

THE ANTISEMITISM IN OUR TIME

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THE ANTISEMITISM IN
OUR TIME
A THREAT AGAINST
US ALL

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America. The Second World War was fought for what? Why did Hitler's Germany start the war? For economic reasons? For political reasons? Were they endangered by anyone? Did anyone want to conquer Germany? After 1935, '36, '37, the depth of the economic crisis in Germany had long been overcome. What was the reason for the outbreak of the Second World War? Was it not ideological? To conquer Lebensraum for the Germanic people of the Aryan race? But that could not be achieved unless the control of the Jews over the world was broken. The war was, to use Lucy Davidowicz's term, «a war against the Jews.»

You could say: «A very extreme thought,» but I stand by it; I think I can prove it. It contributes to the outbreak of the Second World War, to six years of struggle against the most monstrous regime the world has ever seen. Thirty-five million died, six million of whom were Jews, twenty-nine million of whom were not Jews, and it was caused inter alia, or as one of two major reasons, ideological reasons, because of hatred against the Jews, a tiny people numbering less than thirteen million today out of a world population of 4,500,000,000. In those days they numbered 17,000,000.

This illogic is very logical. When you look at the post-Hitler period, when you look at the continuity from old to contemporary, from old to new, you will find the same idea. Look at the antisemitic propaganda in the Soviet Union. Again, you have exactly the same argument, but the form is different. One hundred and sixty-three military industrial monopolies control the capitalist world, Lev Korneiev for instance, argues. One hundred and fifty-eight out of the 163 are controlled by what he calls the Zionist bourgeoisie. Well, you know, the more ridiculous it is, the better it is believed. You will find this kind of an explanation in other places too. Let me quote to you (and I have no time for more than one quote), from an article of August 8, 1982. It says this:

«The dreams of the pioneers of Zionism, who established the State of Israel, were determined by the fact that they all were Communists. The settlements in Israel are nothing but centers of Communism. Israel was established by Russian Communists with the money of American Capitalists. We should remember Adolf Hitler's historic speech in the German Parliament. He announced that only he would solve the Jewish problem, and for this, history will remember him for 1,000 years.»

This was written in the Egyptian government newspaper «October» by probably the foremost contemporary Egyptian novelist and journalist Anis Mansour. One could go on and on, because this is spread all over the place. Of course, he does not identify with the argument of Lev Korneiev, naturally. He accuses the Jews of Communism. The Soviets accuse the Jews of capitalism. Hitler accused the Jews of both.

Let me, because I have to finish (and as I said, maybe it is a good thing that I have to finish), conclude with the following remarks:

You can, of course, oppose the State of Israel's policies. You can oppose Mr. Begin or you can oppose Mr. Peres. You can think that this or that policy of this or that government is useless, bad, you are opposed to it. In fact, when Labor was in power in Israel, half of the country was against it. Now, when Mr. Begin is in power, half of the country is against him too. It is in the nature of a democracy. You are perfectly entitled to this kind of criticism. I am entitled to criticize the new government in Norway if I do not like it, but I am not going to say that the Norwegian state has no right to exist. Nor am I going to say that the Norwegian state has no right to defend itself, to conduct international relations, to participate in organizations, or whatever. People have the right to say, «Look, we happen to think that we are a people of some kind. We want to have our own ways of organizing things.» If you deny that to the Jews, you are antisemitic, you are anti-Jewish. That also is a continuity from the past. The denial to the Jews of the right to be separate, different and equal; to have their own life, their own way of organizing things. If they want to quarrel with each other, they do. That's their right. It is the problem of prejudice generally that you deny the other group the right to be separate and equal. What is the answer to these problems?

Because my thirty-five minutes are up, I want to say quite clearly, quite simply:

Contrary to the past periods of time when there was no possibility of an international hearing on antisemitism, whether in Oslo or anywhere else, we are today in a situation where more and more people realize that antisemitism is a danger to them. Not only to the Jews. The Jews are the immediate victims, but Jews have very little to do with antisemitism. Antisemitism is a cancer in the body politic of the non-Jewish people. It eats them, as was proved by the Hitler period. If we want to avoid this, not for the sake of the beautiful eyes of the Jews but for the sake of a civilized society with democratic and humanistic values, then maybe this crazy world, this absolutely illogical and irrational world, could perhaps continue to exist in the future. If we want that, this is one of the areas where we have to act, because we see that it is not only the Jews who are attacked. All of us are.

In August 1944, the Jewish population of liberated Romania numbered 320,000. In March 1945, Northern Transylvania was re-annexed, during 1945, the surviving deportees from this province returned and thousands of Jews were repatriated from the territories annexed by the Soviets (Bessarabia and Northern-Bukovina). Consequently, and despite the flow of emigrants that commenced immediately after the liberation, the number of Jews in Romania may have reached 360,000 in 1946. In Hungary there were few survivors. In February 1945, some 115,000 Jews were found in Budapest; in 1946, despite emigration, the Jewish population of Hungary was possibly 180,000. According to exaggerated official figures, the number of persons of Jewish origin was 220,000 in 1946.

During the last phase of the war, Jews in Hungary suffered much greater loss and deeper shock than the Jews of Romania. The ordeal of the latter commenced in the autumn of 1940; but Hungarian Jewry was spared pogroms and massacres, with the exception of a first wave of deportation in 1941, and the Novi-Sad massacre of January 1942. The German occupation of Hungary (March 1944), the subsequent deportation of the provincial Jewish population, and the ghettoization of the Budapest community, totally demoralized Hungarian Jews precisely because of the illusions they had nurtured at this late phase of the war. The enmity of the Hungarian masses toward the Jews, and the Arrow Cross terror (which began on October 16, 1944), led to radical changes in the relationship between Jews and Hungarians. At the end of the war it seemed that the course of a century-long process of assimilation had been irremediably halted and reversed.

By contrast, during the last years of the war, Romanian Jewry experienced a de-escalation of the impending danger. It is true that after Romania joined the war against the Soviet Union, the majority of the Jews in the re-annexed eastern provinces were annihilated. Nevertheless, Antonescu's administration resisted German pressure to deport the Jewish population of the Old Kingdom and of Southern-Transylvania. At the time of the anti-German coup and the liberation of the country in the Autumn of 1944, the vast majority of Jews in Romania proper had survived the Holocaust. The gap between the native population and the Jews did not seem as unbridgeable as the gap in Hungary, despite the fact that Romanian Jewry had never integrated into the host nation to the extent that Jews in Hungary had.

In Hungary, the Communists had to deal with a Jewish population that, although assimilated to a larger extent than most other European Jewish communities, was nevertheless undergoing a process of dissimilation and national revival after the liberation as a result of the trauma of the war years. The Romanian Communists, by contrast, had to tackle the issue of a non-assimilated minority, whose attitude toward the host nation was one of gratitude rather than revenge.

These differences were compounded by others, which were of a more general nature.

Veterans of Jewish origin constituted the backbone of the highest echelons of the Hungarian Communist leadership, but in the Bucharest Politburo and Central Committee the number of Jews was minimal. While the Hungarian Communist party leadership contained many Jews who were outstanding in cultural and intellectual life as well, in Romania there were only few prominent Jewish intellectuals on the top echelon. In Hungary a considerable number of assimilated Jews held office at the ministerial level and at the rank of senior party and state officials, but in Romania the number of Jews in the Politburo, the party secretariate and in the government was negligible; however, it should be noted that in certain key positions quite a number of Jewish Communists were in the forefront in Romania too.

In order to understand the public mood in Hungary, we have to recall that all the four leading personalities of the Communist regime in the early 1950s were Jewish (Rákosi, Gerö, Farkas, Révai), and the hated chief of the secret political police was also a Jew (Gábor Péter). Prior to 1952 in Romania, there were only two Jewish personalities in the Politburo (Ana Pauker and Iosif Chisinevski). Yet, cultural and ideological life was dictated by two other Jews besides Chisinevski (Leonte Răutu and Mihai Roller). Popular antisemitism was obviously more deeply rooted in Hungary, and anti-Communism was much closer associated to antisemitism than in Romania, in spite of the fact that in both countries the Communist regime was regarded by the politically less oriented masses as a Jewish import, brought mostly by the «Muscovites» the Jewish Communists trained in Moscow during the interwar period and in the war years.

In the two postwar years pogroms and antisemitic excesses occurred in both countries, mainly in Hungary, however. They were the outbursts of the basically anti-regime old antisemites. But, at this early phase, before the complete Communist seizure of power in Hungary, the Jewish Communists in Budapest displayed a cowardly opportunistic attitude towards the anti-Jewish pogromists. The excesses were played down, and the worker and peasant criminals were handled with kid gloves, in order not to antagonize the lower classes precisely over the Jewish question.

A common feature of both Communist leaderships in the two countries immediately after the war was a slow reinstatement of property belonging to survivors. The reluctant and only partial restitution was due to the same consideration: Not to provoke and estrange from the regime those strata which profited during the war from the spoliation of the Jews. I would not call this attitude outright antisemitic (many of the leaders at that time were Jews) — but, as I mentioned, rather sheer opportunism.

An interesting test case — the first one — of the Communist regimes in

the Jewish question came into the lime-light during the course of the Stalinist show-trials following the Titoist schism. During the Rajk-trial in Hungary in 1949, and during other minor trials after Rajk's liquidation, Hungary witnessed a peculiar, *sui generis* antisemitic wave. Some of the victims of the purges were exposed as being of Jewish origin and designated by their original Jewish sounding names instead of their Hungarian names. The euphemism of «cosmopolitans» was used to hint at the Jewish origin of some defendants. Anti-Zionist slogans were voiced, and — the most peculiar characteristic of the infamous insinuations — those who initiated these anti-Jewish manipulations were mostly Jews, or in any case the manipulators acted under the auspices of the Jewish quadrumvirate (whose names I have already mentioned). Some senior officers of the secret police who conducted the KGB-type investigations against the alleged Zionist deviationists, were themselves Jews. I repeat: These antisemitic manifestations were of a peculiar character, since the spiritual perpetrators belonged to Rákosi's Jewish entourage.

In Romania the purges had a less obvious anti-Jewish (anti-Zionist) edge, and as a matter of fact, the disclosure of the Jewish origin of the victims and the anti-Zionist character of the trials (or persecutions) were not preponderant in Bucharest. Moreover, while Ana Pauker and a few other Jews were dismissed, other Jews in leading positions survived the purges, or were even instrumental in their implementation.

In both cases, regardless of the intentions of the Communist leadership, the anti-Jewish masses greeted with great satisfaction the downfall of the Jewish leading personalities.

I should like to devote a few words to the efforts of the local Communist leaders in trying to downgrade the Jewish problem during the first post-war decade by an assimilationist policy.

In Romania the Communist leaders did not harbor any illusions that large numbers of the Jewish masses would be prepared for a speedy integration into Romanian society and the new regime.

Faced with a huge, non-assimilated Jewish population, the Communists encouraged Yiddish cultural activity under semiofficial party guidance. After the euphoria and illusions of the first post-liberation months, the Communists (Jews and non-Jews alike) could not help but admit the existence of a Jewish question in Romania. They also had to recognize the necessity of a transitional period for the acculturation and assimilation of the Jewish masses.

The new regime contented itself with the alleged democratization of these Jewish masses, while estranging them from their religious and national minded leaders, and crushing the Zionist organizations. Despite this policy, the authorities maintained a liberal attitude on the issue of emigration to Palestine and later to Israel. Moreover, these trends and phenomena did not

contradict another parallel practice of the Communists, namely the encouragement of those intellectuals and youth who were ready to sever their ties with Jewry and consider themselves Romanians.

In December 1948, the Communist party published its resolutions on the national question. «Chauvinistic Zionism» was one of the nationalisms that the Communists strongly condemned, claiming that it tried to sabotage the integration of the Jewish population. The attacks against the basically anti-assimilationist forces opened a long period of anti-Zionist trials, aimed at wiping out every trace of Jewish national activity. But the transformation of the Jewish masses into Romanians was considered — realistically — an impracticable task.

In contrast to the situation in most Communist countries, during the second decade of the Communist regime in Romania, there was no pressure on the Jews to disavow their ethnic origin. This was despite Gheorghiu-Dej's markedly nationalistic policy, or perhaps precisely because of this specific feature.

Thus, from the late 1950's, mass emigration to Israel was permitted intermittently. Characteristically, irrespective of a party member's declaration of nationality, party documents registered Jewish members as Jews. These policies were nothing but acknowledgements of the fact that Romanian Jewry, recently emancipated and far from being assimilated, still represented a distinct ethnic community. The number of Jewish Communists, mainly senior officials and «literati», who were supposed to have been completely integrated and who were considered as Romanians, was minimal.

As to Hungary, a kind of polarization, more conspicuous than in Romania, occurred among the Jews after the war. In the wake of a national revival tens of thousands joined the Zionist movement and intended to emigrate to Palestine. On the other hand, a similar number joined the Communist party. The number of Jews in the security organs, already controlled by the Communists at the beginning of the coalition period, was conspicuous. Despite the trauma of 1944 when large numbers of Hungarians from every social stratum had participated in the decimation of the Jews, both camps, the «nationalists» and the Communist Jews, now proclaimed their loyalty to the Hungarian people.

Communists and non-Communists joined forces in persuading Jewish survivors that the past must be forgotten and that their future called for their complete submersion in the Hungarian nation. The authorities dismissed the Zionist demand for recognition of the status of a distinct nationality.

Within the Jewish community, non-Communist assimilationists were as eager as the Communists to forget the past and to make a sharp division between preliberation and postwar Hungary. They searched for a formula that could preserve or revitalize the fiction of «Hungarians of the Jewish faith».

By the end of the 1940's, the Jews in Hungary were divided into three groups: the Zionists, the Orthodox, and the assimilationists. Without any organizational framework after 1949: the «Hungarians of Mosaic faith», i.e., the assimilationists, who still considered themselves members of the Jewish religious community; and a third category, Jews who severed all links with Jewry. Some four or five years after the liberation of Hungary, the Zionists practically disappeared from the public scene. The second group survived and even enjoyed the support of the regime. As to those who chose the path of «total Hungarianism», their intergration was more successful than in any other Central or East European country. A high percentage of writers, poets, and leading figures in intellectual, cultural, and artistic life were Jews who became Hungarians. None of the political leaders of Jewish origin maintained any contact with Jewry, and a change of surnames and denial of ethnic origin were common among those who fulfilled functions of any importance. Not even the anti-Jewish overtones of the Rajk trial and the subsequent purges affected the general trend of total submersion of communist Jews. Jewish emigration was less frequent than in Romania, and most of those who did leave Hungary preferred countries other than Israel.

In the history of the two Communist countries, one major event and one important political process should be mentioned from our point of view:

1. The 1956 uprising in Hungary.
2. The incessantly strengthening nationalist trend in Romania from the beginning of the 1960's onwards.

As to 1956: David Irving, the revisionist British historian, in his much discussed book about the Hungarian uprising published two years ago, insinuates that the event was a major anti-Jewish revolt against the Jewish leadership and the Jewish infiltrated secret police. Nobody doubts that the popular uprising had strong antisemitic undertones, and that in a rapidly changing political constellation old, reactionary and anti-Jewish elements came to the fore in Budapest at the beginning of November 1956. But the uprising was basically anti-Communist and Anti-Soviet and not first of all anti-Jewish.

Many Jews were active in the struggle against the Stalinist regime, and at the same time, obviously, many other Jews were on the other side of the barricades. However, tens of thousands of Jews fled Hungary after the crushing of the uprising, some of them indeed fearing an antisemitic flare-up, but most of them because of their hatred of the Communist regime. Among those who suffered retaliations after the setting up of the Soviet-created Kadar regime, many were Jews, while other Jews served the new regime, at least one of them as a member in the Politburo of the revitalized Communist party.

In spite of the mass exodus in 1956-57, the majority of Hungarian Jewry

did not leave the country, and since then, in spite of a systematic elimination of the Jews from the middle and lower echelons of the party and state life, there has been nothing to bear out an official antisemitism. I should like to mention a phenomenon, characteristic only for Hungary in Eastern Europe, underlining the tolerance and relative liberalism of the post-1956 regime. I have in mind the unforeseen and unhindered mushrooming of Holocaust literature in the 1960's and during the last decade; the publishing of tens of novels written by Jewish survivors, some of them already well-known as Hungarian novelists or poets; an event indicating a national revival among the Jews, but at the same time, the tolerance of the regime and the interest of the public in such writings.

Paradoxically, Hungarian Jewry, which suffered terrible losses in the Holocaust, and which faced the enmity of an out-and-out antisemitic society, constitutes today the greatest Jewish community in Central and Eastern Europe, second only to Soviet Jewry. However, the huge majority of the Hungarian people has not accepted the 100,000 Jews as completely intergrated (nationally) and only a few observers would deny the existence of latent antisemitism — on the part of the masses. Regarding the question of national identity, an outspoken, courageous and excellent essayist, Gyorgy Szaraz, asked rhetorically: «Why should the Hungarian Jew feel obliged to disown the graves of his persecuted ancestors, why should he forget his kin murdered in 1944?». Should he do so, Szaraz asks, in the name of a misinterpreted patriotism, or in the name of an even more misinterpreted internationalism? He had the honesty to proclaim that the Hungarian Jew remained a Jew after all, who was not expected to renounce his Jewishness — which in any case he could not do. I assume that the public at large and the regime too agree with this view; Jews are living today in a no-man's land between the Hungarian nation and national-minded Jewry, without suffering any official discrimination, but rather tolerated than completely accepted and intergrated.

Two years ago a Jewish journalist, who shares his time between Germany and Israel, asked Szaraz, the author of the best-seller «In the Wake of a Prejudice», an essay about contemporary Jewish assimilation and antisemitism in Hungary, if there was any antisemitism in today's Hungary. The answer was, unequivocally «yes, it exists». The journalist asked him: «I am going to publish this answer in an Israeli newspaper — can I do it? The answer was: «The old prejudices still exist in our society, and since they exist, latent antisemitism also persists among us».

In Romania during the last two decades, an interesting process of reviving nationalism pushed the country to the periphery of the Soviet bloc. Besides Yugoslavia, Romania, a maverick, is the only openly nationalistic regime in the Communist bloc. It follows its own ways, as for example being the only Communist country in the world which did not sever its diplo-

matic relations with Israel. However, the rising nationalism which started to affirm itself in the early 1960's, and which burst into the installation of the Ceausescu dictatorship, and prevails today even more than ever, had its inevitable repercussions upon Romanian Jewry and upon the Jewish policy of the regime.

From the mid-1960's, an unmistakable process of de-Sovietization and re-Romanization made itself felt in Romania in the field of history, literature and other domains, coupled with a re-evaluation of the national heritage, including the rehabilitation of national figures eliminated from public life in the years of Stalinism. As always in Eastern and Central Europe, the rise of nationalism went hand in hand with a dose of xenophobia and mainly antisemitism. In the framework of a systematic diminution of the role of the Jews in the state — and party life, most of the leading Jewish figures disappeared from the scene, and only a handful of Jews remained in leading positions — however, none in the Politburo or in the party Secretariat. Parallel with this process the emigration to Israel (and also to the West) of large Jewish masses was stepped up, masses which included former leading personalities (some cabinet ministers and senior party officials too). Today, Romanian Jewry has dwindled to about 15% of its 1945 figure. This phenomenon does not necessarily mean that they fled antisemitism; rather, it is a combination of two feelings: An uneasiness and disappointment with the nationalist Communist regime, with Stalinist vestiges in internal affairs on the one hand, and on the other hand, the feeling and awareness that the Jews constitute a foreign body in a society which exalts extreme nationalism, and the cult of the «autochthonous» tradition, promoting only «autochthonous» elements.

Although antisemitism is not tolerated in today's Romania, one incident could shed light on the feeling nurtured by many in Romanian society, feelings which reach the surface incidentally, only to be repudiated by the official forums.

In early September 1980, an editorial appeared in the cultural weekly «Săptămâna» (The Week). The article wrote about the real Romanians born in the country throughout hundreds and thousands of years, who do not run away in the face of hardship, who are not deserters, unlike some visitors in the country, avid for enrichments, strangers to the interests of the Romanian nation. If anybody had doubts of who these foreigners were, the writer uses expressions like «gesheftar» (a Yiddish word for traffickers), Judases who lack the Romanian capacity for self-sacrifice etc. The article caused an uproar, Jewish protests were voiced, and the weekly retracted the article admitting that it had contained some errors; ultimately the editorial board dissasociated itself from chauvinism, antisemitism and similar manifestations. However, the damage was done — the article was published. The lack of time does not allow me to mention more publications, mainly

fiction which bear witness to the fact that the mostly young nationalist literati are not free of antisemitic prejudices, and that they are only officially inhibited from expressing themselves according to their real inclinations.

The rehabilitation and re-evaluation of some nationalistic cultural figures can only add to the antisemitic overtones of the constant crescendo in the nationalistic cult. Some vulgar antisemitic poems of Eminescu (the great national poet of the XIXth Century) were re-published without any apologetic commentaries, and Iorga, a historian, the co-founder of the first antisemitic party in Romania, and the national poet, Goga, the Prime Minister of the first antisemitic government, were rehabilitated as giants of the cultural heritage. Since nothing is mentioned about their antisemitic activities, the young generation could easily conclude that nothing was wrong with the rabid antisemitism of these national figures, now venerated by the Communist regime.

One more remark about the perception of the Holocaust in today's Romania. Since the lives of the Jews in the Old Kingdom and Southern-Transylvania were saved, and «only» the majority of the Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina were annihilated, the Romanian historians protest against the use of the expression «The Holocaust of the Romanian Jews»; in their opinion there was no Holocaust in the history of Romanian Jews, on the contrary, Romania was the only country in Nazi Europe where the lives of the Jews were spared by the deep humanism of the Romanian people, which induced even Antonescu to assume the role of a kind of saviour. In this assessment I am obviously not looking for any sort of antisemitism; rather, I am underlining the reticence of today's Romanian official historiography and literature to bear the responsibility for all those deeds which humiliated, crippled and decimated Romanian Jewry from December 1937 until August 1944.

A few weeks ago President Ceausescu of Romania strongly condemned chauvinist manifestations in the country, reprimanding mainly the Hungarians, but he mentioned the vestiges of antisemitism too. So, in spite of the insignificant number of Jews in that country, and many years after the alleged disappearance of antisemitism, Ceausescu still considers it worth fighting against.

One more word about the antisemitic propaganda disguised in the Communist countries under anti-Zionist slogans. In spite of the normal, and even good relations between Israel and Romania, anti-Zionist slogans are not rare in Romania, although one can discern the intention to differentiate anti-Zionism from antisemitism. In a book published in 1979, Lăncrănjan, the author I quoted earlier, condemns antisemitism as an abject current, as any chauvinist current, remarking however, that «Zionism, no matter how many justifications it may have, is not better». In Hungary, Zionism constitutes the object of vulgar attacks, much more than in Romania.

A few concluding remarks:

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There is no virulent antisemitism in any of the two reviewed countries; but latent antisemitism and anti-Jewish prejudices still persist, mainly among the popular masses; in Romania as a corollary of the prevailing extreme nationalism, it lingers on even among the intellectuals. The Jews in Hungary, about 80.000 — 100.000 strong, or at least a huge majority of them, have decided to stay in the country and accept their position in a no-man's land, between Jewry and the Hungarian nation; conversely, the almost 400.000 strong Romanian Jewry in 1945 has dwindled to a mere 40.000 persons today, enjoying a kind of national minority status. Assimilation, acculturation and integration were more successful and smoother in Hungary than in Romania, however, thirty five years of Communist rule in the two countries obviously did not lead either to a complete assimilation, and consequently, to a definitive solution of the Jewish problem, or to the complete eradication of antisemitic prejudices. «Antisemitism without Jews» to use the often heard *bon mot* can easily be attached to the mentality of many young nationalists in Romania, and an uneasy co-existence between Jews and non-Jews still characterizes the status of the Jews in Hungary, in spite of the undeniable goodwill of the regime.

I have no intention whatsoever to blacken even more the anyhow dreary picture which we got about the antisemitic propaganda in the Western world after the Second World War, however, I have to draw the attention to some sources of antisemitic incitement, which have been neglected, or overlooked by our surveys in the past — namely the anti-Jewish activity of the Romanian and Hungarian Nazi emigration in the Western world.

After the war, a huge following of the two most extremist antisemitic movements in East Central Europe, the Romanian «Iron Guard» (or Legionary movement) and the Hungarian «Arrow Cross» remained in the West, or fled to the Western countries (mainly from Hungary, less from Romania). In 1956, after the Hungarian uprising, a new influx of extreme-rightist refugees from Hungary augmented the ranks of the original core of the «Arrow Cross», and in the last decade quite a number of Romanian refugees, or emigrés, mainly intellectuals, and among them a high proportion of young people who managed to reach the Western countries, have joined the ranks of the old Iron Guardists. Today tens of obscure periodicals, published in Romanian and in Hungarian in the United States, Canada, Western Germany, Spain and in other countries are waging not only an ideological war against the respective Communist regimes, but are also inciting against the Jews in a venomous tone, reminiscent of the «Stürmer». Moreover, one of the favorite subjects of this obscene propaganda is the denial of the Holocaust and the cynical derision of what they call «Holocaustism», referring to our preoccupation with the history of the Holocaust. Some of these groups have broken the language barriers which diminished

the circulation and sphere of influence of their publications, and joined local fascist press-organs in world languages — for example in Canada, a group of Romanian Iron Guardists publish in English too, and in Spain some of their writing were, or are still published in Spanish. I cannot refrain from asking the rhetoric question why the above mentioned Western governments tolerate such a Nazi-type incitement, and why, for example today's Socialist regime in Spain permits Horia Sima, the leader of the «Iron Guard» from 1939, the vice-premier of General Antonescu's first fascist government, the prime-minister of a phantom-government set up by the Nazis in Vienna in December 1944, to activate freely and to publish an «Iron Guard» monthly in Madrid. Such incomprehensible acts of «tolerance» — probably in the name of democracy — cannot but generate demoralization amongst those who are worried because of a resurgence of Nazism and of antisemitism.

One more sentence about the Romanian and Hungarian emigration's activity. On every occasion when antisemitic undertones reach the surface in the Communist press of the two countries, the emigré publications gladly greet these manifestations — as it happened during the last few years in the case of Romania.

We can do little to influence the situation in Hungary or Romania; however, we can do much more in silencing the two active emigré groups, and in general we can do much more against contemporary antisemitism by publishing more and by not neglecting such countries as Romania and Hungary and their Fascist emigration, wrongly considered as of secondary importance.

Stiftelsen norsk Okkupasjonshistorie, 2014
tuation in Hungary and Romania. In general we can do much more to combat contemporary antisemitism. So, we have given an answer, somewhat short, but anyhow, an answer all the same. My question goes to Per Ahlmark: What can be done in Sweden, and by extension, what can be done in Norway, in Scandinavia, to combat the increasing, grievous tendency toward neo-antisemitism.

PUNDIK

I have two quick things to say. One is a statement, and one is a question.

Yesterday, almost exactly at the same time, I was in Moscow, in a similar hall. I sat in the audience and in front of me was a panel of eight persons. The head of the panel was the Jewish Three-star General, called David Dragunski. They declared the establishment of a new public committee, as they call it, to combat Zionism. I would like to ask Professor Freimann: «What do you think is the reason for the establishment of this committee? Do you think it has internal reasons, or do you think it mainly has reasons to encourage a new dialogue in the Middle East between the Soviet Union and the Arabs?» Point one. Point two. One thing struck me in your story and in a lot of stories I heard in the Soviet Union over the last two weeks, and that is the unpredictability of the system. You were permitted to leave half a year ago. To people in the Soviet Union, this was something close to a miracle. Lots of your friends get refusals and cannot leave. Writers, I know, write books that don't appear. Suddenly they get permission to publish a book in a thousand copies. Suddenly somebody else gets permission to publish a book in ten thousand copies. Suddenly, an antisemitic book is published in Kiev, and two weeks later the chief editor of *Isvestia* tells me it was a mistake. The man has been punished.

I can mention lots and lots of cases of this unpredictability. Now, I just want to formulate this to you in a question. Is this unpredictability a sign of the lack of coordination of the system? Is it haphazardness, or is the unpredictability of the Soviet Union part of the system? Do they act that way to keep all of us and all of you on edge, never knowing how to act because you never know what the reaction will be, or is it just the system which is not capable of coordinating its actions?

FREIMAN

Not many questions, but complicated ones, about the reasons to leave. I described it already, and it is a loss of social position for vast circles of Soviet Jews. The second reason is the existence of a place to go to. So, the State of Israel, which was not in existence before 1948, and now exists, is one of the strong reasons behind a decision towards a change of mind.

The second question was about the future fate of Soviet Jewry. Here you can't answer for the whole body, for there are two parts. Soviet Jews, in

Soviet society, being Soviet citizens, though, in some cases, not treated very well, will proceed with their life and work. They will proceed to be loyal to Russian society, up to the moment when they are able to make the decision to leave. They will proceed to live under very difficult conditions, but those who already have made the decision, will struggle, for they haven't any choice, only to proceed with their struggle.

Third question: About the unpredictability of Soviet policy. You have a much too superficial image of Soviet Society. You see, it is one single body, directed from above, and its actions and decisions have to appear to be without contradiction, but you don't have the same image of the Western pluralistic society. Nevertheless, there are plenty of undercurrents and differences also in Soviet and you can feel them. It is quite easy to see these differences. Nevertheless, we can see trends and predict events.

VAGO

The first question: Hungary's internal affairs are today liberal. It is one of the most liberal Communist countries. In external affairs it follows Moscow. Romania is very orthodox. In external affairs it is quite independent. It's the only Communist country which has diplomatic relations with Israel. Now, the Jews, the Hungarian Jews did not leave Hungary. «Why?» The answer is history and assimilation. Today they are not really Jews and they are not accepted 100% as Hungarians, so this is a «no-man's land». In Romania today, there remain only 40.000 Jews, compared with 400.000 before the Second World War. This is the typical case of antisemitism without Jews. In East Central Europe, nationalism was always connected with antisemitism. Now, Communist nationalism leads to antisemitism as well. Not only the classical bourgeois nationalism. Communist nationalism today is ex-officio antisemitic or to a certain degree, antisemitic. Concerning Rabbi Rosen, I am also, like you, unhappy with him. And the last question or remark: «What to do?» I shall repeat: «Deal much more with these neglected, but important geographical areas».

AHLMARK

Three questions and three quick answers. Kjell Drægnes from *Aftenposten* asked me why Sweden, as a multi-national state nowadays, has an upsurge of antisemitism. Well, I think there is no connection at all between antisemitism in my country and the number of immigrants in Sweden. We are simply back to the old political and cultural climate that we had in the 20's and 30's where antisemitic innuendoes are part of the so-called normal political debate. There are some dark forces under the surface and they have come up again, and that has nothing to do at all with the immigrants in Sweden. Jahn Otto Johansen asks: «Why was it possible to launch an antisemitic campaign after the Lebanese War?» Well, my simple answer is,

1932), Albert Einstein observed that the intelligentsia is especially vulnerable to the contagion of the printed paper. This might be applied to present-day France, so much the more as the majority of the middle class, the rural population and even a good part of the working class displayed indifference, if not scepticism. One observes here the following contrasts; the mass media, supported by the intelligentsia, lead an untiring campaign against an ever-increasing anti-Arab or anti-Black racism, but I do not have the impression that grassroot France («la France profonde») has been truly affected — its Communist fringe excepted — by the anti-Israeli propaganda. On the other hand, the French public at large is unable to distinguish between Israeli and *Israelite*; certain newspapers readily make the mistake «Israelite Army», but the reverse inaccuracy is not exceptional. The (sub-conscious?) identification between Jews, Zionists and Israelis is a fairly general phenomenon.

As for the political domain: One cannot help but point out the world-wide role of Soviet propaganda, which has been consistent on one thing, since 1948: The vilification of Judaism, practically equated with Zionism. The sources speak an unmistakable language. The PLO limits itself — officially — to Zionism. As a rule, the Arab media are more outspoken, since they overtly disparage the «Jewish race».

Having said that, I should like to make some historical observations. I do not know enough modern Greek history, and I cannot judge if actual anti-semitism (here the term seems to me to be licit) has deep roots. Maybe Arab money has been omnipotent. A recent visit and a conference in Spain gave me the opportunity to observe that the Spanish past weighs heavily on the present in two ways. There are vestiges of medieval superstitions, but there are also, and above all, forty years of Franco regime, which explains the persistence of antisemitism of the kind which was current in Europe between the two world wars.

Before coming to the case of Germany, let me return to «the fascination with the Jew» which, of course, implies a deep ambivalence. The permanence of this phenomenon, which antedates the Christian era, suggests that «economical» or, more generally, «materialist» interpretations of antisemitism miss the mark. The case of classical Antiquity, when the «professional distribution» of the Jews contrasted with that of the Middle Ages — or of today — is very significant. Having said this, let me state that the German case is stirring — and enlightening. Just a couple of quotes: *Der Spiegel* wrote in June 1982: «Just as the Jews were the victims of the Nazis, the Arabs are the victims of the Israelis»; (Walter Meiningen, «Dass Begin Jude sei». *Der Monat*, no. 285, 1982, page. 134,) or an article in *Die Zeit* written by a Jewish writer, according to whom the Israeli people blindly follow Begin like the Germans followed Hitler (3. August 1982); or the German television announcing that «the Israeli military objective is to annihilate the

Palestinians» (7. October 1982). We are now at the heart of our problem. To begin with, let me introduce a personal anecdote: During his trial, Eichmann often quoted from one of my books, in his defense «Poliakov writes that...» As a result, the attorney general Gideon Hausner confused one day Poliakov and Eichmann: «No, Eichmann did not write that...» Which suggests that there is in some recess of the mind of an Israeli attorney, as in those of millions of Europeans and Americans, a contiguity between Nazis and Jews. And some profound feelings of guilt sought to be alleviated, consciously or unconsciously, when favorable circumstances, helped by the current disinformation, permitted the open identification of the Jews with the Nazis. The case was frequent in the Western world, but it is obvious that the Germans in particular were prone to espouse massively this «projection».

Let us now consider a quite different phenomenon, related to disinformation. During the past years, western journalists or cameramen assigned to Beyrouth paid a certain toll to PLO terrorism. Some of them were murdered, others were taken hostage. Colleagues had to take note... On the other hand, the Israeli Command made the mistake of preventing special foreign correspondents from following its army during the initial operations. There was nothing left for them to do but to link up with the «other side» to fulfill their assignments.

I will now return to the situation in France. Firstly, I would like to point out that anti-Jewish abuses committed during the years 1940-44 by the French remain better known than the *acts of humanity* that occurred, for the simple reason that there was an abundance of written proof concerning the former, which is, clandestinity being the rule, not the case with the latter. Also, during the 1950's, as in many other European countries, the Jew became the symbol of persecuted innocence. This outlook was probably more pronounced than elsewhere, perhaps because of an intellectual atmosphere particular to France, or because of the strong Jewish presence within the country. An avalanche of books, films and of speeches helped to identify the Jews as martyrs and heroes, in the face of Nazi executioners and French «collaborationists». This trend, justified to a certain extent, couldn't but lead to a reaction. Moreover, Jewish youth mirrored itself in this image, while on the whole, *hic et nunc*, it had nothing to complain about — with the exception of those who witnessed the deportation of their parents, or whose lives were traumatized in some other way; but those are intimate sufferings and most of them remain suppressed.

The reversal of attitudes among French youth could be linked to the famous «events» of May 1968. It is in their wake that the fad for the Jews was transformed into the fad for the Third World, and specifically, the Palestinians. Revolution, or World Revolution, became the slogan of the students. Some of these young idealists or ideologues now occupy positions of influence or power in France.

It would have to take more than one monument, more than one city to write six million names.

What was the purpose of the chroniclers? The purpose was to save the Jewish memory for the sake of Jewish history, and beyond it, for the sake of humanity. I believe, with all my heart, that these people had given up, they knew that for them it was too late. What they wanted to achieve was to save mankind and, paradox of paradoxes, mankind had forsaken them, yet they wanted to save mankind. What happened to Dubnov's notes from the ghetto? One day, one day they will be found. This is my deep conviction too. Certain voices cannot be stifled. Ringelblum's archives have been discovered. Nubermam's notes have been discovered. Anne Frank's diary has been discovered. Moshe Flinker's diary has been discovered and Yitsok Rudashevski's diary has been discovered.

And if you want something more astonishing: there was a group in Auschwitz, in Treblinka, in Zamowska and in all the death camps. And this group was the most unfortunate of all the victims. They were called the Sonderkommando. Their task was to burn the corpses. Usually they would live a month or two or three, at the most, then they themselves would be burned. After the war we heard legends that they had kept chronicles. I confess to you I never believed it. And then we found a few pages. A friend of mine, who is here tonight, and I shared that discovery by chance. We found a book and in that book we found a few handwritten pages. And then we discovered a story. What a story! In 1945, when Auschwitz was liberated, Birkenau was liberated, the Russian Army came in and found ashes. Mountains of ashes. Some of the people who lived nearby in Auschwitz or in Crakow were convinced that the Jews, before they went to their deaths, had buried gold everywhere. So they began digging for gold. And the Russians, too, found all kinds of strange jars, military jars, and they took the jars with them to Leningrad. Twenty years later, the jars were opened and they found the diary of Zalman Gostynski. In those diaries we found, oh they, not I, I only read them, they found indications where to find more diaries saying, go two steps from here and ten steps from there, and they found them. The book just came out in France, and I wrote the preface to it. And I can tell you I have rarely written something with such a *Yirah*, such a sacred anguish, as I felt when I wrote a preface to these diaries.

There was a man in Treblinka called Yankel Wiernik. He was in Treblinka. He built Treblinka. Then there was an escape from Treblinka, rebellion and escape. And he escaped. Most of those who escaped from the camps were killed by the Poles outside, but he managed to live and wrote memoirs. His book was published in 1944. When did the world know? What a question? In 1944 the book was published with every single detail. And at one point, he says, «Oh God,» he said «will I ever be able to laugh again?» I read it and I thought this is the worst a person can write. And then

I discovered in the diary of the Sonderkommando from Birkenau another man named Zalman Gradowski. He also wrote a diary and in his diary I came across the following sentence: «Oh God, will I ever be able to cry again?»

I would like to know what Dubnov felt when he saw his killer. I would like to know whether his faith in humanity remained unchanged. I would like to know whether his belief in civilization, in emancipation, in culture, in history was affected by his own words. I can tell you that mine has been. Is it because of what I know? Quite the contrary. It's because of what I don't know, of what I will never know. I will never know what it was that provoked such a metamorphosis on such a scale. What was it that made good parents turn into killers of children. And why was the outside world silent? And God, what was His part in the tragedy? We don't have to leave Riga to ask questions. We ask them while we are still there.

The whole issue of knowing and not knowing can be examined with regard to any city. Did the killers know? The answer is: Yes. They came in order to kill. That was their task. That was their mission. To kill. I don't know how but they were trained to kill. We know now. We have documents. How Reinhard Heydrich had written it before the war broke out. He already had the whole thing figured out. And *Einsatzkommandos* were already established with *kommandos*, *sub kommandos*, the «*Gruppen*», the smaller units. It was simply a war to kill. Do you know how they did it in Kiev? Do you know the names? In Kiev they came in September, three weeks after the Germans occupied Kiev, between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Ten days. In ten days again, scientifically, systematically, they killed from 60 to 80 thousand Jews. Ten thousand a day. And it worked! The killers wanted to kill, and it worked! They knew how many graves to dig and they knew what to say to people so that the people would go; and they went. An eyewitness told me, when I was in Kiev for the first time, that for weeks afterwards the ground was shaking, because so many of them had been buried alive. An eyewitness told me that from time to time there would be a geyser of blood over the graves of Babi Yar.

Now I thought in the beginning that Babi Yar was elsewhere, away, elsewhere in a forest, hidden. It isn't. It's in Kiev. It's a part of Kiev. It's ten minutes away from the hotel where we stayed the second time we came. What does it mean? It means that while they were shooting, and shooting, and shooting, the people in Kiev knew. Now why didn't they do anything? I asked the question. I never got an answer.

I will tell you one vignette. It may sound funny. A boy managed to crawl out from under the corpses at night. He was naked, because all of them had to undress before---the Germans wanted the clothes. And they only killed during the day. And at night he was running and he ran away. And she said: «Who are you?» And he said, «I am Jesus Christ. I came from the cross



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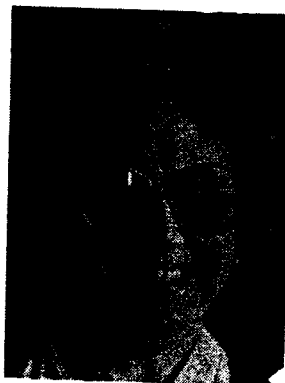
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