Polish, lacked the collective dynamism, institutional structures, or cultural vitality of its western neighbor. Indeed, whether it might be called a community at all was doubtful, since it had no organizational unity, nor much in the way of collective cohesion. In 1918 the Bolshevik Party had established *Evsektsii*, Jewish sections, whose main role was to combat Zionism, "clericalism," and the Jewish socialist Bund. By 1930, however, having achieved their purpose of eradicating this triple-headed monster on Soviet territory, the *Evsektsii* were summarily abolished.

In the late 1920s Soviet Jews were subdivided into five *narodnosti* (national groups), based on geographical location, but by the time of the 1939 census all Jews in the Soviet Union were consolidated in one nationality.[10] The Soviet state in the interwar period not only recognized Jewish ethnicity but encouraged its expression within circumscribed limits. Yiddish schools flourished until the late 1930s. Yiddish newspapers and books appeared. Yiddish theaters were subsidized. Far more than those in Poland, however, such institutions were closely controlled by the state and the ruling party.

The prudent Jew in Stalinist Russia, no less than elsewhere, did not advertise his Jewishness and, where possible, often sought to discard it. Yet there lingered among Soviet as among other Jews on the continent an intuitive mutual recognition that might be instantly sparked by a Yiddish phrase, a shrug, a gesture, or something left unsaid—and with that an implicit, defensive solidarity.

In the 1930s Soviet Jews were caught in the swirling eddies of political debate between Communist sympathizers and their enemies. In France, for example, the Jewish sociologist Georges Friedmann, who studied the Soviet Union and spent several long periods

mobility of Jews under Soviet rule. He contrasted the "physical and moral degeneration" of the Polish ghettos with what he regarded as the social achievements of Soviet Jews: "It is hard to understand, if one has not seen it oneself, the difference in the physical and moral standing of Jews on either side of the Polish-Soviet frontier." Soviet Jews, he reported, "rarely present the old marks of servility and fear that one may observe in the ghettos of Poland and Galicia—and for such a long time even among those who have been able to escape to the great cities of the West."[11] Friedmann reported that young Jews in the USSR, buoyed up by their progress under the Soviet regime, were absorbing its values and merging into general society.

In a fierce riposte, Léon Baratz, a French lawyer of Russian-Jewish origin, protested that antireligious pressures in the USSR were leading to the "integral dejudaization" of young Jews. Zionism, he pointed out, was persecuted more than under either the tsars or Hitler. Jewish scholarship, especially history, was suppressed. Hebrew was a forbidden tongue. Actually, the difference between Baratz and Friedmann was less in their conclusions than in their evaluations. Both could agree with the historian Simon Dubnow that Jews in the USSR, as a distinct entity, were "advancing rapidly towards complete disappearance."[12]

European Jews in the 1930s thus lived in four zones of varying degrees of heat. Yet though divided by geography, politics, and much else, they shared some basic characteristics.

Demographic Decline

Prophecies of Jewish extinction were not limited to the Soviet Union. In 1927 the Polish-born Jewish historian Lewis Namier wrote that "dissolution and ultimate disappearance seem the inevitable future of the Jewries of Western and Central Europe." Given their low birthrates and high rates of outmarriage, he predicted, they would vanish. Only further immigration from the slowly melting glacier of mainly orthodox East European Jewry, he suggested, might sustain these communities.[13] Across the four zones of Jewish Europe, local observers reached similar conclusions.

JEWISH POPULATIONS IN EUROPE, SEPTEMBER 1939	
Belgium	110,000
Bulgaria	50,000
Denmark	7,000
Estonia	5,000
Finland	2,000
France	320,000
Germany*	345,000
Gibraltar	1,000
Greece	75,000
Hungary†	625,000
Ireland	5,000
Italy	47,000
Latvia	95,000
Lithuania	155,000
Luxembourg	4,000
Netherlands	140,000
Norway	2,000
Poland	3,225,000
Portugal	1,000
Romania	850,000
Slovakia	58,000
Spain	500
Sweden	10,000
Switzerland	19,000
Turkey**	80,000
United Kingdom	380,000
USSR**	3,025,000
Yugoslavia	75,000
TOTAL	9,711,500

* Including Austria and Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.
† Including annexed areas of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia.
** Including Asiatic regions.

In Holland, a report in 1936 noted that the Jewish birthrate was much lower than that of the non-Jewish population, a difference attributed by the report's author to "the great influence of birth control among the Jews."[14] They were also on average older than the rest of the population. In February 1939 an expert on Jewish population maintained, in an address to the Amsterdam Anthropological Society, that Dutch Jewry was in danger of disappearing altogether as a result of intermarriage and the decrease in the birthrate.[15] A commentator in Strasbourg in 1938 despaired of the prospects for Judaism in that province. Evidence of declining birthrates, late marriage, and nonmarriage, he concluded, could be summed up in one sentence: "Alsatian Jewry is dying."[16]

In Germany, the Jewish population had been declining before the Nazis came to power. Between 1925 and 1933 it shrank from 564,000 to 503,000, that is, by 11 percent in just eight years. Since religion, in Germany as in other central European countries, was a matter of public registration, these figures give a reliable picture of the number of self-professing Jews and indicate a precipitous decline. There were many contributory causes, including conversions, exogamy, and resignations from the religious community, though resigners did not necessarily intend thereby to deny altogether their Jewishness. But the chief explanation, and the one most fraught with long-term implications, was the collapse of the Jewish birthrate. As a result, German Jewry by 1933 was said to be "for the most part in a state of senilization."[17] Just 21 percent of Jews were below twenty years of age, compared with 31 percent of the general population.

The German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt later wrote:

> When Hitler came to power . . . German Jewry as a whole, after a long period of steady growth in social status and numbers, was declining so rapidly that statisticians predicted its disappearance in a few decades. Statistics, it is true, do not necessarily point to real historical processes; yet it is noteworthy that to a statistician Nazi persecution and extermination would look like a senseless acceleration of a process which would probably have come about in any case.[18]

Arendt took the underlying idea for this passage from writers like Felix Theilhaber, whose book *The Downfall of the German Jews*, published in 1911, had set out a grim prognosis of demographic collapse of the Jews in Germany and, by extension, of European Jewry in general.[19]

After the Nazis' ascent to power, the Jewish birthrate in Germany declined further, as young Jews emigrated or chose to be childless. Most German-Jewish families had no more than one or two children. In 1936 the total number of Jewish births (that is, births where at least one of the parents was Jewish) was 1,714; the equivalent number for 1925 had been 5,785.

Trends elsewhere in central Europe were similar. "Vienna Jewry is moving towards extinction," wrote the sociologist Arthur Ruppin in 1936.[20] A sober sociologist, not given to hyperbole, he referred to the extraordinarily low birthrate of Jews in Vienna, which was replicated in nearly all the major Jewish communities of central Europe. Ruppin noted other "disruptive forces in Jewry": assimilation, decline of Jewish religion, "weakening of the links of common descent and fate," "loosening of family ties," and "economic adaptation of the Jews to their surroundings." By 1939 Ruppin had reached an ominous conclusion: "Much as primitive peoples lose their traditional ways of living and their enjoyment of life under the impact of alien influences, and voluntarily die out, the Jews in these countries are tending to 'race suicide.' "[21]

The demographic outlook was similarly depressing in eastern Europe. The Jewish birthrate in the region as a whole is estimated to have halved between 1900 and the late 1930s.[22] In Hungary, a declining birthrate, conversions, mixed marriages, and emigration contributed to a fall in Jewish population, from 473,000 in 1920 to 400,000 by 1939.[23] In Lithuania in 1937, an analyst noted that the number of Jewish births was "horribly low and declining from year to year." In 1934 the rate of Jewish natural increase there was only 2.6 per thousand, compared with 10.2 for the country as a whole.[24]

In the USSR the Jewish birthrate had been in decline since before the revolution. Although it rose slightly in the late 1930s, possibly as a result of official natalist policies, it remained low, particularly in Moscow and Leningrad. This was in spite of the relative

youth of the Jewish population in those cities by comparison with Jews in the former Pale. In the USSR, as elsewhere, Jews, on average, were older than the rest of the population and produced fewer children. The age of Jewish marriage, already higher than that of the rest of the population, rose further in this period. Between 1926 and 1939, the average fertility of Soviet Jewish women declined by a third. There was also a significant imbalance of the sexes: more than eleven women for every ten men. That may help to explain the "conspicuous decline" in marriages by Jews (whether with other Jews or at all) in the USSR in the 1930s.[25]

Intercontinental migration added a further negative weight to the European Jewish population balance. The closure of the United States to large-scale immigration from 1924, the political difficulties attending emigration from the Soviet Union after the early 1920s, and the limits set by British mandatory authorities to Jewish entry to Palestine after 1936 all constrained Jewish movement out of Europe. Nevertheless, more than a million Jews left the continent in the interwar period. Between 1933 and 1938 Nazi anti-Jewish measures led an estimated 169,000 Jews to flee Germany. And at least 400,000 left the second Polish republic during the two decades of its existence. This was 13 percent of all the Jews in the country but for Polish anti-Semites it was not enough. They insisted that Poland was overpopulated with Jews and demanded their total removal.

The sum of all these elements was that Jewish population increase was rapidly slowing and in several countries had turned into absolute decrease.

Jewish demographic decline was clearly linked to urbanization, social mobility, and what may loosely be termed modernization. Yet what is often called Jewish assimilation has a perverse or inverse significance when viewed through a demographic lens in the early twentieth century: the more European Jews became like their neighbors in other ways, the less they resembled them in their demographic patterns. Jewish fertility, infant mortality, and death rates all declined faster than non-Jewish, the average age of marriage climbed higher, and the average size of family became smaller than those of non-Jews. Almost invariably such trends were visible earlier and on a greater scale among the less traditional, more secularized strata of Jewish society. In the sphere of population, indeed, the Jews were much less assimilators to existing social patterns than pioneers of the demographic transition that, over the next two generations, was to transform European society as a whole.

High Life Expectancy

As a collectivity, then, European Jews might appear to have been heading toward extinction. Yet individually they could expect to live longer than ever before and longer than their neighbors. Their high life expectancy arose from their relatively favorable levels of health. Alcoholism, a major contributor to early death in many countries, was almost unknown among Jews: in 1925 the number of arrests for drunkenness in Warsaw, where Jews were one-third of the population, was 87 for Jews and 11,994 for non-Jews.[26] Deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, reflecting alcoholism, were less common among Jews than in the general population. The incidence of syphilis and other venereal diseases was lower among Jews. They also exhibited greater resistance than others to contagious diseases such as tuberculosis (even when comparing Jews and non-Jews of the same social class).[27]

In the 1930s, however, a change of direction in relative Jewish health was detected. Overall, the general Jewish medical condition in eastern Europe, though still more robust than that of the general population, was reported by knowledgeable observers to be deteriorating. Jews were particularly susceptible to digestive and vascular troubles. They died disproportionately from diabetes, heart disease, and, in the slums of Warsaw, respiratory illnesses.[28] Moreover, certain less serious ailments were endemic among poor Jews in eastern Europe, notably scabies. In the wretched Jewish working-class areas of Łódź the prevalence of typhoid fever was above average and an investigator in 1930 reported that "the sick-rate curve for Jews has grown in recent years, while that for Christians has kept on falling."[29]

A doctor in Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania, in 1937 lamented the squalor in which the greater part of the Jewish working class of the city lived.

> Ritual requirements notwithstanding, people don't wash much. Hands are dirty, nails are black, people are afraid of soap, don't change underwear often enough, and as for toothbrushing, that's already a sign of a bourgeois situation. Parasites still play a considerable part in Jewish life. . . . Lice, fleas, and bugs are, in effect, family members in far too many Jewish households. Worms are constant companions among children and very widespread among adults.[30]

Venereal diseases, including syphilis, were said to be spreading among Jews, although they were still far less prevalent among Jews than non-Jews.

The Jewish diet, according to the Kovno report, was unhealthy: unvaried, poor in vitamins, too fatty and spicy. The very poorest would subsist on little more than black bread, potatoes, cabbage, borscht, and tea. Challah (braided white bread) would be eaten only on the Sabbath. Cheaply available herring was consumed a great deal. But "the Jew exhibits an aversion to all green vegetables."[31] Moreover, complained the same doctor in Kovno, food was gobbled down rather than chewed.

Marrying Out

Most European Jews in the nineteenth century married other Jews. By the early twentieth century, however, a significant growth in exogamy was registered across the continent. At first the trend was strongest in western and central Europe, but by the 1930s it was noticeable elsewhere, particularly in the Soviet Union.

In Denmark and Italy, where relations between the small Jewish communities and general society were generally harmonious, more than half of all marriages by Jews in the mid-1930s were with non-Jews. In Bohemia and Moravia, where the intermarriage rate before the First World War had been under 5 percent, it reached 30 percent by the 1930s.

In Hungary and Germany, the graph of Jewish intermarriage showed an inverted V. In Hungary the rate was 25 percent in the early and mid-1930s. Thereafter it declined as anti-Semitism poisoned the social atmosphere and Jewish partners became less attractive marital propositions.[32] In Germany the change was drastic. In the early 1930s a majority of German-Jewish marriages were with non-Jews. After the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, however, the rate plummeted to zero, as marriages of Jews with "Aryans" became illegal, though existing mixed marriages generally remained intact.

More men married outside the faith than women: in central Europe in 1929 about three men did so for every two women. As a result, the children of mixed marriages were, in their great majority, not regarded as Jewish according to religious law (which recognized only the child of a Jewish mother as Jewish). Mixed marriages tended to produce even fewer children, on average, than all-Jewish marriages: in Germany the average was just 0.5 per couple. The reasons, in the sociopolitical atmosphere of the 1930s, were not far to seek. One demographic expert suggested: "Birth control is even more intensive in mixed marriages, because the sore points are more numerous and the desire is dominant to avoid the possibilities of conflict, which may arise because of the children."[33] Moreover, the children of mixed marriages in Germany and Hungary were much more likely to be brought up in the Christian (or in no) faith than as Jews. According to an estimate in Germany in 1928–29, a mere 2 percent of children of such unions were raised in the Jewish faith.[34] Intermarriage, on the scale and in the form that it took in central Europe in the interwar period, thus portended the rapid disappearance of the Jewish community.

In the Russian Empire mixed marriages were not permitted before 1917 (the legal ban remained in force in the former Russian provinces of Poland in the interwar period). After the revolution, however, marriage between Jews and non-Jews in the USSR increased rapidly. By 1939 out of every thousand marriages in which one partner was a Jew, 368 were mixed marriages. In Moscow and Leningrad around half of all Jewish marriages were mixed. In the Soviet Union too, far more men than women married non-Jews, with the result that, by 1939, there were much larger numbers of unmarried Jewish women than men in the USSR, with a consequent further negative effect on the Jewish birthrate.

A Nation of Shopkeepers

The Jewish social pyramid was like no other in Europe. Very small proportions of Jews worked in the occupations that constituted the largest categories of labor almost everywhere: agriculture, domestic service, mining, or public employment. Peasants, an absolute majority of the population throughout eastern Europe, were to be found in significant numbers among Jews only in a few backward regions, such as Bessarabia (in Romania between the wars) and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the easternmost province of Czechoslovakia. In Europe as a whole no more than 5 percent of Jews engaged in agriculture.

Jews were heavily underrepresented in the civil service and in the armed forces. In 1931, fewer than 2 percent of civil servants in Poland were Jews. In the whole of the country there were just seven Jewish university professors out of a total of 596 (all university teachers were public employees), this in spite of the high level of education among Jews. Not a single Jew in Poland was principal of a government secondary school. In Germany, hardly any Jews, even under the Weimar Republic's ostensibly meritocratic order, were employed as civil servants (less than 0.1 percent, as compared with 4.8 percent of the general population in 1933).

Almost everywhere Jews were heavily concentrated in commerce. In 1933 more than 60 percent of German Jews in the labor force were engaged in trade, generally as small shopkeepers. In some branches of the economy, such as clothing manufacture and the grain trade, the Jewish presence was so dominant that these were regarded as characteristically Jewish occupations.

In general, Jews showed a tendency to prefer self-employment over wage labor. Most worked on their own or in small units with members of their families. In Lithuania 60 percent of Jewish artisans in 1937 worked at home—among them 90 percent of tailors, 81 percent of shoemakers, and 77 percent of bakers. The Jewish urban working class, therefore, was only to a limited degree proletarianized.

In the interwar period Jews continued to move rapidly into the

professions. Although only a minority of Jews belonged to this class, they dominated certain professions, especially law and medicine, in central and eastern Europe.

Formally there was no Jewish aristocracy, save in Hungary (where, in any case, most of its Jewish-origin members were converts to Christianity). Great wealth had lifted certain families out of the bourgeoisie into a social stratosphere far beyond the rest of Jewish society. At its apex were plutocratic families such as the Warburgs in Hamburg, the Hatvanys in Budapest, the Gunzburgs (exiled from Russia) in Paris, and the Rothschilds almost everywhere. These patricians attracted disproportionate attention and hostility from anti-Semites but they were completely unrepresentative of Jews in general.

With the virtual elimination of private commerce in the USSR, the occupational distribution of Soviet Jews in the Stalinist period differed from the pattern elsewhere. The commercial class had constituted 40 percent of the Jewish working population in the Russian Empire in 1897. By 1926 in the Soviet Union it had shrunk to 12 percent—Jews were even then disproportionately represented among "NEP-men," the traders permitted to operate during the period of the New Economic Policy. By 1939, however, this class had virtually disappeared. As in other countries, Jews moved strongly into the professions. In the Slavic republics of the USSR in 1939, a quarter of all doctors, dentists, and pharmacists and a fifth of all lawyers were Jews. But the Soviet Union was unlike most other countries in its readiness to admit Jews to state employment, a much larger and more significant segment of the labor force in a socialized economy than elsewhere. Ten percent of all those employed in the "upper echelons of the intermediate stratum" of economic management in 1939 were Jews (who comprised only 1.8 percent of the total population). More than half of all Jewish workers were in white-collar occupations, a higher percentage by far than for any other nationality in the USSR.

Jews were eager to integrate into Soviet society and successful in doing so. In the process, many internalized the prevalent ideology. But in spite of that thought system's glorification of the urban working class and notwithstanding an official policy aimed at their

productivization, Jews were not absorbed into the proletariat as they sovietized. Compelled to abandon their classic roles as petty traders and middlemen, most of them did not head for factories, mines, or steel mills. Instead, with an ability to see through official sloganeering and with a perception of the real locations of power and privilege in the workers' and peasants' state, Jews proceeded in large numbers, via high schools and universities, toward bureaucratic posts, scientific laboratories, judicial chambers, medical consulting rooms, university lecture theaters, newsrooms, and managerial offices. The USSR became the country in Europe in which Jews were most disproportionately represented in the power elite. This, however, availed them nothing if they came under attack, either as individuals or as a collectivity: in the years of Stalinist terror they were no less endangered than any other section of Soviet society.

Institutional Ramparts

The European Jews were great institution builders. They created political parties, youth movements, trade unions, fraternal lodges, burial societies, charitable bodies, and every other type of associational form imaginable. In the absence of a unified political framework for their existence, they invested heavily in what a later generation has come to term social capital.

In Cracow, for example, the sixty thousand Jews in the interwar period operated more than three hundred institutions: not only synagogues, *chevra kadisha* burial societies, and *yeshivot*, but twenty-nine charitable bodies, seven women's organizations, political parties, labor unions, hospitals, orphanages, old-age homes, bathhouses, several primary and secondary schools (including the orthodox boys' Takhkemoni, the orthodox girls' Beys Yankev and its related teachers' college, a coeducational Hebrew high school, and a secular girls' Nasza Szkoła), sports clubs (Maccabi, the leading one, with fifteen sections, among others for rowing, fencing, riding, and chess), the Association of Jewish Artists, the Jewish Music Society, Szir (a choral club), a theater society, the Union of Hebrew Journalists, the Radio Social Club, Tarbut (a Hebrew cultural club), a Yiddish theater society, and Toynbe [*sic*] Hala (primarily a cultural association but inspired by Toynbee Hall in the East End of London)—all this not counting more strictly commercial enterprises such as newspapers (especially the influential Polish-language daily *Nowy Dziennik*), Hebrew printers, kosher butchers, and delicatessens.[35]

The basic Jewish institution was the *kehillah* (community). In most countries of central and eastern Europe, with the notable exception of the Soviet Union, Jewish communities had a recognized legal status and the right to tax their members. While operating under government supervision, the *kehillot* enjoyed a limited degree of autonomy that enabled them to spend some money also on educational, social, and cultural activities, such as hospitals, old-age homes, orphanages, and beggars' shelters. The *kehillot* were generally democratic institutions, at least in the sense that all males had the vote. In Poland, in particular, where there were an estimated nine hundred *kehillot*, elections were often fiercely contested, sometimes on a party-political basis.

Polish Jews still lived with the historic memory of the quasi-autonomous federation of *kehillot*, the "Council of Four Lands," which had represented them in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1580 and 1764. The Polish Republic after 1918 curtailed the powers of the *kehillot*, restricting them to strictly religious functions. They were permitted to levy taxes that supported the salaries of the rabbinate, as well as kosher meat slaughter and maintenance of synagogues, ritual baths, and cemeteries. (A new law in 1928 allowed them also to spend on some social needs.) Taxation was graduated and the very poorest members did not have to pay at all. In the largest community, Warsaw, half of all Jews fell into the exempt category, an index of the dire impoverishment of much of the population. The government made a small contribution, amounting to less than 1 percent of the operating costs of the *kehillot* (on a per capita basis, this was one-twelfth the size of the contribution made to Christian institutions).[36]

The synagogue was less an institution than a building, the outer shell of the *kehillah* in its religious dimension. Houses of worship came in all shapes and sizes. Poland was famous for its wooden and fortress synagogues, Italy for the ornate decoration of synagogues

such as those of Venice, Florence, and Livorno. The oldest in Europe was the medieval synagogue of Worms, the origins of which dated back to the eleventh century, followed by the Altneushul in Prague, built in the late fourteenth century. The largest on the continent had for a long time been the great Portuguese Jews' Esnoga in Amsterdam. It was overtaken in 1859 by the resplendent three-thousand-seat Dohány Street temple in Budapest. The smallest synagogues were the Hasidic *shtiblakh*, small prayer rooms in which a *minyan* (quorum of ten men) would gather to recite the morning, afternoon, and evening services.

In many synagogues, particularly in central and southern Europe, the biblical prohibition against "graven images" had somehow been reconciled with lavish decoration, stained-glass windows, and representative art. Substantial amounts might be spent on ornamenting and beautifying the building and such expenditures were rarely grudged in spite of the burning pressure of other demands on funding, particularly for *tsedakah* (charitable help for the poor). The little synagogue of Lackenbach in Burgenland, the easternmost province of Austria, bore wall paintings of the exodus from Egypt and other biblical scenes. In the Great Synagogue of the Romanian *shtetl* (small town) Podu Iloaiei, allegorical figures of griffons, lions, deer, and double-headed eagles were carved on the ark and *bimah* (reading platform), and the building was adorned with representations of the Western Wall, Rachel's Tomb, and the "waters of Babylon."

Compared with western Europe, where social service organizations to help the Jewish poor were highly developed, eastern Europe, notwithstanding its masses of Jewish paupers, had much more primitive provision of this kind. A large part of such activity was generated by organizations based elsewhere, notably the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the "Joint"), the wealthiest Jewish charitable body in the world, and ORT.

The Organization for Rehabilitation of Jews through Training traced its origins in Russia back to 1880. After 1917 Russian-Jewish émigrés reestablished it in Berlin and Paris. Almost alone among Russian émigré organizations, it succeeded in establishing a working relationship with the Soviet regime, with which, as with other east European governments, it undertook social welfare activities through most of the interwar period. ORT tried to find practical means of "productivizing" the Jewish population. It founded trade schools, artisanal courses, and evening classes, supplied craftsmen with modern equipment, and sponsored producers' cooperatives.

But in the 1930s the financial capacities of both the Joint and ORT were squeezed by the effects of the Great Depression and the demand for aid to victims of Nazi persecution. German Jewry, through the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, had once been an exporter of charitable assistance. Overnight, in 1933, German Jews became supplicants rather than benefactors. As a result, the Joint, in particular, was compelled to divert resources that had formerly gone to eastern Europe toward German-Jewish relief.

In the absence of large-scale government action in the sphere of public health, and with a great part of the Jewish population unable to afford medical insurance, much of the burden of health care in east-central Europe was carried by voluntary organizations. About fifty Jewish hospitals operated in Poland, with 3,500 beds (about 5 percent of the total number in the country). They were funded by *landsmanshaftn* (groups, especially in the United States, of emigrants from a particular locality), *kehillot*, small grants from municipalities, and general philanthropy.

The Society for Safeguarding the Health of Jews, TOZ, founded in 1921, sought to raise standards of hygiene and public health among Jews in Poland. An outgrowth from the prerevolutionary organization OZE, established in St. Petersburg in 1912, TOZ built four hundred hospitals and clinics in seventy-two towns by 1939, as well as sanatoria and bathhouses. TOZ devoted special efforts to children and mothers, providing tuberculosis and other vaccines, dental services, school medical stations, and nutritional advice. It undertook preventive measures against venereal diseases, trachoma, and ringworm and sought to alleviate malnutrition.

TOZ's parent organization, OZE (later OSE, Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants), with headquarters from 1933 in Paris, remained active in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. It also ran a children's home in Kovno and clinics in Romania. It conducted propaganda in favor of breast-feeding and educated mothers in hygienic methods of preparation of bottled milk. Much of the funding for OSE and TOZ, which spent

over $2 million annually, a considerable sum in the 1930s, was supplied by sympathizers abroad, particularly the Joint, but a large part of its budget was raised in Poland by means of membership campaigns, balls, concerts, and lotteries.

By these and other means, voluntary institutions furnished, in greater measure than for most population groups, the basic elements of social welfare provision. Beyond all this, they provided a framework that might serve as some sort of bulwark for Jews in the face of not only the minimal state but the hostile state. They were often weakened, however, by the internal disunity of the Jews.

Brotherhoods of Contempt

Jews often preached unity but no less often they meant different things by it. Though the European Jews shared many social and cultural characteristics, they were riven by deep divisions. Historically, the most fundamental was between Ashkenazim (Jews of German origin) and Sephardim (descendants of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century). "We lived together with the Spanish Jews on the same continent as close neighbours for several hundred years until the expulsion from Spain in close spiritual and everyday contact and yet how estranged we have become!" exclaimed the social commentator Jacob Lestchinsky, an Ashkenazi.[37]

In west European cities such as Amsterdam, London, and Bordeaux, the long-established Sephardim regarded themselves as an aristocracy and a cut above the Ashkenazim. But Sephardim were by this time a minority among Jews in these places. Emigration from the Balkans and other parts of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also produced a large Sephardi community in Paris, said by the 1930s to number fifty thousand. Smaller Sephardi communities existed in Altona (near Hamburg), Vienna, and Romania. A few Sephardim lived in Budapest but their congregation there was dissolved in 1938 "for lack of members."[38] The Jews of Italy included many descendants of emigrants from Spain but nevertheless regarded themselves as a distinct group, since, at any rate in Rome, they could trace their origins back to the second century of the Christian era, long before either Ashkenazim or Sephardim existed as Jewish categories.

Most European Sephardim were concentrated in the Balkans, where they were a majority of Jews in Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria. In the larger Sephardi centers, such as Salonica and Istanbul, Judeo-Espagnol was still widely spoken and Jews took great pride in their Hispanic heritage. In Yugoslavia, Sephardim lived mainly in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Skopje, and amounted to about a third of the seventy-thousand-strong community. They were in general poorer than their Ashkenazi neighbors and their straitened economic condition in the 1930s led the local branch of the Zionist fund-raising organization, Keren Hayesod, to allocate 20 percent of its receipts to charitable purposes in Yugoslavia rather than in Palestine. In Sarajevo a small group of intellectuals formed a Sephardic Circle with the object of preserving their distinctive culture against gathering Ashkenazi dominance.

The Union Universelle des Juifs Sépharadim, formed (under a different name) in 1925, with headquarters in Paris, aspired to represent the Sephardim of the world. It published a magazine and held meetings of Sephardim from most of the major communities of Europe as well as of the Levant and North Africa. But internal disputes and rivalries weakened the organization. When its first international conference convened in London in 1935, the Greek, Turkish, and Bulgarian communities did not send representatives. In spite of speechifying about "Séphardisme" and a "Sephardi renaissance," and notwithstanding some sparks of local cultural dynamism, the Sephardim never developed into a unified or significant political force in the Jewish world.

Ashkenazim, who constituted at least 90 percent of the Jews of Europe, were themselves deeply divided: between *Litvaks* and *Galitsyaner*, between Hasidim and *misnagdim*, between western (particularly German) Jews and *Ostjuden* (emigrants from eastern Europe), as well as among orthodox, liberal/reform, and secularized Jews, not to mention crosscutting political differences.

The *Litvak* and *Galitsyaner* were both types of *Ostjude* but each had its own stereotype, which was applied to inhabitants of the

areas in question as well as to emigrants from them and even to their descendants. The *Litvak* originated in Lite, an area broader than interwar Lithuania, stretching as far east as Vitebsk and as far south as Minsk and Białystok. The *Litvak* was "smart, analytical, learned, worldly, skeptical, proud, stubborn, dynamic, and energetic."[39] He was also dry, rational, and unemotional. By contrast, the *Galitsyaner*, a Jew from the southern Polish province of Galicia, was warmhearted, sly, witty, sharp, stingy, *ibergeshpitst* (crafty), and something of a trickster. He had a "peculiar mix of shrewdness and heartiness."[40] "To be called a . . . Galitzianer was for long not much of a compliment. . . . It denoted folksy backwardness and at times also a petty mercantile mentality and moral shiftiness."[41] The two types spoke different kinds of Yiddish: the Lithuanian version was regarded as more cultivated; Polish/Galician Yiddish was homespun and earthy. The split was also partly culinary. The *Litvaks* prepared their *gefilte fish* savory rather than sweet and their *farfl* (egg noodle dough cooked in broth) as small pellets rather than rolled into flat sheets that were then sliced, as was the custom among *Galitsyaners*.[42]

The division between *Litvak* and *Galitsyaner* followed, in large measure, the lines of division between Hasidism and its enemies, the *misnagdim*. The greatest opponent of Hasidism in its early phase had been Eliyahu ben Shlomo-Zalman (1720–97), the gaon (a high rabbinic title) of Vilna. But Hasidism had some adherents in Lite, in particular the followers of Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745–1813), founder of the Chabad movement, better known, from the small-town location of the rabbinical court of the second *rebbe* of the dynasty, as Lubavitcher Hasidim. Even in Galicia, however, the overenthusiastic, dancing, singing Hasidim were often viewed with a raised eyebrow. The writer S. Y. Agnon recalled that in his home *shtetl* of Buczacz the Hasidic prayer house was called the *laytsim shlikhel* (the little synagogue of clowns).[43]

Litvak and *Galitsyaner*, Hasid and *misnaged* were all types of *Ostjude*. One in five Jews in Germany in the 1920s was an *Ostjude* (many more fell into this category in terms of their ancestry). Immigrants from eastern Europe were also a significant element in the Jewish populations of France, Austria, and other countries, notably the United States, to which over two million Jews from eastern Europe had emigrated between 1881 and 1914. The *Ostjuden*, by their clothing, their retention of Yiddish, their kosher food shops and restaurants, the hyperreligiosity of some and the revolutionary politics of others, impressed their mark on the central immigrant areas of cities, such as the Marais in Paris, known in Yiddish as the Pletzl, and Leopoldstadt, the poorest district of Vienna. Situated between the River Danube and the Danube Canal, it was dubbed "*matzah* island" on account of its dense concentration of Jews, more than a third of the population of the area.

Ever since the Enlightenment, German, Austrian, Hungarian, and French Jews had learned to look down on the *Ostjuden*, even though many were themselves immigrants or descendants of immigrants from eastern Europe. The writer Joseph Roth observed with some justice: "The more western the origin of a Jew, the more Jews there are for him to look down on. The Frankfurt Jew despises the Berlin Jew, the Berlin Jew despises the Viennese Jew, the Viennese Jew despises the Warsaw Jew. Then there are Jews from all the way back in Galicia, upon whom they all look down, and that's where I come from, the lowest of all Jews."[44]

Franz Kafka was a significant exception: "I would like to run to these poor Jews of the ghetto," he wrote, "kiss the hems of their garments and say nothing, absolutely nothing. I would be perfectly happy if, in silence, they would endure my presence."[45] Few west European Jews shared Kafka's engaging humility. Robert de Rothschild, head of the Consistoire de Paris, the main Jewish religious body in the city, expressed the common disdain toward recent arrivals from eastern Europe with unusual bluntness in a speech to the organization's general assembly in 1935: "If they are not happy here, let them leave. They are guests whom we have warmly received but they should not go about rocking the boat."[46]

In Germany in the early twentieth century, however, such attitudes began to change. The encounter during the First World War between Jews in German-occupied Poland and German-Jewish soldiers and army chaplains led to a new respect on the part of some German Jews for what they regarded as the more authentic traditionalism of the *Ostjuden*. German Jewry consequently experienced what came to be called a *Bewusstseinswandel*, a shift of consciousness

that involved also attitudes to *Ostjuden*. The redaction and popularization by Martin Buber of tales of the Hasidic masters accentuated this new tendency toward sympathetic respect. But stigmas, once implanted, are difficult to remove and the old arrogance lingered.

The *Ostjuden*, for their part, often had their own chip-on-the-shoulder scorn for *yekes* (the nickname for German Jews), as in the line of doggerel:

Yeke iz a nar
The *yeke* is a fool
un fun a nar hot men tsar
and a fool just gives you trouble;
un ven dem nar vilt zikh zayn a har
when a *yeke* wants to become a gentleman
vert er a gefar.[47]
he becomes dangerous.

All Jews might have been brothers but, in this as in other ways, theirs was often a fraternity of mutual contempt.

Such internal fissures hobbled the Jews' resistance in the 1930s to the pandemic of anti-Semitism.

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THE CHRISTIAN PROBLEM

"We Are All Semites"

Jews and Christians alike spoke of the "Jewish problem" but this was a misnomer for what should more properly have been called the Christian problem. In its essence, after all, anti-Semitism was a phenomenon that arose out of the failure of European Christendom to live up to the most fundamental teaching of its Jewish founder: "love thy neighbor as thyself."

In assessing the role and responsibility of the Christian churches in the prevalence of anti-Semitism in Europe in the 1930s, it is instructive to dwell not on the worst but on the best. A few leading Christian thinkers in the 1930s, such as the neo-Thomist theologian Jacques Maritain in France and the Protestant bishop of Debrecen, Dezső Baltazár, in Hungary, were outspoken in their condemnation of anti-Semitism.

Yet even in such a figure as Maritain, genuinely and passionately opposed to anti-Semitism, we may notice a mote in his eye. In a powerful essay (originally a lecture delivered at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs in Paris) in February 1938, Maritain attacked all forms of anti-Semitism: racial, political, cultural, social—all, that is, except one, Christian anti-Semitism, which, according to him, was a contradiction in terms.

Maritain, whose sincerity and fervor in opposing racial hatred cannot be doubted, could nevertheless suggest that the Nazis, "in seeking to reject Israel," had "embraced the very worst of Israel." He detected in the Nazis "that sentiment of racial pride which is,

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EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

The Hanging Question

One of the most acute contemporary analysts of European Jewish politics and society, Jacob Lestchinsky, wrote from Berlin as early as March 1933 that the Nazis aimed at "a mass slaughter of Jews."[1] Lestchinsky was a Lithuanian citizen, a leading figure in YIVO, and a serious commentator not normally given to sensational statements. His report earned him expulsion from Germany. He moved to Poland but was expelled from there too in 1937, this time because his writings on Polish Jewry were regarded by the government as hostile to the regime. In 1938 he emigrated to New York but remained in close touch with Polish Jewry and continued to write for the Yiddish press.

Lestchinsky, who was not a Zionist, observed in 1938 that, by comparison with Jews in Palestine, the Jewish worker in the diaspora (he meant principally in eastern Europe) did not feel sufficiently secure and rooted to make sacrifices today for gains the day after tomorrow. "He rattles through life in the Diaspora the way one rattles through five o'clock prayers" ("Er khapt op dos lebn in golus vi men khapt op dos funfornt-davnen"), "the quicker to be rid of a burden."[2] Deferred gratification, in other words, made no sense in a world of no expectations.

In late July 1939, Lestchinsky published an article calling for Jews to cast aside shortsighted passivity and to display greater readiness to resist their oppressors. Large numbers of German Jewish ex-

to serve in the French and British armies. Some voices then had inquired whether the volunteers were willing to take responsibility for untoward consequences that might befall the Jews who remained in Germany. "After all, Hitler would simply slaughter them" (*zi oyskoylenen*). "The question," he continued, "remained hanging in the air." But nobody now, he said, came out against Jews volunteering for the British army or the French Foreign Legion with the goal of fighting against Hitlerism.[3] Although his article did not discuss the Polish-Jewish predicament directly, the call for a strategy of resistance to anti-Semitism was plainly not restricted to Nazi Germany.

But how to resist? And how to address the "hanging question"?

Return to the Ghetto

According to Hannah Arendt, one of the salient features of what she termed "totalitarianism" was the reduction of its victims to atomized, isolated individuals.[4] Perhaps. But at any rate as regards Germany between 1933 and 1939, heightened solidarity rather than atomization was more characteristic of Jews' reaction to persecution.

Joachim Prinz, the young rabbi whose preaching captured the imagination of thousands of listeners in Berlin between 1933 and 1937, argued in 1935 in the *Jüdische Rundschau* under the headline "Ghetto 1935" that the only place in Germany that was not a ghetto was the synagogue.

> Everything else [as he later summarized the article] was ghetto, and that meant persecution: the streets, the parks, the theatres, the schools, the place of work. But the synagogue was a place of security, or at least one in which people felt secure. The yearning to be with other Jews was overwhelming. It included all kinds of Jews. Among them were Jews who had converted to Christianity and thousands of marginal Jews who were so assimilated that they had never seen the inside of a synagogue.[5]

Victimization, while heightening personal feelings of vulnerabil-

fraternity. But were the Jews, notwithstanding what Prinz maintained (and he left Germany in 1937), really rising above the ghetto or huddling back into it?

Talk of a "return to the ghetto" became a commonplace of Jewish discourse of the late 1930s. Debate over the concept cut across conventional ideological lines and across borders throughout the Jewish world. At first the phrase was understood as denoting a rejection by Jews of the universalism of the Enlightenment and reattachment instead to the roots of Jewish culture. It came to embody a feeling of disappointment in the consequences of emancipation and a resigned turn inward. The idea seems to have originated in Germany, where some Jews, particularly the strictly orthodox minority who had always been suspicious of the dangers, as they saw them, of an open society, were not, at first, altogether averse to the re-erection by the Nazis of barriers between Jews and gentiles. In Poland too, as nationalists sought to shut Jews out of common fellowship in national society, some were attracted to the idea of retreating into a shell. Later, as Jews were driven into economic and social isolation, the phrase began to carry more sinister implications.

A reaction soon set in from those, particularly liberals and leftists, who retained faith in the Enlightenment vision of the brotherhood of men. In 1937 Roman Zilbershtayn, a Warsaw city councilor, told a meeting of the Jewish Merchants' Association: "We must burn out with a red-hot iron every kind of nonsensical thought of going back to the ghetto. We may perish but we will not perish in a ghetto."[6]

In April 1938, after the horrors of the Anschluss, the New York Yiddish poet Jacob Glatshteyn published his "Goodnight, world," a savage, unsparing, petulant cry of rage:

A gute nakht, brayte velt,
Good night, wide world.
Groyse, shtinkendike velt. . . .
Big, stinking world. . . .
Oyf mayn aygenem gebot—
At my own command—
Gey ikh tsurik in geto.[7]

Whether he was consciously echoing the Bach cantata, the performance of which had so moved Paula Lindberg in 1933, is not known.

As sometimes happens when an idea is already in the air, publication of the poem fanned smoldering embers into a fiery controversy. The acerbic Warsaw literary critic Yoshue Rapoport wrote that for several weeks he could "neither swallow nor spit out" Glatshteyn's poem. "So Glatshteyn goes willingly into the ghetto? Not me!" he thundered. And if the day should come that he (Rapoport) was confined in a ghetto, he insisted, he would go not with misplaced pride but shouting out loud that he was being shoved in by force and creating a great commotion in order to let in a breath of the wider world. The Jews, he argued, should not succumb to a "deathly egocentrism" but instead ally with their traditional allies, the forces of enlightenment, to overcome their common enemies.[8]

Meanwhile, the editor of *Parizer haynt* observed that the catastrophe that was befalling the Jewish people had left many fearful that entire Jewish communities would be annihilated and wiped off the face of the earth. But he too disapproved of any talk of a return to the ghetto, arguing instead for a Zionist solution of the Jewish problem.[9]

In early 1939 the head of the historical section of YIVO, Elias Tcherikower, at the time an émigré in Paris, founded a Yiddish journal, *Afn sheydveg* (At the Crossroads), in which he too advocated a return to the ghetto. The circle around the magazine took a pessimistic view of Jewish prospects in Europe. In the Soviet Union Jews had become *meysim khofshim* (liberated dead). In western Europe assimilation was drying up the wellsprings of Jewish culture. Despairing of his earlier belief that secular Yiddish culture might serve as a replacement for religion, Tcherikower wrote: "Our generation, a scattered camp of Jews, gazes with wonder and envy at the spiritual fortitude of past Jewish martyrs, who 'cherished their troubles,' as the Gemara [Talmud] permits itself to say, who accepted providence and elevated suffering to heroism, to *kiddush hashem* [martyrdom]."[10] Tcherikower lamented that the old world of diaspora life

> The tragedy of our generation does not consist in the quantity of afflictions that have fallen to our lot but rather in that the generation has lost the old beliefs and despaired of the new. Through and through individualistic, skeptical, and rationalistic, our generation is devoured by assimilation—right or left—and has lost its past strength. It stands now empty, expelled, without the innocence of a believer and without the primitive strength of a fighter—without any consolation in its afflictions.[11]

This sense of lost cultural and moral bearings, widespread not only among Jews in Europe of the 1930s, was part of what sustained the idea of a return to the ghetto.

The controversy rumbled on until the last, most terrifying word went to the grand old man of *yidishkayt*. In a letter to the editors of Tcherikower's magazine, reprinted in the Warsaw *Haynt* on August 25, the seventy-nine-year-old Simon Dubnow commented: "The last two Hitler-years, 1938–1939, have left many people with the impression that we are at the beginning of the destruction [*khurbn*] of European Jewry." Hitler's "extermination-system" (*oys-rotungs-sistem*), he maintained, was a straightforward re-creation of Haman's plan "to destroy, to massacre, and exterminate all the Jews," with the difference that in Haman's case it had remained merely a plan.[12] The Jews, Dubnow argued, were standing "not at a cross-roads but on a *battlefield*."

What was to be done "*now*, when we face a struggle for our very physical survival, for our human dignity"? What could an unarmed people do? A great deal, he maintained. Alas, his prescriptions were hardly new: strengthening the economic and moral boycott of the two aggressive "bandit-regimes" (he meant Germany and Italy: the article was written before news of the Nazi-Soviet pact reached him), securing homes for Jewish refugees in Palestine and other havens, and combating anti-Semitism in countries where it threatened to engulf the Jews (he meant eastern Europe, including Latvia, where he was then living).

More significant than his immediate political prescriptions were Dubnow's thoughts on Jewish collective self-understanding. He had long argued that emancipation, tolerance, and open societies led to

Jewish assimilation and internal disintegration, whereas persecution and exclusion solidified Jewish collective self-consciousness, cohesion, and solidarity. In this age, he admitted, there was a temptation to abandon the very idea of emancipation: what, after all, had it brought? Yes, it had brought the Jews assimilation, but it had also "brought to life the free human being within the Jew." Jews must struggle against "counter-emancipation," against calls for "evacuation." They must not throw up their arms and sigh. They would stand or fall with humanity as a whole and with the "anti-aggressor alliance" that now included the east European states (here he meant Poland and Romania, which had recently received guarantees from Britain and France).

Dubnow rejected the call for a return to the ghetto as a collapse into passivity and resignation. He discountenanced the summons to repentance and reliance on God. He agreed that every great disaster in the life of a people called forth a "spiritual reckoning" (*heshbon nefesh*). But the proper time for that would come later. Now, in the very midst of the cataclysm, the urgent necessity was saving bodies, not souls: "first Jews, then Jewishness!" ("*Friher yidn, dernokh yidishkayt!*")[13]

Gateway to Annihilation

The ten million European Jews were by no means all of a kind. Indeed, they were probably the most internally variegated people of the continent. But they faced a common set of enemies and they shared a common destiny. In 1939 they all faced an existential crisis.

The challenges confronting them came from within no less than from without. They were heirs to a great civilization but one that showed only limited capacity for self-renewal or rejuvenation. The collective sum of millions of individual decisions by Jews themselves over the previous two or three generations had weakened the ligaments of their society to an extent that even a renewed sense of solidarity in the face of extreme danger could not redress. Long before their enemies turned from vilification and persecution to outright extermination, the Jews themselves were for

toward what one of their most perceptive and sympathetic observers called "race suicide."[14]

The demographic trajectory was grim and, with declining fertility, large-scale emigration, increasing outmarriage, and widespread apostasy, foreshadowed extinction. Jewish cultural links were loosening. Use of the Jewish vernaculars, Yiddish and Judeo-Espagnol, was waning from Vilna to Salonica. Traditional religious practice had been eliminated among the greater part of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union, had given way to secularism among large sections of western and central European Jewry, and was in retreat in its Polish-Lithuanian fortress. Many Jews wanted to escape from what they saw as the prison of their Jewishness but found that, however hard they tried, they could not throw off their jailhouse uniform.

In much of Europe, particularly France, Germany, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, a majority of Jews had opted for acculturation and social assimilation, in the hope that these would lead ultimately to full integration into general society. In all these cases that hope was proving delusory. In most of central and eastern Europe, Jews were treated as pariahs. In Poland they were rapidly acculturating without assimilating, let alone integrating. In the USSR, where, more than any other nationality, the Jews had embraced the ideals of the new Soviet society, their position in the late 1930s underwent a sharp reversal. In France the revolutionary tradition of the rights of man, to which most Jews clung as a lifeline, proved gossamer-thin and snapped in the ultimate crisis.

Acculturation and assimilation, of course, were neither one-way streets nor linear processes. The European Jews gave at least as much as they took from surrounding societies and cultures. Their "contributions" (as they are often termed) to European culture earned them admiration and congratulation—particularly after they were gone. In Europe of the late 1930s writers, artists, composers, and scholars of Jewish origin were more commonly assailed as subverters or perverters of national cultures than acclaimed as donors in a mutually beneficial gift relationship.

The problem was not just Germany. The Nazis were the vanguard of a wider European phenomenon of stigmatization, expropriation,

extrusion, and bloodshed. Anti-Semitism almost everywhere on the continent that Jews lived had risen to unprecedented heights and was directed against every section of Jewish society, even children, the elderly, and the disabled. Whereas Europe in general was recovering from the Great Depression, the economic position of Jews was catastrophic in German-dominated central Europe and under sustained attack in Poland and Romania. Christian morality, which in the past had set some limits to the worst excesses of Jew-hatred, showed no capacity (nor, in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, much readiness) to restrain racist brutality.

Liberalism and socialism failed in this period in the case of the Jews, as in so much else, to live up to the universalist, Enlightenment principles on which they were founded. As Zygmunt Bauman has written:

> There was an irreparable contradiction between the conditions which had to be met to obtain exit visas from the ghetto, and those which had to be observed to purchase entry tickets to universal humanity. As travelers were soon to discover to their dismay, the universal currency which bought exit visas was not honored by those selling entry tickets.[15]

Allies to whom the Jews had looked with assurance in the past now had other priorities. In France the decline of the Popular Front was accompanied by a growth, even on the left, of xenophobia and collapse of faith in liberal principles. In Britain the policy of support for the Jewish National Home had been replaced by an overriding concern for national and imperial security, held to be incompatible with continued support for Zionism or for large-scale reception of Jewish refugees, whether in Palestine or anywhere in the British Empire. The Soviet Union, which had posed as the most determined foe of Nazism, turned suddenly in August 1939 into Hitler's catspaw.

Increasingly, as we have seen, the Jews of Europe were being transformed from a community into a desperate horde of wandering refugees and into a paradigmatic "camp people."

None of this was news to contemporaries: "the struggle for existence" was one of the characteristic phrases of the period among the

Jews of east-central Europe. As we have seen, contemporaries spoke repeatedly about the threat of "extermination" of the Jewish people. If nobody could foresee Auschwitz, no serious observer of European Jewry in 1939 could be anything but deeply pessimistic about its future.

The Jews of Europe did not react to their predicament passively. They were actors in their own history. They sought by every possible means, individually and collectively, to confront the threats that loomed on every side. They tried emigration, but the exits were blocked. They tried persuasion, but few would listen, and anyway the barking loudspeakers of Nazi propaganda deafened ears. They tried political organization of every kind, but they were politically weightless. A handful, even before the war, tried violent resistance, but their enemies could wreak vengeance a thousandfold—as the Nazis demonstrated on Kristallnacht. Some tried prayer, but their God betrayed them.

They might be captains of their souls but they were not masters of their fate. Theirs was, for the most part, the agitated ineffectuality of flies sealed in a bottle, slowly suffocating.

Wholly defenseless, largely friendless, and more and more hopeless, the European Jews, on the eve of their destruction, waited for the barbarians.

EPILOGUE

FATES KNOWN AND UNKNOWN

Aberbach, Moses, librarian and scholar: born Vienna, 1924. Died Jerusalem, 2007.

Abramowicz, Hirsz, journalist: born near Troki (now in Lithuania), 1881. Left Vilna for a vacation in North America in late June 1939 and did not return. Died New York, 1960.

Abramsky, Yehezkel, Talmudic scholar: born Grodno, 1886. Moved from Latvia to London, where he served as head of the Bet Din (rabbinical court). In 1951 he emigrated to Israel, where he died in 1976.

Adorno, Theodor (né Wiesengrun), philosopher: born Frankfurt am Main, 1903. Died near Zermatt, 1969.

Agnon (né Czaczkes), **Shmuel Yosef,** writer: born Buczacz (Galicia), 1888; Nobel Prize for Literature, 1966. Died Rehovot (Israel), 1970.

Alter, Abraham Mordechai, third Hasidic *rebbe* of Gur (Góra Kalwaria, Poland): born there, 1866. Fled from Poland to Palestine in 1940. Died in Jerusalem during the siege of the city in 1948.

Alter, Wiktor, Bundist leader: born Mława, north-central Poland, 1890. Arrested by NKVD and sentenced to death for anti-Soviet activity, September 1939. Released September 1941 but rearrested December 1941. Executed by firing squad, Kuibyshev, 1943. Maxim Litvinov, at the time Soviet ambassador in Washington, announced the deaths of Alter and Henryk Erlich and said both had been guilty of seeking a separate peace with Germany. Alter's execution was personally approved by Stalin.

Altmann, Alexander, rabbi and scholar: born Kaschau (Košice, now in Slovakia), 1906. Emigrated to England, 1938, where he became communal rabbi of Manchester. From 1959 professor of Jewish philosophy at Brandeis University. Author of the standard biography of Moses Mendelssohn (1973). Died Boston, 1987.

Andermann, Martin, doctor: born Koenigsberg, 1904; took refuge in Switzerland in 1937. Later emigrated to the United States and lived in Buffalo, New York.